

Keyes campaign: Keyes vows to work for fair redistricting system

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Court ruling kicks gerrymandering back to lower court

“The decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to send the Wisconsin gerrymandering case back to the lower courts is a setback for the country and our state,” said Dr. Brittany Keyes, a Democrat running for the 31st Wisconsin State Assembly seat.

“My own Assembly district is a prime example of allowing legislators to choose their voters, rather than having voters choose their representatives and senators,” Keyes said. “The district is shaped like a jigsaw puzzle piece and was designed to keep Republicans in charge.”

The district includes the Village of Clinton and parts of the cities of Beloit and Janesville in Rock County. In Walworth County, the district includes the villages of Sharon, Darien, Walworth, the City of Elkhorn and most of the cities of Williams Bay and Fontana on Lake Geneva.

The court ruled in the Wisconsin case that the plaintiffs could not show that partisan gerrymandering had harmed them as individuals and that they had no standing to bring the lawsuit. The court did not rule on the merits of the case.

“I keep waiting for the courts to rule that our Constitution demands representation based on fair elections,” Keyes said. “If the courts won’t rule for the people, legislators are going to have to find the vision to put electoral advantage aside and do the right thing.”

Keyes vowed that if elected, she will fight for legislation to have redistricting done by a non-partisan bureau, as it is in Iowa.

“I will be a sponsor of a bill that requires that redistricting be done by a non-partisan panel,” Keyes said. “If the courts won’t act to preserve democracy, the Legislature must.”

Republicans took control of the state Senate, Assembly and governor’s office in 2010, which gave them the power to draw district lines for U.S. Congress and the state legislature. It was the first time in decades that one party had sole authority over redistricting.

The Republicans were able to substantially expand their majority in the Assembly despite getting fewer votes than Democrats statewide, Keyes noted. For several election cycles, the numbers of incumbents running without opposition increased.

“Democracy depends on an exchange of ideas, and that is what elections are about,” Keyes said. “Serious candidates have stayed away from running for seats in districts that have been rigged against them. That discourages people from voting and results in a stagnant pool of ideas and debate.”

Keyes dismissed the argument that it is impossible for an appointed bureau to be non-partisan and to be evenhanded in creating legislative districts.

“Iowa proves that it can work,” she said. “Wisconsin is already served by scrupulously non-partisan bureaus, such as the Legislative Council and Legislative Reference Bureau.”