The principle of “one person, one vote” requires states to redraw their election districts every 10 years in order to account for changes in population.¹ In most states, legislators can manipulate district boundaries to benefit their own political party.² This manipulation, called gerrymandering, weakens voters’ ability to affect election outcomes and exercise accountability over government. Distorted election districts lead to skewed representation and legislators who are less responsive to the will of the voters.

The U.S. Supreme Court is considering Gill v. Whitford, a case challenging extreme partisan gerrymandering in Wisconsin.³ In 2012, Republican legislators in Wisconsin gained a supermajority—60 out of 90 seats—despite losing the statewide popular vote. When a lower court struck down Wisconsin’s distorted maps, it pointed out that “in any likely electoral scenario, the number of Republican seats would not drop below 50%.”⁴

Shielded from accountability to their voters, the Wisconsin Legislature enacted an agenda that defied the preferences of most of its constituents. To stop frustrated citizens from turning to their local governments, the Legislature passed unpopular laws preventing local governments from setting their own rules in a variety of areas.

- **Minimum wage:** In 2014, cities and counties across the state put minimum wage referenda on the ballot, and the referenda won in all 13 jurisdictions—with two-thirds of all voters in favor—but could not go into effect because of a new state law preventing local minimum wage increases.⁵
- **Medicaid expansion:** The Legislature’s refusal to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act—a decision opposed by 56 percent of voters from both parties—caused 85,000 Wisconsinites to lose out on access to affordable and quality health care.⁶
- **Tax fairness:** Two-thirds of Wisconsinites think the rich should pay higher taxes, yet the Legislature has passed a series of tax cuts overwhelmingly favoring the state’s wealthiest residents.⁷
- **Student debt:** The Legislature has repeatedly blocked bills to help student loan borrowers refinance their loans—a move supported by more than two-thirds of Wisconsinites in a recent poll.⁸ More than 750,000 people in the state have federal student loan debt.⁹
Slightly more than half of voters chose Republican candidates for the Wisconsin State Assembly in 2016, but the GOP secured a supermajority of seats.

Sources: Ballotpedia, “Wisconsin State Assembly elections, 2016,” available at https://ballotpedia.org/Wisconsin_State.Assembly.elec-

Endnotes

1 Reynolds v. Sims, 377 U.S. 533 (1964). XX ENDNOTES #2, 6, AND 7 HAVE DISAPPEARED XX


