

Wisconsin Legislature's Passage of Gerrymandered Maps

Written by AOTL, Brooke Lillard
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Thursday's action bakes in the 2011 Republican Gerrymander, lacks transparency, dilutes the voices of populous urban areas and communities of color, says former Attorney General.

Washington, D.C. -- Thursday, Eric H. Holder, Jr., the 82nd Attorney General of the United States and chairman of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, released the following statement in response to the Wisconsin State Legislature's passage of gerrymandered legislative and congressional maps:



"The Republican gerrymandered maps and the process that led up to them are an insult to the people of Wisconsin. Instead of pursuing a fair and transparent process, the manipulated maps were—just as they were a decade ago—drawn in secret with Republicans holding just one hearing designed to prevent the public from participating in their process. Republicans even made it difficult for the public to submit proposed maps that recognized and protected communities of color, demanding additional onerous and unnecessary requirements for their submission. These actions are wrong and they are anti-democratic. Let me be clear: Republicans have this power that they are attempting to exploit solely as a result of a decade-long gerrymander that they put in place in 2011. I commend Governor Evers for pledging to veto these egregiously partisan maps and to fight for fair maps that accurately reflect the will and political preferences of Wisconsinites."

ALARMING THEMES IN WISCONSIN REPUBLICAN MAPS:

Taken together, there are common themes among the Republican congressional and legislative maps in Wisconsin and the process that led up to them. Below are some of the alarming themes we have seen:

1. Bakes in the 2011 Republican Gerrymander: Following the 2011 Republican gerrymander, Wisconsin had some of the most gerrymandered congressional and legislative districts in the country. The maps passed by the Republican-led legislature manage to be even more gerrymandered than they were 10 years ago. Wisconsin is a 50-50 state, and a fair map should reflect its competitive nature. Over the past decade, Democrats have seen increasing success in statewide elections. For example, in 2018, Wisconsinites elected Tammy Baldwin to represent them in the United States Senate, Josh Kaul to be their Attorney General, and Tony Evers to be their Governor. In 2020, Wisconsin voted in favor of President Joe Biden. Yet the Republican legislature drew a congressional map that gives Republicans five safe seats and Democrats only two safe seats out of a total of eight. President Biden carries only 25 percent of the congressional seats the Republican legislature has drawn, despite his statewide win.

Furthermore, the maps would further entrench the manipulated Republican majority in the state legislature. The maps clearly aim to protect Republican incumbents from any sort of competition, making it clear the Republican politicians who drew these maps care more about insulating themselves from the reality of the political dynamics in Wisconsin than delivering Wisconsinites the representation they want and deserve.

2. Lacks Transparency and Public Input: While Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg) has claimed that Wisconsinites had “an unprecedented level of input and influence over the map-drawing efforts,” the evidence shows that this statement is false. Throughout the duration of the redistricting process, the Republican legislators held only one public hearing, which took place after they released their gerrymandered maps. It's clear the hearing was scheduled to prevent Wisconsinites from participating in the process, by scheduling one hearing in-person without a virtual option at 9 AM on a workday.

The Republican-led “Draw Your District” public mapping portal was only open for six weeks. Wisconsinites found it to be clunky and difficult to navigate. In September, Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) and Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg) went as far as sending [a letter](#) that essentially intimidated Wisconsinites from invoking the Voting Rights Act in their map submissions to the Republican-led mapping portal. In addition to this, Republicans did not heavily promote the program to the public. Once the portal closed on a Friday night, Republicans waited

[mere hours into the next workday](#)

to propose their gerrymandered maps, which calls into question whether and how they processed the hundreds of public input maps that were submitted in the days prior.

3. Dilutes the Voices of Diverse, Populous Urban Areas and Communities of Color: The 2020 Census data indicates that most of the population growth in Wisconsin over the past decade occurred in Dane County, which includes Madison. However, the Republicans' gerrymandered maps do not increase the number of state legislative seats representing Dane County in accordance with the population growth reflected in the Census data. Furthermore, the gerrymandered maps passed by the Republican-led legislature crack diverse, urban areas that favor Democrats, diluting the voices of those voters. For example, the state assembly map splits the city of Madison so that its voters are merged into five different rural Republican-leaning counties. Additionally, the gerrymandered congressional and legislative maps further pack the Black community in Milwaukee, preventing them from having the ability to elect a candidate of their choice.

Chaired by former Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr., the National Democratic Redistricting Committee (NDRC) is the first-ever strategic hub for redistricting focused on winning targeted elections, advancing legal action, and building up the political infrastructure to achieve a fairer redistricting process.