http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/wi-fair-maps-s5.jpg



Sen. Jeff Smith provides an update on where Wisconsin's redistricting process currently stands and shares information about how people can stay engaged.

MADISON - Imagine what it must be like to have a job that carries with it a lifetime guarantee. No matter what you do, no matter how you behave, your job can't be taken from you until you decide to give it up. Make terrible choices that hurt the clients you're supposed to serve? Ignore calls from customers? Don't bother showing up to your job for nearly a year? You face no consequences and you keep your job.

This is what happens with gerrymandered maps. Ten years ago, Republican politicians hired private attorneys to draw legislative districts in secret, with no public input. These gerrymandered maps essentially preserved the Majority Party's political advantage for the last decade, giving them a free pass to ignore their constituents.

Since the gerrymandered maps were drawn ten years ago, you've heard me advocate for a nonpartisan redistricting process. Well, the time is finally here. The redistricting process is now underway and it's crucial that we are paying close attention to make sure we have fair maps that truly represent the will of the people.

So, what's the latest with Wisconsin's redistricting efforts? In the spring, the U.S. Census

Bureau released data showing an increase in the state population. This census data is used to show where population shifts occurred over the last ten years, which will determine how districts are drawn. Once the census data was made available in August, the redistricting process could officially begin in Wisconsin.

There are three phases that make up the local redistricting process. Currently, counties are preparing a county supervisory district plan with the census data. Once this phase is completed, municipalities are required to adjust the ward boundaries by complying with traditional redistricting principles that preserve geographic compactness, district contiguity, communities of interest and unity of political subdivisions. In the third phase of local redistricting, counties and cities will adopt their district plans.

While the local redistricting process is happening, state legislators are preparing to draw legislative and congressional districts. State lawmakers must adhere to the same traditional redistricting principles that local elected officials use when creating maps.

The redistricting process is complex. The process we currently have in place was shaped by U.S. Supreme Court decisions, landmark legislation and a fascinating history dating back to our state's founding. Current redistricting efforts will have its share of political arguments and lawsuits—but this is why it's more important than ever for you to be involved.



While your local and state elected officials begin sketching district boundaries, they need to hear from you to take into account the identity and values you share with other members of your community. We want to ensure the public has ample opportunity to participate in this historic process, but we need to fulfill our constitutional duty of passing new maps before the next election. So, don't delay—contact your elected officials today to share your support for fair maps and submit your districting ideas.



You've probably heard from me and others that the state budget is a moral document; it defines our values and priorities. Well, redistricting falls into that same moral category. It's a huge responsibility that must be taken seriously and done fairly if we are to be honest with ourselves and with you, the constituency we serve.

For years, policies supported by a majority of Wisconsinites have been ignored because of the gerrymandered Majority Party. We still haven't expanded BadgerCare, closed the dark store loophole or legalized marijuana. It's immoral to ignore the will of the people, and it ends now by participating in the redistricting process to ensure Wisconsinites' voices are restored.

For a moral and just future we can't allow legislators to give themselves a guaranteed job for another decade. We should–and must–answer to you on each issue we decide. Pay attention to this process and discuss with friends, neighbors and your legislators.