

GOP redistricting maps headed to Evers following Assembly passage, veto expected

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The Assembly approved new GOP-backed legislative and congressional maps today after some Dems berated both the Republicans lines and a proposal from a commission Gov. Tony Evers created.

Ahead of two 60-38 votes on the Senate-passed bills, Speaker Robin Vos said the Senate-approved maps drawn by GOP legislative aides adhere to Voting Rights Act requirements better than People's Maps Commission maps. The Rochester Republican said the GOP maps are compact and contiguous, avoid splitting wards or municipalities, retain core populations and maintain communities of interest.

The maps now head to Evers' desk for consideration, who has vowed to veto them. That would all but assure the courts will draw Wisconsin's political boundaries for the 2022 elections. There are currently lawsuits pending before the state Supreme Court and a federal court asking them to draw the lines if the gov and Legislature fail to reach a deal.

During floor debate, Vos said Dems could win a majority under the current and the GOP-offered maps if they fielded better candidates.

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"Statewide election results point to the fact that both Democrats and Republicans can achieve a majority in the state Assembly if they have candidates who appeal to the people in each district," he said.

Minority Leader Gordon Hintz, D-Oshkosh, knocked Vos for forcing an amendment vote on the PMC's legislative maps, calling it a political game.

The Assembly rejected the PMC's legislative maps 77-21. All Republicans present voted against the maps, while 21 Dems voted in favor and 17 voted against them.

Hintz also said he doesn't buy Republicans' argument that their maps are best because they present the least-possible amount of changes to current maps, as they continue to be skewed against electing Dem candidates.

He added gerrymandering and the focus on reelection instead of lawmaking detracts from the essential role representative government plays.

"Having fewer competitive districts really leaves our Democracy in shambles," he said.

"Do you understand that it is not normal for a 50/50 state to have 64 seats drawn to be more Republican?"

But Hintz added the maps being debated today likely won't be the new maps.

"Your maps are not going anywhere, the People's map's not going anywhere," he said. "We'll see what happens in the courts."

Rep. Sylvia Ortiz-Velez, D-Milwaukee, slammed Evers' maps for working to increase Dem seats at the expense of limiting representation of Black, brown and other minority voters.

She said any new maps must protect minority-majority districts, adding the PMC maps are part of a national effort to limit minority-majority representation.

"It promotes a white supremacist agenda that says it's OK for other folks who we don't choose to rule over us and make decisions for us," she said. "I will not remain silent, Mr. Speaker, while others unlawfully try to prevent us from electing candidates of our choice. These maps are illegal and a perversion of justice that cannot stand."

Ortiz-Velez added she and other minority lawmakers were blocked by the executive branch from intervening in the PMC process.

Rep. LaKeshia Myers, D-Milwaukee, said Ortiz-Velez is right about the PMC maps, but the Republican maps also smack of gerrymandering.

Myers also said minority voters have historically suffered under both parties, but she will not vote for any map that limits representation for African-Americans.

“But when it comes to looking at maps, I’m not willing to vote for any map that dilutes and or erases African American or Latino representation,” she said. “I don’t care who wrote it, who drew it, who took the crayon, who circled it, who did whatever, because it makes no sense.”

She said she called a quorum before going into her speech because some of her Dem colleagues decided to leave the floor and she wanted to make sure they were present.