

# One Wisconsin Now: National voting rights leader highlights need to keep up fight against GOP efforts to rig elections

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## *Wisconsin Has Been Ground Zero in Coordinated Effort to Restrict Access to Voting ... And An Example of How to Fight Back*

MADISON, Wis. — With bills passed to impose a voter ID requirement, limit hours of early voting, make casting a ballot more complicated for seniors and students and rig legislative district lines, Wisconsin under Gov. Scott Walker and the Republican-controlled legislature is a prime example of how politicians trying to manipulate the rules on voting to give themselves an unfair advantage. At a press conference in Madison today, national voting rights leader Jason Kander, president of Let America Vote, joined with Wisconsin voting rights activists to discuss how critical it is, now more than ever, to protect voting rights. “Lawmakers should be doing everything they can to protect the right to vote and make voting as convenient as possible,” said Kander. “There’s a group of politicians using voter suppression as a political strategy to win elections, and we saw that right here in Wisconsin in 2016. It’s wrong and we will hold those politicians accountable.”

In recent years, Wisconsin has been at the forefront of a coordinated, partisan effort by Republicans to manipulate the rules on voting to give themselves an unfair advantage. Barriers were erected by the GOP majority with the intent of suppressing votes among targeted groups, especially people of color and students, who were less likely to support conservatives.

One Wisconsin Now’s partner organization, One Wisconsin Institute, was the lead plaintiff in an ongoing federal lawsuit, *One Wisconsin Institute, et. al. v. Thomsen, et. al.*, that exposed the Republican voter fraud of manipulating the rules on voting for their own benefit. The lawsuit resulted in a number of onerous requirements being struck down at the federal district court level. Limits on the hours and locations of early voting, prohibitions on using university dormitory lists to verify student residency and extending the time a person must live in their home before being able to vote there were among the stricken anti-voter provisions. In addition, the judge overseeing the case ruled the state unconstitutionally administered its strict voter ID requirement.

In separate litigation, a panel of three federal judges ruled the state Assembly district lines adopted by the Republican controlled legislature in 2011 constituted an impermissible partisan gerrymander and violated the rights of the people of Wisconsin. The U.S. Supreme Court will be hearing an appeal of the decision brought by Republicans seeking to protect their rigged maps.

State Senator Mark Miller, a former military pilot and now ranking member on the state Senate Committee on Elections and Utilities commented, “Our democracy is strongest when everyone is allowed to participate and voice their opinions. Republicans continue to create barriers and limit the freedom to vote.”

Continued vigilance is needed to protect gains made in pushing back against efforts to restrict access to the franchise. While Republicans in Wisconsin continue to fight tooth and nail to protect the rigged system they’ve put in place, at the federal level Donald Trump is attempting to use bogus claims of voting impropriety as a set up to justify new voting restrictions from the federal level.

One Wisconsin Now Research Associate and University of Wisconsin - Madison student Savion Castro concluded, “Voting is one of the more precious rights we have in American democracy, and for students and people of color like me, that right is always in a precarious position. For me and a generation of students looking down the barrel at the growing \$1.4 trillion in student debt, it is critical we make our voices heard in the policy debate by voting.”

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