

Only two of the six Republican members of the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections bothered to attend Friday's hearing on redistricting reform, and no reporters were able to attend. Legislators pick their voters when it should be the other way around.

MADISON – State Representative **Terese Berceau** (D–Madison), the ranking Democrat on the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections, denounced the comments of the committee chair, Representative **Kathy Bernier** (R–Chippewa Falls) during an informational hearing on redistricting reform. Bernier labeled questions about the timing and purpose of the invitation-only hearing "divisive, hateful speech."

Berceau also pointed out that only two of the six Republican members of the committee bothered to attend today's hearing, and no reporters were able to attend. "I have to believe they realize this is an exercise in futility because Assembly Speaker Robin Vos publicly called redistricting a 'non-starter' and this hearing is being held weeks after the legislature adjourned its session for the year. Senate Majority Leader **Scott Fitzgerald** also said he was fine with redistricting as is," she noted.



"Since 2011, Democrats introduced a half-dozen redistricting reform measures," Representative **JoCasta Zamarripa** (D-Milwaukee) stated. "Majority Republicans refused to hold hearings on any of them. Instead they scheduled this April Fools' Day farce, with no bill before us and no ability for members of the public to weigh in regarding the need for fair and impartial legislative and congressional districts."

During the last redistricting process, controlled entirely by Republicans, private lawyers drew up new maps, at a cost to taxpayers of more than $2 million. Legislative Republicans reportedly had to sign secrecy pledges before they could see their new district boundaries. Bernier reacted testily to questions about the pledges, saying, "I will not hear any more divisive, hateful speech today."

Studies indicate Wisconsin is one of the most gerrymandered states in the country. Only a handful of legislators face competitive races. In 2012, Democrats garnered a majority of the votes statewide, yet captured under 40% of the seats in the Assembly.

"Under our current redistricting model, legislators pick their voters when it should be the other way around," Representative **Fred Kessler** (D-Milwaukee) said. "Republicans stacked the deck so it is practically impossible to unseat most of the incumbent legislators. We desperately need to have an honest, serious look at establishing a standard for determining partisanship and also insure competitive districts. Unfortunately, today's hearing fell far short of that standard."