



**Statement to the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections
regarding Assembly Bill 328 and Senate Bill 58 relating to
Legislative and Congressional Redistricting**

**April 1, 2016
Informational Hearing**

We enthusiastically support the effort by Wisconsin legislators to adopt the Iowa model for drawing Wisconsin's political maps. Assembly Bill 328 and Senate Bill 58 authorize the Legislative Reference Bureau to draw Wisconsin's district maps in an impartial, nonpartisan manner, which is vital to help restore people's faith in our democracy.

Iowa has been using this method for 36 years now, to great effect. There's no reason why we can't do it here in Wisconsin. We need transparency in our government. We need public involvement in the redistricting process. At the moment, we have neither.

Instead, we've become a national embarrassment because of the hyper-partisan way that Republican leaders and their private lawyers and academics secretly redrew the maps in 2012. A pending federal lawsuit against this redistricting says it was "one of the worst partisan gerrymanders in modern American history," and that it violated Wisconsin citizens' Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection guarantee and their First Amendment rights of free speech and free association.

Essentially, the map-drawers jiggered the districts so Republicans could bulk up on the number of seats they hold, even if they didn't gain popular votes.

And you might say, "So what? Both parties do this." And to some extent, you'd be right. And it happens not just in Wisconsin but all across the country. Some Republicans in power do it where they can; some Democrats in power do it where they can.

In fact, gerrymandering is increasing nationwide. As the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last year in *Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting*

Commission, this trend threatens a “ ‘core principle of republican government,’ namely, ‘that the voters should choose their representatives, not the other way around.’ ”

We shouldn’t let partisan map-drawers from whichever party is in power basically take away the right of citizens to have a legitimate voice in the political outcomes where they live.

It is time to move beyond these partisan games.

We are encouraged that Assembly Bill 328 is supported by Republican Representative Todd Novak, as well as by many Democrats.

And we are encouraged by the bipartisan efforts of former Republican Senate Majority Leader Dale Schultz and former Democratic Senate Majority Leader Tim Cullen to come together and advocate for an Iowa-style solution.

“Democracy requires access for every citizen, and it requires truly competitive elections,” said Schultz. “When elections aren’t competitive, we see corruption, and we see hubris.”

“These districts have clearly been drawn to protect not only incumbents, but a permanent majority that doesn’t need to worry about voters,” said Cullen. “Many of our fellow citizens – from all political persuasions, from all walks of life – simply have lost faith that their government is listening to them.”

We need to restore our citizens’ faith in their government.

One necessary way to do that is to have nonpartisan map-drawing, and no more gerrymandering.

Iowa can do it. Why can’t we?

Thank you for your consideration.