

Common Cause: Statement on “Iowa model” redistricting reform measure unveiled by Assembly Speaker Robin Vos

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After steadfastly opposing any and every attempt to reform the redistricting process in Wisconsin over at least the last 12 years, Assembly Speaker **Robin Vos** is now attempting to ram through his version of reform legislation in less than two days? With no public input and with no buy in from others with whom a bipartisan consensus is essential for this reform process to be successful? This is simply not credible.

Common Cause Wisconsin has long championed and advocated for a nonpartisan redistricting process for Wisconsin modeled after our neighboring state of Iowa's redistricting process that was adopted in 1980. That has been in place for the past 43 years and through five redistricting cycles with the strong support and confidence of legislators of both major political parties and most importantly, with the backing of the voters of Iowa. Common Cause Wisconsin has supported a version of this model to be implemented into Wisconsin with redistricting reform bills that have been introduced in the legislature over the past several years.

Iowa's Constitution, like Wisconsin's, stipulates that the legislature shall determine state legislative and congressional district boundaries. The Iowa model provides an excellent example for Wisconsin to emulate, with important modifications. A key addition was made to the proposed Wisconsin version of the Iowa Model redistricting legislation by reformers in 2019 and was also included in the 2021 version to address a major concern regarding redistricting in Wisconsin. However, these modifications are NOT included in the measure Vos unveiled, for the first

time, Tuesday afternoon.

Essentially the modifications prevent manipulations of the redistricting process by the politicians. Common Cause Wisconsin has supported reform that prevents the party in control of the redistricting process from holding their power indefinitely by drawing their own districts to retain their seats. **Vos's proposal lacks the safeguards to prevent the party in the majority from rigging the process that has harmed Wisconsin voters and our desire for fair representation for too long.**

In short, the key provision that is needed in any nonpartisan redistricting legislation is that:

If one or both legislative chambers twice vote down the unamended voting maps put forth by the nonpartisan Legislative Reference Bureau, then the Legislature may proceed to amend the map, with the caveat that any such amended version must acquire the support of three quarters of those voting in each legislative chamber.

Without this amendment to what Vos has initially proposed, it is entirely conceivable that the majority party could simply vote down the first two iterations of the voting maps devised by the LRB and then pass their own partisan plan by a simple majority.

We are also deeply concerned about the manner in which this serious redistricting reform measure is being advanced. Speaker Vos has chosen to unveil his proposal without any consultation with public interest organizations such as Common Cause Wisconsin and with no support from Democrats or from the Governor. In less than 48 hours, Vos scheduled a vote in the Wisconsin Assembly without a public hearing and without seeking to come to an agreement and consensus with other key participants. **His rush to a vote does a vast disservice to the citizens and voters of Wisconsin who have long supported and advocated for a fair, transparent and nonpartisan redistricting process.**

We respectfully request that Speaker Vos withdraw his version of the Iowa Model redistricting legislation from the Assembly calendar. He should then schedule meetings with Democratic Legislators, reform advocates and, most importantly,

with the public in an open and transparent way that can result in a truly reformed redistricting process.

Wisconsin is ready and eager for real reform and calls on legislators to pass meaningful redistricting reform legislation that has the broad public and political support necessary for state legislative districts to reflect the true and fair representation that Wisconsin voters demand and deserve.