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League of Women Voters continues the fight for nonpartisan redistricting legislation.

MADISON - The need for redistricting reform in Wisconsin is critical. Concerned voters across the political spectrum are calling to end the practice of gerrymandering by our elected officials. The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin has advocated for nonpartisan redistricting for decades. Over these decades, the control of the legislature has teetered between the two major parties. The response from the party in power has always been to accuse the League of siding with the minority party and that the League is looking to push that party's agenda. The League has been accused of siding with Republicans and then siding with Democrats.

But in fact the League has always been looking out for the voters in our advocacy. The voters who are packed together or cracked apart because of gerrymandering. It's a problem with power, and when those in power can determine how they keep their power, we no longer have a representative democracy. Republican voters are cheated when Democratic politicians gerrymander like in Maryland. Democratic voters are cheated when Republican politicians gerrymander like in Wisconsin. No party is innocent.

Gerrymandering isn't a problem of one party. It's the partisan cling to power that damages the will of the voters and erodes our democracy. Voters should pick their elected officials, not the other way around. With our current system in Wisconsin, politicians draw their own district lines to pick their voters and to lock in their own political power.

Yet, there is a solution.

Representative Robyn Vining (AD 14) and Senator Dave Hansen (SD 30) drafted redistricting reform bills that will make this process more open, more representative, and more transparent by taking the redistricting process from the partisans and moving it to an independent and nonpartisan Redistricting Advisory Commission. There is bi-partisan support because this is a solution that is right for democracy. Wisconsin voters across the political spectrum want to see this change.

And now is the time for the nonpartisan redistricting bills SB 288 and AB 303 to get a public hearing and deserve serious consideration by lawmakers in Wisconsin as we expect the representatives we elect to be held accountable to the public's unified call for reforms. Elections should be determined by voters, not politicians who draw maps.

Fair voting maps are fundamental to what makes democracy work. The League will keep pushing for this reform with unrelenting energy and motivation of our members and partners. It has been and will continue to be a long, difficult fight, but it may be our most important work. Wisconsin deserves better and the League is committed to making it happen.

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Erin Grunze is the executive director for the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin. The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin is a nonpartisan political organization that advocates for informed and active participation in government. There are 20 local Leagues throughout Wisconsin. More information at lwvwi.org .