

Sen. Larson: Rigged maps, culture wars, and the big lie - today's Senate session a low point for our democracy

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Last week, a lone public hearing was held on the two most important pieces of legislation our legislature will consider this decade, our legislative and Congressional districts. Nearly 100 members of the public spoke, and not a single person other than the bills' authors testified in favor of the proposed GOP maps. Jurisdictions representing about 80% of Wisconsin residents have passed either a resolution or referendum in support of fair maps. Every scientific poll that has been conducted in Wisconsin in recent years has shown strong majority support for fair maps.

And yet, in today's Senate floor session, every single Republican voted for maps that make one of the worst gerrymanders in the nation even worse. Owing solely to the fact Governor Tony Evers will veto them, these maps as they exist now will not become law. Sadly, it won't be a nonpartisan commission drawing the maps that go into effect for our 2022 elections, it will in all likelihood fall to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. All voters can do is hope the justices follow the law and not their own partisan leanings.

Not content with voting to secure their own power at the expense of what their constituents actually want, Republicans went a few steps further with today's session. They passed bills meant to restrict abortion, limit civil liability for gun manufacturers, and (in a nod to believers of the Big Lie) castigate the Wisconsin

Elections Commission (WEC) – a body they themselves created – for making prudent decisions to protect elderly voters’ rights during the pandemic.

They even rejected my substitute amendment to their “Big Lie” resolution, which would have condemned the domestic terrorism that took place in Washington, D.C. on January 6th and also honored slain Capitol Police Officer Brian Sicknick, who died protecting the Capitol from violent insurrection.

None of the bills mentioned above do a thing to improve the lives of our neighbors. It’s no wonder last week’s Marquette Law School Poll found just 38% of Wisconsin voters approve of the job the legislature is doing. You might think that with approval that low, members would work harder to be responsive to their constituents, if for no other reason than pure self-interest. Sadly, thanks to the existing gerrymander, almost nobody in either house is in danger of losing their seat, no matter what they do while in office.

This is no way to run a government, and the people of the great state of Wisconsin deserve far better.