

# Senate approves GOP redistricting maps along party lines

Posted on Monday, Nov 8, 2021

The state Senate voted 21-12 along party lines to sign off on GOP-authored maps that would likely strengthen Republican majorities in both houses of the Legislature over the coming decade.

The maps next head to the Assembly, which is expected to take them up Thursday. Gov. Tony Evers has vowed to veto the plans, and it's expected the courts will ultimately put new lines in place for the 2022 election.

"Republicans' new gerrymandered maps are modeled after the same gerrymandered ones we've had for a decade," Evers tweeted today. "I won't sign them. Wisconsinites want and deserve #fairmaps now."

The chamber also approved a new congressional map on a similar 21-12 vote with all Republicans in favor and all Dems opposed.

**>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Republicans also forced a vote on the proposals produced by Evers' People's Maps Commission.

Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, introduced the map during debate on the GOP legislative plan, saying Dems were so "embarrassed" by what the commission had proposed that they were running away from them.

He ticked off a series of issues, including that the commission may have violated the state's open meetings law with walking quorums by subcommittees. LeMahieu said the commission's plan leaves several Senate districts that just had elections last fall without an incumbent, meaning there'd have to be special elections to fill those seats.

"I think the only people these maps are good for are Realtors," LeMahieu said, referring to the number of lawmakers who'd likely be forced to move under the commission's plans.

Under one Dem plan, there would be 38 lawmakers paired; 30 in the Assembly and eight in the Senate. All but four are Republicans.

Under the GOP plan, there would be six Assembly Republicans paired in three districts.

Sen. Jon Erpenbach, D-Middleton, argued the commission proposals were historic because it was the first time the body was voting on maps that hadn't been drawn by lawmakers or the courts, but a nonpartisan commission.

The map failed 22-11 with Sen. Lena Taylor, D-Milwaukee, joining all Republicans in opposing the plan.

"This isn't a trap. This is history," Erpenbach said.

Under the current maps, Joe Biden won 37 Assembly districts as he took the statewide contest by more than 20,000 votes last fall. Under the proposed GOP lines, he would've won 35.

Both the existing Senate map and the one Republicans proposed have 11 Biden districts.

Senate Minority Leader Janet Bewley, D-Town of Mason, acknowledged the GOP proposal is legal after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the federal courts have no role in determining whether a map is a political gerrymander. But she argued it wasn't fair considering Wisconsin's reputation as a purple state.

"We all know what fair is," Bewley said. "Wisconsin is almost equally divided along partisan lines. The state Legislature should represent that 50-50 split. But it does not."

Dems proposed two maps during the debate, and both would be better for them politically when considering past results in statewide races.

Under one, Joe Biden would've won 17 Senate seats and 46 Assembly districts, compared to the 11 and 37 he won.

Taylor opposed all four maps that were before the body today over concerns that they didn't give minority voters an adequate opportunity to elect the candidates of their choice.

Under current law, there are two majority Black Senate districts by voting-age population. There are also six majority Black Assembly districts and two majority Hispanic districts.

The proposals from the People's Maps Commission have fewer majority Black and Hispanic districts. Still, the commission chair has argued there are more "opportunity districts" in which white voters are a minority of the voting-age population when considering the combined voting age population of Black and Hispanic voters.

Taylor, who is Black, argued "opportunity districts" aren't sufficient to give minority voters the chance to win seats. She said past results have shown if white voters cast their ballots as a bloc and minority voters don't join forces, the white candidate can win a seat.

While LeMahieu knocked the People's Maps Commission for having fewer majority Black and Hispanic districts than the GOP plan, Taylor said the Republican-drawn lines were insufficient as well. She said that's because the Republicans were trying to pack minority voters into districts, while Dems were trying to crack them.

"Today, I'm not supporting any of these maps, but a process different than yours is necessary," Taylor said. "It is necessary for fairness. Fairness means a lack of favoritism. Your maps are full of favoritism to yourselves."

Had the GOP congressional map been in place last fall, Biden would've won just two seats. That's similar to his performance under existing lines, though the GOP plan would make western Wisconsin's 3rd CD more Republican. The seat has been represented by U.S. Rep. Ron Kind, D-La Crosse, for 25 years. But Donald Trump won it in 2016 and 2020, and Kind isn't seeking reelection next fall.