



Legislation Text

File #: 190826, **Version:** 0

190826

ORIGINAL

ALD. JOHNSON

Resolution directing the Executive Director of the Election Commission to place on the April 7, 2020, ballot a non-binding referendum relating to the establishment of a non-partisan redistricting process for the State of Wisconsin.

This resolution directs the Executive Director of the Election Commission to place on the April 7, 2020, ballot a non-binding referendum asking voters whether the City of Milwaukee should request that the Wisconsin Legislature pass a law establishing a non-partisan procedure for drawing legislative district maps.

Whereas, Following the 2010 United States Census, the Wisconsin Legislature established new legislative maps for the state, a process known as redistricting; and

Whereas, The partisan procedure by which the Legislature prepared new legislative maps in 2011 was controlled entirely by its Republican members; and

Whereas, Implementation of the 2011 legislative maps has granted an advantage to Republican candidates for office in Wisconsin in each election since, as first evidenced by the results of the 2012 elections, in which the re-drawn maps enabled Republican candidates to win 60 of the Wisconsin Assembly's 99 seats, even though Democratic candidates won a majority of the statewide Assembly vote; and

Whereas, This advantage continued through to the recent 2018 election, in which the Republican party won 27 more Assembly seats than the Democratic party, even though Democratic candidates received 203,373 more Assembly votes statewide than Republican candidates; and

Whereas, In 2016, a federal court found that in preparing the new legislative maps in 2011, Republican members of the Wisconsin Legislature employed partisan gerrymandering techniques known as cracking and packing to split or concentrate Democratic votes in particular districts in an effort to dilute the voting power of Wisconsin's Democratic electors and to entrench Republican control of the Legislature; and

Whereas, While this federal court found that Wisconsin's Democratic voters were burdened by the discriminatory effect of the new legislative maps in both the 2012 and 2014 state elections, the U.S. Supreme Court, in another gerrymandering case, ruled that partisan gerrymandering claims, like

those at issue in Wisconsin, cannot be decided by the courts but instead must be resolved through the political process; and

Whereas, Following the upcoming 2020 Census, the Wisconsin Legislature will again have the opportunity to re-draw the State's legislative maps using the same partisan procedure; and

Whereas, To address the issues of fairness and partisan legislative redistricting in 2020 and beyond, the State Legislature could establish a non-partisan re-districting procedure for drawing legislative district maps; and

Whereas, Convincing members of the Republican-controlled Legislature to reform a redistricting procedure that has been successfully exploited to benefit candidates from the Republican Party is likely to require significant political pressure; and

Whereas, A referendum on the upcoming April 7, 2020, ballot could demonstrate Milwaukee voters' support for establishing a non-partisan procedure for establishing new legislative maps; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, By the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee, that the Executive Director of the Election Commission of the City of Milwaukee is directed to place on the April 7, 2020, ballot a non-binding referendum relating to the establishment of a non-partisan redistricting procedure for drawing legislative district maps; and, be it

Further Resolved, That the following referendum question shall be submitted to a vote of the electors at this election:

"Should the City of Milwaukee request that the Wisconsin Legislature pass legislation creating a non-partisan procedure for drawing legislative district maps that will result in fair political representation for all Wisconsin voters?"

LRB174888-1
Dana J. Zelazny
September 4, 2019