



# Fair Maps Wisconsin Newsletter

June 1, 2020: Vol. 1, #7



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- ### Fair Maps Teams Meet via ZOOM
- Fair Maps Team Meetings in May will continue to be held through Zoom. Please contact [Carlene](#) or [Holly](#) if you would like to be added to the Zoom meeting invitation for your region. To connect with the Fair Maps Team in your region, please complete this [Google form](#).
- 1st CD Fair Maps Team** -Tuesday, June 16, at 5:30pm
  - 2nd CD Steering Committee** - Thursday, June 4, at 10:00am
  - 3rd CD Fair Maps Team** - Thursday, June 11, at 6:30pm
  - Jefferson County Fair Maps Team** - Wednesday, June 3, at 6:30pm
  - Midstate Fair Maps Team** - Thursday, June 18, at 4:00pm
  - Lodi Fair Maps Team** – Tuesday, June 9, at 4:00pm
  - 7th CD East/Central Fair Maps Team** - Tuesday, June 16, at 7:00pm
  - 7th CD West Fair Maps Team** – Thursday, June 11, at 4:00pm
  - 8th CD Fair Maps Team** - Tuesday, June 16, at 6:30pm

## Meet Three Great Grassroots Activists!

Kris Lennon, Kate Levy, and Elena Calhoun met as Citizen Action volunteers and became involved in nonpartisan redistricting when Sachin Chheda, executive director of the Fair Elections Project, gave a talk on the issue at a meeting in 2017. They, along with others, began organizing town halls around Milwaukee County to educate voters about the impact partisan gerrymandering is having on fair representation in the Wisconsin State Legislature. Here are their own accounts of why they’ve gotten so involved in this exciting grassroots movement.

### Elena Calhoun

I’m Elena Calhoun, a retired Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, living in Wisconsin’s 5th Senate District. I began my citizen activism when I joined the Women’s March on Washington on January 21, 2017. Shortly thereafter, I read an article in the *Journal Sentinel* about how Republicans were using taxpayer money to defend their partisan redistricting. This brought the issue of gerrymandering front and center for me. That was the day –better late than never! – that I began to see how this wonderful state with a history of progressiveness and integrity was being eroded. And I noticed that my small section of Milwaukee had been carved out to join the western suburbs in Waukesha County – part of the effort by the Republican leadership in 2011 to guarantee safe seats for the GOP after the 2010 Census.

## Slay the Dragon & Fair Maps Week Days of Action

What a finish to Fair Maps Week!

One thousand people watched *Slay the Dragon* during Fair Maps Week, May 24-30. Hundreds participated in daily actions - from using our FB frame and Zoom virtual background to signing the voter pledge, contacting your legislators and writing letters to the editor. Importantly, many of you signed up to get connected with the Fair Maps Team in your region.

Our live discussion on ending gerrymandering in Wisconsin capped off the week. Emceed by Holly Bland from the Fair Elections Project, it featured:

- Katie Fahey, Executive Director of The People.org,
- Hans Breitenmoser, Lincoln County Board Supervisor, WI Farmers Union member
- Fabi Maldonado, Racine County Board Supervisor, Political Director at Voces de la Frontera, and
- Carlene Bechen, Fair Maps Organizer, Wisconsin Voices

If you missed it, you can use these links to watch the panel on [YouTube](#) or [Facebook](#).



Already there have been **2,100** views and more than 40 shares. We encourage you to share the film and discussion through social media and with folks you know.

### Here are some of the actions and resources discussed in the panel:

- [Volunteer and join a regional Fair Maps team](#) (Google Doc)
- [Make sure you are registered to vote](#)
- [Fill out your 2020 Census](#)
- [Take the pledge to only vote for candidates who support fair maps](#)
- [Find out where your legislators stand on the issue](#) (Google Spreadsheet)
- [Encourage your local candidates to pledge to enthusiastically support fair maps](#)
- [Help resource the fight for nonpartisan redistricting](#)
- [Watch and invite others to watch Slay the Dragon](#)

We are excited and grateful for the participation of so many concerned Wisconsinites in Fair Maps Week and ask that you stay engaged in the campaign to end gerrymandering in Wisconsin.



# Why pass nonpartisan redistricting referendums?

~ Carlene Bechen.

Fair Maps WI Coordinator I get this question a lot. “What’s the point of getting a referendum on the ballot? It’s not binding.” And it’s a good one. Here’s why:

The vast majority of Wisconsinites – Republicans, Democrats and Independents – believe that ‘the system is rigged’ and they aren’t happy about it. In fact, they’re pretty angry. The Marquette Law School Poll in January 2019 and February 2020 found that more than 70% of Wisconsinites favor a nonpartisan process for creating electoral maps. In the summer of 2019, Play Fair Wisconsin commissioned two focus groups in the Dodgeville area consisting of a cross-section of Republicans, Democrats and swing voters. In both groups, voters voiced their frustration, anger and mistrust of politicians and a desire for elections to be fairer. Gerrymandering really ticked them off.

Now we need to demonstrate how deep and widespread this anger is so that every elected official – and every candidate running for office – knows that their own constituents won’t stand for this any longer. That’s the point of passing these referendums: So that anyone who gets into office has to respond to the wishes of the people so we can finally ban gerrymandering in Wisconsin. I’m sick of waiting!

The last time the Wisconsin legislature created district maps in a cooperative, bipartisan manner was 1971. That’s 50 years ago! I was still in middle school, and now I have a granddaughter in college. In every redistricting cycle since, partisan bickering has resulted in Wisconsin’s legislative district maps being drawn by federal judges.... until 2011, when the Republican legislature contracted highly paid consultants – including a political scientist from Oklahoma -- to rig maps with sophisticated software behind closed doors.

Of course, that’s still not the complete picture. In every biennial cycle from 2003 through 2009,



nonpartisan redistricting legislation was proposed. The last time, in 2009, the Democratic-led legislature held a hearing on a bill calling for an independent, nonpartisan map-drawing process, based on the model Iowa has used successfully for over 40 years. But the leadership wouldn’t bring it to

a vote. That was a big missed opportunity!

During the 2019 legislative session, bills for nonpartisan redistricting -- SB288 and AB303 – didn’t even get a hearing. And now it’s 2020, another Census year. It’s also another election year. Every seat in the State Assembly and half the seats in the State Senate (even-numbered districts) are on the ballot. That means campaigns. That means opportunities to query candidates and incumbent legislators on their position on this crucial issue. That means they need our votes.

That also means using advisory referendums on nonpartisan redistricting to elevate the issue of gerrymandering. Educational campaigns about the referendums inform voters and provide opportunities to pressure candidates and incumbent legislators to support nonpartisan redistricting.

So, while it’s true that these referendums are advisory, the candidates and elected officials better take our advice!

I hope you’ll get involved in this crucial effort. Fair Maps Teams, along with allied groups like the League of Women Voters, the Wisconsin Farmers Union and others, are working to get referendums on the November ballot in counties all around the state. To find out how you can help, just send me an email at [carlene@wisconsinvoices.org](mailto:carlene@wisconsinvoices.org) or give me a call at 608-513-7655.

# The Nonpartisan Redistricting Referendum Process in One Wisconsin County

~ Jermitt Krage

## Prior to the County Board Meeting

We asked to be placed on the agenda of the County Board of Supervisors meeting. Prior to the meeting, three of us either met with or called members on the County Board and explained to them about the impact of gerrymandering in this area of Wisconsin. We provided some material that gave them some background information.

A member of our team presented sample language for a resolution to put the nonpartisan redistricting referendum on the ballot at the County Board of Supervisors meeting.

We recruited fair map supporters from around the county, who joined about 15 members of our Fair Maps team to attend the meeting.

## County Board of Supervisors meeting

There were around 10 people who spoke in favor of placing the referendum on the ballot. Two people from the audience were opposed. The County Board agreed to place the referendum on the ballot.

We stayed away from trying to persuade them on the merits of the fair maps issue. Instead, we focused on the value of the citizens have the right to vote on this issue. The Board was the gatekeeper, and only they could allow the citizens to vote on this issue at this time. They were obligated to provide this opportunity and let the citizens decide on the merits.

The resolution passed.

## Actions prior to the election

Once the referendum was going to be on the ballot, we felt we had the obligation to inform the citizens of the County on the value of nonpartisan redistricting for Wisconsin.

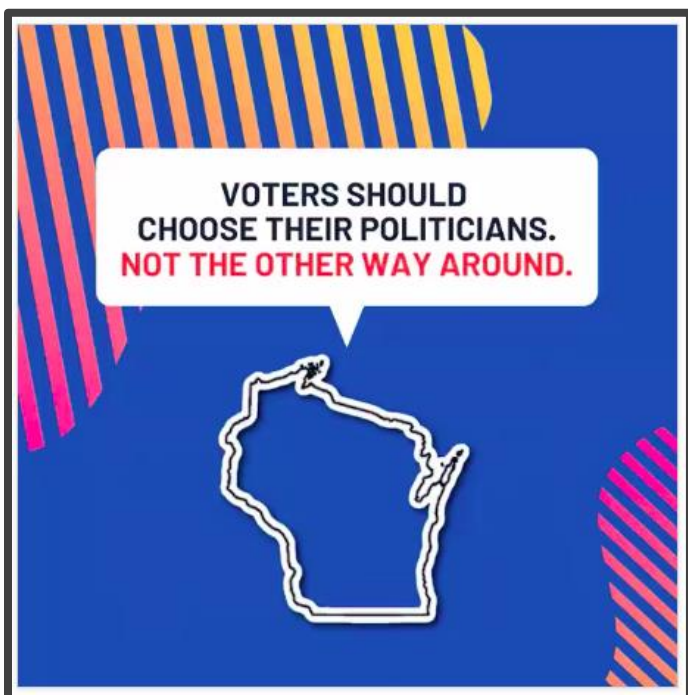
There were seven basic strategies:

1. Provide the County Board members with more information on the negative impact of gerrymandering.
2. Weekly letters to the Editor
3. Two presentations by outside speakers
4. Press releases on both speakers.
5. An essay contest of the students of high school districts within the County (Cash prize)
6. Press release notifying the community of the essay contest.
7. Telephone calls to known supporters.

Because of COVID-19 concerns, the second speaking event had to be canceled, and the selection of the winners (4) of the essay contest was delayed.

**The referendum passed in this county by 72.4%.**

**\*\*\*NOTE:** *Referendums must be approved by the County Board and to the County Clerk by August 25th in order to appear on the November ballot.*



## Building Unity Tour Travels Wisconsin



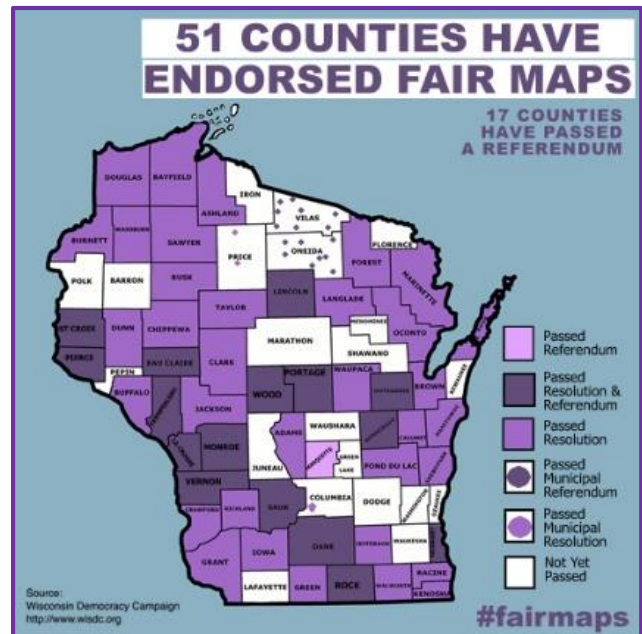
The schedule for the **Building Unity Tour** is:

- Greater Milwaukee area (5/23-6/20)
- North East / Fox Valley area (6/21-7/15)
- Central Wisconsin area (7/16-7/25)
- Far North Eau Claire area (7/26-8/6)
- LaCrosse area (8/7-8/20)
- Richland Center area (8/21-9/3)
- Platteville area (9/4-9/17)
- New Glarus Monroe area (9/18-10/2)
- Deforest Beaver Dam area (10/3-10/16)
- Lake Mills Whitewater area (10/17-11/1)

Check the [schedule](#) for Building Unity Tour stop details, additional stops, and changes. If you would like to help pick a date and time for a virtual gathering in your area, [contact tour organizers](#).

## Fair Maps Counties Map Progress Timeline Video **UPDATED!**

We have updated the map showing a timeline of the counties and municipalities that have passed referendums and resolutions against gerrymandering and in favor of redistricting reform. Columbia County municipal successes were inadvertently missed and have been added. You can always get the most current version of the map from the [End Gerrymandering Toolkit](#).



## Toolkit to End Gerrymandering Highlights

We highlight in this edition, [three templates](#) for a local Fair Maps referendum including ballot language.

### 1) [Milwaukee County Board Supervisor Johnson's Draft Resolution for a Fair Maps Referendum](#)

Milwaukee County Supervisor Willie Johnson worked with a Milwaukee County Research & Policy Analyst to create this excellent example of a county board resolution to support a county-wide referendum. Supr. Johnson shared the draft with us to get coalition approval. The referendum passed in Milwaukee County with just shy of 80% of the vote.

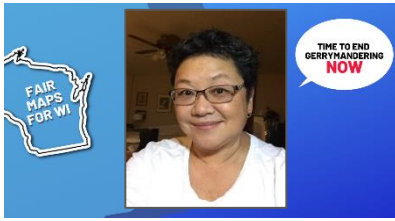
### 2) [Pierce County Wisconsin Resolution -- 2 in 1 resolution including approval for a county Fair Maps referendum](#)

This example from Pierce county efficiently and effectively took on both a county board resolution and an advisory referendum approval in one resolution. In April the referendum passed with 76.2% voter supporting.

### 3) [Generic Resolution Template for a Fair Maps Referendum](#)

For use by those who want to show their own genius and start with a more generic template.

**[Meet 3 Grassroots Activists! Elena cont'd from page 1]**

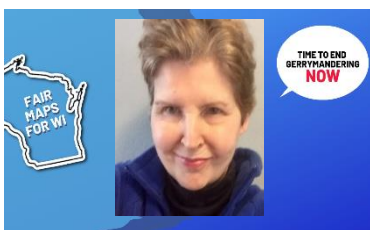


I was incensed then, and it's a feeling that hasn't gone away. The manipulation of the maps to ensure one party gains

“safe” seats is unfair. Just look what happened in November 2018: statewide, 54% of the people voting in Assembly races were casting ballots for Democrats, but Republicans won 63% of the seats. No party should be able to monkey with maps to give themselves a stranglehold on power.

With gerrymandered government, the ruling party feels they have the right to shut out our voices, but our voices need to be heard. People care about many issues: gun control, equitable health care, humane prison reform, immigration, clean air and water, public education. And many more issues have come to the surface during this pandemic: Who are the workers that keep our lives sustainable? Who picks our food? Who distributes our necessities? Who helps care for our elderly parents or our sick children? Who carries the burden of this pandemic? The injustices, racism and inequities need to be addressed. But with rigged maps, they're not being addressed. In fact, the rigged maps have only emboldened the leaders of the Legislature to force us to go to the polls at the height of the pandemic and to prevent us from voting by mail.

No matter how many town halls, marches, protests, sign deliveries, and voter registration efforts I participate in, I will not be able to stop until our legislators listen to us. I want that “right” restored to us. I refuse to give up on the fact that the citizens of Wisconsin deserve fair government, that everyone's vote should count, that seats should not be won by cheating or any form of voter suppression.

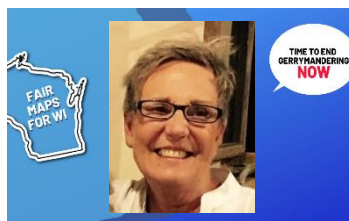


**Kate Levy**

I'm Kate Levy, and I live in Wauwatosa. I got tired of stewing about the inherent

injustice of gerrymandering without doing anything about it, so I joined the Fair Elections Project since I'm determined to bring fairness back to Wisconsin. And what a terrific group of people they are. All different personalities, all different life experiences, but oh the passion they have to fix Wisconsin! I immediately became friends with Kris and Elena and we kept talking about what we could do—and then the town halls, county resolutions, and referenda followed, and awareness around the state grew. Now that it is only a matter of months to get this right, I encourage anyone who has been sitting on the sidelines to volunteer to change things – step out of your safe place (while social distancing) and don't let the opportunity to make a difference pass you by. Your children and grandchildren will thank you and you just might meet life-long friends while saving democracy.

**Kris Lennon**



I'm Kris Lennon, a volunteer with the Fair Elections Project. I've been working on fair redistricting maps since

2017. I used to believe that a good citizen contributed to our economy by working and paying taxes, contributed to our government by voting, and contributed to causes through donations. Then in 2016 my world turned on a dime, and I realized to be a truly good American you had to become an involved citizen. As an independent voter, I went in search of a nonpartisan cause and a friend mentioned gerrymandering. I began to research the term, and fate intervened in a google search: This guy with a very strange name, Sachin Chheda was giving a presentation on the topic of gerrymandering. On that cold February night, I went to hear him speak, and in a matter of two hours I was all in.

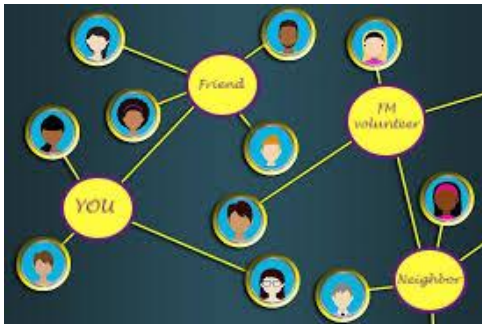
I teamed up with Kate Levy, Elena Calhoun, and others, many with little-to-no activist experience. We began reaching out to communities with a few simple questions; “Do you know how gerrymandering is disenfranchising your vote?” “Do you know that political leadership from both parties

are selecting their constituents in lieu of your vote electing your representatives?”

We tenaciously began hosting town halls across southern Wisconsin. With guidance from great speakers like Matt Rothschild, Sachin Chheda, Shauntay Nelson, Tim Cullen, and Dale Schultz, to name a few, we got really good at setting these things up. Our team invited elected officials, we invited the public, and we created strong “asks” of our fellow citizens. We gave them the facts and the

inspiration, and we clued them in on how they could help. We followed the lead of Lincoln County Board Member Hans Breitenmoser and worked with local county board supervisors to get resolutions passed and referendums on ballots.

We became living examples of what Margaret Mead wrote forty years ago: *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*



## Two Relational Organizing Training Options

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, Cass Bowers from Organizing Empowerment Project and Carlene Bechen will host another **Introduction to Relational Organizing Training** to help Fair Maps volunteers/teams develop this skill into an effective strategy to persuade, engage and mobilize our friends and neighbors to take action with us to end partisan gerrymandering.

Relational Organizing has shown to increase voter turnout by 13.2%, much higher than phoning or canvassing. This training will focus on how to have conversations with family, friends and neighbors with whom you have a relationship, but with whom you don't normally talk about politics. Most people take action because they can, because they care and because they are asked. It's time to ask.

To register for *Introduction to Relational Organizing*, click [here](#).

**Relational Organizer Session 1 Training** is meant for those of you who participated in the introduction training to relational organizing in May. Every Wednesday at 1:00, Cass Bowers conducts this training and will walk fair maps organizers through how to apply the soft skills we use in conversations with friends and family and adapt them to the digital space.

To register for *Session 1 Training*, click [here](#).

## Other News and Resources

- [Documentary Wants You to Slay the Dragon of Gerrymandering in Wisconsin](#), Up North News, 6/1/2020
- [How Partisan Gerrymandering Hurts Kids](#), Center for American Progress, 5/28/2020
- [Covid\\_19, the census and redistricting](#), League of Women Voters, 5/27/2020
- [Building Unity Tour Explores Gerrymandering in Rock County](#) (video), 5/18/2020