

## The People's Maps Commission: By the People and For the People

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***The People's Maps Commission has an important role in re-drawing Wisconsin's electoral maps and fixing our broken partisan gerrymandering system. State residents have until July 31st to apply to be a member.***

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EAU CLAIRE, WI - When representatives of the original colonies gathered to determine the formation of the United States they took the bold step of putting the trust in the hands of its citizens, establishing the United States as a Democratic Republic.

From an early age, we learn the importance of the right to vote and our responsibility to participate in democracy as American citizens. After all, democracy can only happen when people choose their elected officials at every governing level, from the town hall to the U.S. Capitol.

Yet, as with all nations throughout history, the thirst for power overcomes the core belief behind the original intent. Once elected into office to serve the people, many politicians want

all the power they can grab and do all they can to protect their power. This is why we must have the People's Maps Commission to uphold the principles of a Democratic Republic, in which our country was founded on.



Throughout our country's history, people in power have politically disenfranchised marginalized communities in obvious ways, such as misleading voters on issues or passing laws that make it difficult or impossible for some citizens to vote. People who have historically been deprived this right have the greatest understanding how valuable the vote is.

Partisan gerrymandering is one of the greatest detriments to truly having a democracy that works. States are obligated to redraw electoral districts after every census. Population shifts over a decade make it logical to adjust lines so districts are evenly represented. In the past, self-serving politicians learned, through trial and error, how to manipulate the district maps in such ways that people of color would be disenfranchised. Eventually, the courts ruled, that drawing district lines to disenfranchise people of color was unconstitutional. This ruling didn't completely stop partisan gerrymandering, though; it's just become much more sophisticated and diabolical.

Partisan gerrymandering has become easier for politicians and data experts to determine how people lean politically and draw district lines in such a way that makes the incumbent unbeatable. This practice diminishes your voice in government and completely defeats the purpose of a representative democracy if politicians can count on winning no matter how poorly they represent us.

In 2009, I co-authored legislation and held a public hearing as Chair of the Assembly Elections and Campaign Reform Committee to fix this manipulative practice, but unfortunately it didn't pass. In this legislative session, I supported legislation to create a non-partisan redistricting process, and also introduced legislation to establish a constitutional amendment for non-partisan redistricting reform.

Most recently, during the State of the State address, Governor Evers announced the creation of the People's Maps Commission, which will consist of 9 people in Wisconsin, excluding politicians or lobbyists, to draw the next legislative maps in 2021. Just last week, the Governor released the official details for the People's Map Commission application and the selection process. The members of the Commission will be chosen by the Selection Panel, which includes 3 retired judges.



The Commission will hold 8 hearings, one in each congressional district, to hear directly from experts, stakeholders, elected officials and the general public. Following the hearings, the Commission will apply the U.S. Census data to draw the maps. Once these maps are created, the Legislature will then decide to accept the non-partisan Commission's maps or draw their own. The People's Maps Commission will help fix our broken partisan gerrymandering system and put an end to politicians picking their voters.

The Majority Party, blinded by the power they hold, hired a bunch of slick lawyers to draw electoral maps for them instead of using a nonpartisan commission. They even signed secrecy pledges to prevent the public from seeing the maps! We need an open process to create fair maps and end map manipulation for good.

Non-partisan redistricting reform is not a partisan issue – it's a people issue. We all deserve a government that works for us and represents the values of its citizens.

The deadline to apply for the People's Maps Commission is July 31<sup>st</sup>. If you're interested in applying, you can do so by visiting [govstatus.egov.com/peoplesmaps](https://govstatus.egov.com/peoplesmaps)

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