

Common Cause Wisconsin: “Iowa Model” anti gerrymandering legislation not affected by terrible Supreme Court decision

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With Federal Courts Now Out of the Fight, It's Entirely Up to We, The People

Last Thursday's narrow (5 to 4) but terrible decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to not inject itself, or other federal courts into the question of whether or not hyper-partisan redistricting of congressional and state legislative districts could deny voters equal protection under the law and infringe on their First Amendment right to have their votes count as much as any other voter (it can and does) was deeply disturbing, disappointing and disgusting. But it was not, in the least bit, surprising.

The June 27th SCOTUS decision in *Rucho v. Common Cause* was pre-ordained when moderate conservative U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy retired a year ago and was replaced on the nation's highest court by Trump's selection, the ultra-conservative, partisan, and ill-tempered Brett Kavanaugh.

But the Supreme Court did not foreclose the possibility or ability of states to end partisan gerrymandering. Indeed, Chief Justice John Roberts decried the partisan map drawing and practically begged states to enact such reforms even as he

cowardly backed away from utilizing legitimate judicial power to strike down unfair voting maps.

For years, we have been working on the advancement of redistricting reform under the assumption that we cannot depend on the courts to get this done. We have always believed that it is up to we, the people, who must eventually prevail over the hyper-politically partisan bosses of Wisconsin and their minions who have defended partisan gerrymandering, voter suppression, unlimited, secret special interest money, and anything else they can do to hold on to power – at any cost to taxpayers – the public be damned.

The U.S. Supreme Court has run away to hide. So be it. Onward and upward.

In May, Wisconsin Republican legislative leaders, Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) and State Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau), and their GOP acolytes on the Legislative Joint Finance Committee (JFC) stripped the redistricting reform provision proposal that Gov. Tony Evers has inserted in his 2019-2021 state budget proposal.

Dozens of Wisconsinites testified in strong support of the “Iowa Model” redistricting reform measure at the four state budget hearings the JFC held around Wisconsin (in Janesville, Oak Creek, River Falls and Green Bay) during the month of April.

Nobody spoke against it.

The legislation is based on Iowa’s redistricting process which was developed and enacted into law in Iowa by Republican Governor Robert Ray and a Republican-controlled Legislature (both chambers) in 1980.

Now, out of the state budget, the “Iowa Model” redistricting measure has been introduced, with bi-partisan support, in the Wisconsin Legislature as “stand alone” legislation.

In the State Senate, the lead sponsor is Sen. Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay), who has introduced Senate Bill 288. In the Assembly, the lead sponsor is Rep. Robyn Vining (D-Waukesha), who has introduced an identical measure, Assembly Bill 303.

Now, it is time for you to do your part to help make ending partisan gerrymandering a reality in Wisconsin before 2021, when the next redistricting process will occur, following the 2020 Census. This week, before the 4th of July, please contact both

your state senator and your state representative and demand that they co-sponsor and support Senate Bill 288 and/or Assembly Bill 303. If you are not sure who your state senator and/or state representative is, go here.

These measures have overwhelming citizen support all throughout Wisconsin. Now, state legislators need to adhere to the demands of their constituents to defy Vos and Fitzgerald and do the right thing. Support fair maps! Some legislators and their staff may tell you the U.S. Supreme Court has now said that their current, partisan gerrymandering system is the only way the redistricting process can occur. That is a bald-faced lie! They absolutely could and should adopt the fair, non-partisan legislation (SB 288/AB 303), now ready for a public hearing and consideration by the full Wisconsin Legislature tomorrow, if they put the the public interest ahead of their narrow, partisan interest.

Here is more information about the “Iowa Model” reform measure and about the redistricting process in Wisconsin. You can also watch and listen to this video about the redistricting reform process in Wisconsin.

Above all, take action. Make your voices heard. Never, ever surrender. On Wisconsin!