

Sen. Larson: Republican redistricting resolution seeks to lock in their unfair advantage for another ten years

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Madison, WI – After last weekend’s thrilling last-second victory over the San Francisco 49ers, many fans were left wondering if the Packers hadn’t just defeated the opposing team, but also the officials. Now imagine if it wasn’t just the lack of calls against the 49ers paired with the hyper scrutiny of the Pack, but that the 49ers got to start every drive at the 50 yard line, while Green Bay had to start at the 20. Or what if the 49ers were allowed an extra couple of players on the field? There’s a very good chance the Green and Gold would have walked out on the losing end.

That’s approximately what the Republican-controlled legislature did with our legislative maps a decade ago, virtually ensuring that no matter how the people voted, the GOP would maintain, even expand their majorities in the legislature. As it turns out, that’s exactly what happened.

Despite Democrats winning a majority of the votes statewide in at least one house of the legislature in 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018,[1] and despite a Democrat or left-leaning nonpartisan winning 9 of the last 10 statewide elections, Republicans have only increased their majorities in the state legislature, where they now hold over 60% of the seats in both houses.

This has led to governance that is immune to public opinion and demands. With these rigged maps, Republicans have passed huge taxpayer giveaways to big

business paid for with cuts to our kid's education system. They've ignored demands for more affordable healthcare, for an increased minimum wage, and marijuana legalization, all supported by a majority of Wisconsinites.

Now, as our state gets ready to draw legislative maps for the next ten years, Republicans are attempting to lock in their advantage right where it is, using the guise of continuity and fairness to justify it. If something's already rigged in your favor and against the interests of a majority of Wisconsinites, why change it?

Today's joint resolution, passed on a strict party-line vote, may sound reasonable on its face, but it flies in the face of what they themselves did in the last redistricting, when they moved over two million voters into new districts with little regard for continuity, representation, or fairness.

Unlike ten years ago, a Governor who is committed to a fair redistricting process must sign any maps proposed by the legislature if they are to become law. That's the good news. The bad news is that Republicans in the legislature are attempting to use referees, in the form of the State Supreme Court's 4-3 right-wing majority, to rig the game once again if Evers vetoes their gerrymandered maps, as he is likely to do. If Republicans get their way this time around, we won't recognize the state we are left with in ten years' time. If we don't have fair maps, we don't have a fair democracy.