



## **WI Interfaith Leaders for Fair Maps!**

Wisconsin Interfaith Leaders against gerrymandering & partisan maps

As pastors, rabbis, imams, and leaders in the faith communities in our state, we write about the urgent need to bring fairness into our state's redistricting process. Republicans, Democrats, Independents, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus alike regard partisan gerrymandering as a serious issue in our democracy that undermines the integrity of our elections.

As people of faith, we are deeply committed to upholding our democracy and safeguarding every citizen's sacred right to vote. We believe that all of us are made in the image of God and endowed with worth and dignity and deserving respect. Part of living a life of dignity and respect is the right to be heard and to be counted. In a democracy, that means having the freedom to vote. We believe that a democracy can only thrive if the electors choose their representatives, rather than the representatives choosing their voters. We believe every vote must count, every voice must be heard, and our elected officials must be responsive to the needs and priorities of the people they serve.

However, when you have a super majority of one party and maps that are drawn in such a way that safeguards that majority, you lose the fundamental building block of legislating. The hyper-partisan nature of our current maps has created seats that are so safe, the legislators no longer feel obligated to listen to their constituents. We see this when our legislature refuses to act on expanding Medicaid, making early childhood education affordable, expanding broadband access to rural areas and inner cities, and funding our public schools appropriately, all issues that Wisconsin residents care about and support.

What is more, our children, marginalized communities, and communities of color are further affected - packed and cracked into districts that do not allow for any competition in our elections and thus bring no balance in our legislature.

We must draw maps in a non-partisan manner where everyone --- not just political parties --- benefits.

We must give voice to ALL of our communities, especially those who have been traditionally excluded from the legislative process. As we have seen, maps that are not drawn with a racial equity lens as a core principle will never be "fair".

At this critical juncture in our state's history, and in the redistricting process, decision makers have an imperative role to play in ensuring maps are drawn in such a way as to give everyone equal voice. To restore trust in our democratic systems, the maps that will be implemented must be more competitive so that no one party has an unfair advantage over any other. We deserve it, our congregants and community deserve it, our state deserves it.

Whether Republican, Democrat, or Independent; rural, urban, or suburban; Black, white or Brown; religious or not: as voters we believe that our voice matters for the wider society. We have faith in democracy. We cannot allow that faith to be betrayed by rigged maps that will let our voices be ignored. Let us do right by the people of Wisconsin for fairness and equity.

Faithfully,

Wisconsin Faith Leaders

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