

## **GOP redistricting plan would create political 'islands' in Madison and Dane County**

[https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/gop-redistricting-plan-would-create-political-islands-in-madison-and-dane-county/article\\_e3bcc24a-b1a5-11e0-b3f7-001cc4c002e0.html](https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/gop-redistricting-plan-would-create-political-islands-in-madison-and-dane-county/article_e3bcc24a-b1a5-11e0-b3f7-001cc4c002e0.html)

May 23, 2012

DEAN MOSIMAN and MARY SPICUZZA | Wisconsin State Journal

Madison officials on Monday ripped Republicans in the state Legislature for imposing new political boundaries on municipalities that they say ignore long-standing ties within neighborhoods and will raise the cost of conducting elections.

The plan will force the city to modify local ward maps that already have been drafted and add more wards, which will increase future election costs, city officials said.

Also, the GOP's boundaries strictly follow municipal lines, creating dozens of islands in the city and Dane County where residents will have different ballots and representation than surrounding neighbors.

Typically, municipalities draw new ward lines after each Census, and then the Legislature, using those lines, creates new Assembly, Senate and congressional districts.

But earlier this month, Republicans who control the Legislature released proposed state maps well before the deadline for municipalities to draw new ward boundaries. At the same time, GOP lawmakers proposed legislation allowing the Legislature to draw districts lines first.

By strictly adhering to municipal boundaries, the GOP maps create islands of residents who live in the remnant portions of towns that have been steadily swallowed up as the city grew. Mayor Paul Soglin said the districts look "like moths have gotten in and eaten parts" of them.

The GOP lines would also force the city to create 12 new wards, for a total of 108, including six wards below the legal threshold of 1,000 residents, Madison officials said.

One new ward would have just 31 people, making it likely that others, looking at election results, could figure out how particular residents voted.

As the city annexes lands, it would have to create even more small wards — up to 100 more in the next decade, officials said.

The full Legislature is to consider changes to the redistricting process on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Also Tuesday, the City Council will consider a resolution alleging the Legislature's move is about "purely partisan ends" and is being rushed to precede recall elections that could tip the balance of the state Senate. It would authorize the city "to take all legal actions possible" to stop the new maps from taking effect.

"It's obvious what they're trying to do politically," said Ald. Chris Schmidt, 11th District, main sponsor of the resolution. "They're just running roughshod over the process."

### **'We're not going quietly'**

Soglin called on Gov. Scott Walker to block the change in long-standing state practice.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for the governor to demonstrate he believes in good government," the mayor said, declining to say if the city would go to court. "Let's see whether or not (the concern) is addressed. We're not going to go quietly."

On Friday, GOP lawmakers offered an amendment to the redistricting plan allowing municipalities to create wards smaller than 1,000 residents so they won't have to waste months of effort and redraw wards and districts. Municipalities were still analyzing the legislation Monday.

"We were not consulted in any of this," said Dan Thompson, executive director of the Wisconsin League of Municipalities. "Please slow down. We do not understand the ramifications of this bill."

At a public hearing last week, Fitchburg Mayor Shawn Pfaff voiced concerns that the city's redistricting work would be undone — like creating two districts with more minority voters than whites and another rural district. But on Monday, Pfaff said he believed the city's concerns had been met.

Paul Vornholt, Milwaukee's director of intergovernmental relations, remained unimpressed.

"We still have to use their lines in our wards," he said. "We will still have to go back and change things, they're just washing their hands of it."