

# Legislative election unconstitutional, court rules

## Republican maps federal

*Source: Office of Rep. Jon Richards*

**Courts have to intervene yet again to stop GOP attempts to suppress voting rights**

Legislative redistricting maps drawn last year by Republican state lawmakers were ruled unconstitutional today by a panel of three federal judges who heard the case brought by immigrant rights advocates and Wisconsin citizens. Specifically, the judges ruled unanimously that the composition of two Assembly districts on Milwaukee's south side violated the voting rights of Latinos and had to be redrawn soon by the legislature. The judges' decision also blasts the process as "needlessly secretive" and states that the results "needlessly moved more than a million Wisconsinites and disrupted their long-standing political relationships..."

Rep. Jon Richards (D-Milwaukee) issued the following statement in response to the court's ruling:

"Once again the courts have had to intervene to stop legislative Republicans' illegal attempts to suppress the voting rights of Wisconsin citizens for their own political advantage.

"Earlier this month, in a span of less than a week, two separate courts ruled that the new state law requiring voters to show a photo ID at the polls was unconstitutional.

“Now today a panel of federal justices put a hold on the election maps Republicans and lobbyists drew under secret oath at private law firms because they violate the voting rights of Latinos. They also note that the maps needlessly move more than one million Wisconsinites.

“This is what happens when politicians work in secret, ignore the constitution and shut the public out of the process. The federal court has ordered the legislature to act quickly to redraw its redistricting maps to make them constitutional.

“I encourage my Republican colleagues to follow the judges’ order and to get to work immediately on redrawing the maps in a bipartisan, transparent and legal way.”

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## **Rep. Jon Richards says Wisconsin consumers will lose \$14M under Walker administration plan**

*Source: Office of Rep. Jon Richards*

Governor Scott Walker’s top insurance regulator is seeking permission from the federal government to allow Wisconsin health insurance companies to escape a law requiring health insurers to spend at least 80 cents of every dollar collected in their customer’s premiums on medical care.

In a [letter sent Tuesday](#), Insurance Commissioner Theodore Nickel asked the federal government for a waiver from a rule in the federal health reform law that limits health insurer profits, salaries, marketing and other overhead costs to 20% of the amount spent by consumers in the individual market. Insurers who spend more than this amount on non-medical expenses must provide refunds to consumers under the law.

If the federal government approves Nickel's waiver request, health insurers who spend more than 20% of their customer's premiums on overhead will no longer have to provide refunds, costing Wisconsinites who buy their own insurance plans \$14 million, according to estimates included in the request.

"Yet again the Walker administration is putting special interests before the needs of Wisconsin families," said Rep. Richards. "Governor Walker's top insurance regulator wants permission to ignore federal health reform rules so insurance companies can pocket even more profit at the expense of consumers who are already struggling to afford health insurance, housing, food and other essentials."

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**Local representatives  
Richards, Larson, and Sinicki  
neighborhood meeting to**

# consider bike/pedestrian lane on Hoan

Letter from Rep. Jon Richards

Dear Neighbor,

Tuesday, Aug. 23, from 5:00pm to 7:00pm, I am hosting another neighborhood meeting on the Hoan Bridge reconstruction project with Sen. Chris Larson, Rep. Christine Sinicki, and state transportation officials. This meeting is devoted solely to talking about a possible Hoan Bridge bicycle lane. It will be held in the [Beulah Brinton Cafeteria Room, 2555 South Bay Street in Bay View](#).

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is currently studying the feasibility of adding a bicycle lane to the Hoan Bridge. DOT expects to complete its study sometime this fall, so now is the time to make your voice heard if you have an opinion about biking the Hoan.

Our Aug. 23 meeting at Beulah Brinton will provide you with an excellent opportunity to learn more about the DOT bike lane study and to let state transportation officials know how you feel about adding a bike lane to the Hoan Bridge. I hope to see you there!

The DOT has also set up a website devoted to the Hoan Bridge project where you can find the latest information on the project [here](#).

As always, it is a pleasure to be able to stay in touch with you! Please feel free to contact me with any concerns, questions or ideas you may have.

Sincerely,

JON RICHARDS

State Representative

19th Assembly District

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Jon Richard

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# **Survey results: concealed weapons, MPS, Hoan Bridge, DNR Secretary...and more!**

*Source: Office of Representative Jon Richards*

Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond to my 2011 Spring Legislative Survey. The large number of responses is a testament to how engaged, informed and active you are. I am honored to represent you in Madison and this survey helps me speak for you with a clearer voice. I have included the results for you to see below:

1. Do you support replacing the current Milwaukee Public Schools district with a collection of smaller districts?

– Yes: 23%

– No: 45%

– Undecided: 32%

2. Do you support allowing the carrying of a concealed weapon with a permit if it were a felony to carry that weapon without a permit?

– Yes: 26%

– No: 66%

– Undecided: 8%

3. Do you support having the DNR Secretary appointed by the Natural Resources Board, rather than by the Governor as is currently done?

– Yes: 66%

– No: 20%

– Undecided: 14%

4. Do you support the continuation of SeniorCare and BadgerCare at current eligibility levels?

– Yes: 76%

– No: 11%

– Undecided: 13%

5. Do you support lifting the moratorium on building new nuclear power plants in Wisconsin?

– Yes: 32%

– No: 55%

– Undecided: 13%

6. Do you support the creation of a separate Parks District that would fund and operate the parks in Milwaukee County?

– Yes: 42%

– No: 28%

– Undecided: 30%

7. Do you support Governor Walker's plan to remove state employees' ability to collectively bargain for their health insurance and pension costs?

– Yes: 26%

– No: 71%

– Undecided: 3%

8. Do you support implementing the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in Wisconsin to ensure Wisconsin residents cannot lose their insurance because of a pre-existing condition, to reduce the costs of prescription drugs for seniors and to give residents the option of purchasing insurance through a statewide private health insurance pool even if it requires all Wisconsinites to carry health insurance?

– Yes: 78%

– No: 15%

– Undecided: 7%

9. Do you support efforts to redeck the Hoan Bridge in its

present configuration?

– Yes: 74%

– No: 6%

– Undecided: 20%

10. Do you support the creation of a Southeast Wisconsin Regional Transit Authority to run our bus system and any future commuter rail system?

– Yes: 56%

– No: 19%

– Undecided: 25%

Thank you again for completing my legislative survey. I value your opinion. As we continue to debate in Madison, and as new issues come before the legislature, please contact me any time with any questions, thoughts or opinions you have. It is always great to hear from you.

Sincerely,

JON RICHARDS

State Representative

19th Assembly District

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Legislative

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Follow Representative Richards on Facebook:

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***\*\*In respecting your privacy, and to help stop unsolicited e-mails, I will not share your e-mail address. Additionally, if you wish to be removed from this list, please reply to this email. I'll make sure that you are immediately removed!***

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# **Chris Larson wins Wisconsin, State Senate, District Nine seat; Richards, Sinicki retain seats**

Larson , Chris Dem 37,164 57%

Ripp , Jess GOP 27,779 43%

State Senate – District 7 – General

Precincts Reporting – 100%

<b>Sinicki , Christine (i) Dem</b>	<b>10,844</b>	<b>53%</b>
McGartland , Molly GOP	9,502	47%
State Assembly – District 20 – General Precincts Reporting – 100%		
<b>Richards , Jon (i) Dem</b>	<b>15,122</b>	<b>69%</b>
Burns , Krista GOP	9,502	31%
State Assembly – District 19 – General Precincts Reporting – 100%		

*Source: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

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## Countdown to a smoke-free Wisconsin

Next month Wisconsin will be smoke-free. On July 5, the ban on smoking in all Wisconsin workplaces—including restaurants and bars—will go into effect. Currently, there are 37 different communities with smoke-free ordinances. This legislation establishes a level playing field for all businesses in Wisconsin.

Nonsmokers are contracting lung cancer at alarming rates due to increased, and unwanted, exposure to secondhand smoke. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke increase their risk of contracting heart disease and lung cancer by 20-30 percent. Restaurant and bar employees are more likely to be subjected to unwanted exposure to secondhand smoke than other workers.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services Burden of Tobacco Report (2006), nearly 16 percent of all annual deaths in Wisconsin are directly attributable to cigarette smoking. In addition, \$2.16 billion is paid annually

in Wisconsin direct health care costs. Clearing the air of secondhand smoke will save lives, and decrease the overall cost of health care in our state.

The Smoke Free Wisconsin Act was endorsed by a diverse coalition of public health and business groups that include the Tavern League of Wisconsin, Smoke Free Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, Taverns Clearing the Air, the Wisconsin Medical Society, the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, and the American Heart Association. Twenty-five other states, including Midwestern neighbors like Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois, have passed similar legislation.

In the last days of the legislative session we passed a small change to the smoking ban to clarify that indoor smoking is prohibited and that smoking areas protected from the elements can be erected next to bars and restaurants. This legislation enjoyed bipartisan support in both the Assembly and the Senate. This was truly a bipartisan victory for everyone in Wisconsin!

*Jon Richards is the state representative for Wisconsin's 19th state Assembly District, which includes Bay View, the Third Ward, eastern downtown, and the East Side. His website is [jonrichards.org](http://jonrichards.org). He can be reached at (888) 534-0019 or [rep.richards@legis.wi.gov](mailto:rep.richards@legis.wi.gov).*

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## **Investing in our green economy**

Going green is not only good for the environment, but also for the bottom line. Going green can create new jobs in the clean

energy sector-an industry with enormous growth potential. While many of Wisconsin's manufacturers are focused on creating jobs and staying competitive in this tough market, allowing employers to save money on the cost of energy keeps Wisconsin businesses more competitive and more profitable.

Wisconsin businesses want to invest in energy efficiency. Last month I attended an event with AT&T Wisconsin where they announced the deployment of their first Compressed Natural Gas vehicles in Wisconsin. I was proud to stand with AT&T and support their effort to invest in cleaner domestic alternative fuel vehicles. The deployment of these 42 vans that service the Milwaukee area will cut down on the amount of carbon dioxide emissions and ultimately make the air we breathe healthier and reduce our reliance on foreign sources of energy.

In order to help more businesses like AT&T invest in cleaner, renewable energy, I worked to pass legislation that gives Wisconsin employers the tools they need to jumpstart these efforts. The legislation created a one-stop shop for Wisconsin manufacturers that are seeking to take advantage of state and federal green energy assistance programs and resources.

In addition to this legislation, I worked to advance the Clean Energy Jobs Act. Four years ago, Wisconsin became one of the first states to enact renewable portfolio standards, reducing our dependence on foreign fuels and creating jobs. As a result, we have seen rapid expansion in renewable energy production and major growth in clean energy jobs. The Clean Energy Jobs Act failed to pass the legislature this year; however, I will continue to fight to bring this idea to fruition.

Every year, Wisconsin sends \$16 billion out of our state to power our homes and businesses and fuel our vehicles. The Clean Energy Jobs Act will help reduce our dependence on foreign fuels and make sure that Wisconsin does not miss out

on the opportunity to have a piece of the emerging clean energy job market.

Last month we celebrated the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. Now is a good time to reflect on how far we have come in the fight to protect our environment. I will continue to work toward developing new and innovative ways of assisting businesses to create jobs and help keep our environment clean for generations to come.

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## **Tax credits can reduce your tax bill**

As the income tax deadline draws near, please make use of ways to make this time of year less difficult. The state of Wisconsin has assistance available to those having difficulty completing their 2009 taxes.

The deadline for completing your 2009 taxes is April 15, 2010. Extensions are available for those who cannot meet this deadline. Please contact the Wisconsin Department of Revenue at (608) 266-8641 or visit their website at [revenue.wi.gov](http://revenue.wi.gov). For information regarding federal tax returns, visit the U.S. Internal Revenue Service website at [irs.gov](http://irs.gov).

Be sure to reduce your tax burden by taking advantage of tax credits offered by the state of Wisconsin. Wisconsin offers

the Earned Income Tax Credit. If you qualify, your family could receive a combined state and federal tax credit of \$8,090 if you have three or more children, \$5,732 if you have two children, and \$3,165 if you have one child. To qualify, your income must not exceed \$48,279 and you must have been a legal Wisconsin resident for the duration of 2009.

You might also be eligible for the Wisconsin Homestead Credit. If you qualify, you could receive up to \$1,160 in tax credits. In order to qualify for the Homestead Credit, you must be a legal Wisconsin resident, over the age of 18, your 2009 income must be less than \$24,500 and you must have owned or rented your homestead for all of 2009.

Be sure to mention these tax incentive programs to your tax preparer or contact the Wisconsin Department of Revenue if you have any questions. Also, please feel free to contact my office at (888) 534-0019 if you would like information about free preparation services in and around Bay View. Please make use of these ways to make this time of year a little less difficult.

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## **Cracking down on predatory payday loan lenders**

Last month the state Assembly passed legislation to crack down

on the practice of predatory payday lending in Wisconsin. I have been a longtime advocate for capping the interest rate that these loan companies can charge consumers. However, that idea did not garner enough support among my colleagues. The final language of the bill offers meaningful consumer protection and gained wide bipartisan support.

The Responsible Lending Act, as the legislation has been dubbed, bans auto-title loans; caps loans at a maximum of \$600 or 35 percent of the borrower's biweekly income, whichever is less; and restricts the practice of rollovers. A rollover happens when a borrower does not have the money to repay the loan when it comes due. The borrower then makes another loan to pay back the first one. These rollovers trap people in a cycle of debt, all too often leaving them in financial ruin. This bill goes a long way toward protecting people against these unfair practices.

In addition to these restrictions, the bill provides borrowers the option of repaying the outstanding debt over four equal payments, without incurring any additional penalties or fees. This will help make repayment of these loans more manageable for many people. Loan companies must also disclose the interest rates and fees that are associated with the payday loan.

All of these provisions are a step in the right direction to rein in this predatory industry. The national financial crisis has been fueled in part by a lack of regulatory oversight of the financial industry. In Wisconsin, the payday loan industry has exploded over the last 15 years from just two payday stores in 1995 to over 500 in 2008. This legislation cracks down on a system that prioritizes the profit of loan sharks over the protection of consumers. Wisconsin will no longer be fertile ground for predatory payday loan companies to do business.

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## **Milwaukee's economy improving in 2010**

We have all seen the effects of this bad economy on our daily lives. Many of us know someone who has lost a job. Many people took a hit in the stock market. Many of our friends and neighbors are finding it difficult to find good-paying employment. While the environment for economic growth and improvement has been sobering recently, there are signs that 2010 will be a year of recovery.

One of the most exciting areas of growth in Milwaukee has been in the freshwater industry. In this year's budget, I worked with Governor Doyle and my colleagues in the legislature to secure the largest single investment the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has ever seen. This investment focuses on UWM's expansion of both the Schools of Freshwater Sciences and of Public Health. The money also will provide for a new research facility for the Engineering School.

We are also beginning to see the results of some of the economic innovation we in the legislature used in the state budget to help get Wisconsin back on track economically. We created tax credits to reward employers when they move jobs to Wisconsin or keep manufacturing jobs here.

We have seen two airlines at Mitchell International expand

their presence in the region and add jobs. Bucyrus International has also announced it will add up to 500 new jobs to the Milwaukee area. I am confident these success stories will be replicated in 2010 both in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin.

Our economy is not out of the woods yet. But, things are turning around. We in the Assembly are currently working on adding green jobs to our state's economy. This month we began considering promising new initiatives that will create the groundwork for growing Milwaukee's capacity to build the next generation of equipment that either saves energy or creates energy without burning fossil fuels. We have also formed a bipartisan group of business leaders and workforce representatives to develop creative solutions on how to grow Wisconsin's economy. In 2010 we need to build on the successes of 2009 to attract new companies to Wisconsin and Milwaukee and expand world-class jobs in our city.

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## **Asian carp invasion threatens Lake Michigan**

During our recent extraordinary session, the state Assembly passed a resolution formally requesting that Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen take legal action to prevent Asian carp from invading Lake Michigan from the Chicago Sanitary and Ship

Canal. I authored the resolution along with my colleague from Door County, Representative Garey Bies.

Also in December, Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox filed a lawsuit before the U.S. Supreme Court to force the state of Illinois and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to close the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal until the Asian carp infestation has been eliminated. The resolution passed by the Wisconsin Assembly authorizes AG Van Hollen to intervene on behalf of the state of Wisconsin in this case. Currently, the only measure stopping the carp now is an electric barrier operating at half strength.

As has been widely reported, these fish are enormous. They can grow up to four feet long and weigh up to 100 pounds. These monsters can consume up to 20 percent of their body mass in food every day. If Asian carp get into Lake Michigan, they will almost certainly destroy the natural habitat for the salmon, trout, bass, and perch of the Great Lakes. This will be detrimental to the \$7 billion Great Lakes fishing industry. We cannot allow this to happen.

Additionally, I asked my legislative colleagues to join me in signing a letter to Wisconsin's congressional delegation asking them to join us in fighting to stop the Asian carp from entering Lake Michigan. I will not stop working until the threat of Asian carp entering our Great Lakes has been eliminated.

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# Fresh ideas for improving our schools

In October, I stood with Governor Doyle, Mayor Barrett, and many other elected leaders and community members to support a compromise that would change the governance structure of the Milwaukee Public Schools. This is an important first step in what I hope is a frank and open discussion about the future of our public schools here in Milwaukee.

The challenges that face Milwaukee schools are no secret. Test scores lag behind national and state averages. The racial achievement gap between black students and white students is one of the largest in the entire United States. High school graduation rates are dismal. Drastic changes are needed to ensure that our kids have the tools they need to compete with those in other communities around Wisconsin, our nation, and the entire world.

I support providing clear lines of accountability for the success or failure of the system with a superintendent appointed by the mayor with expanded powers. One of the first steps to turning MPS around is to carve out a clear path of accountability so that responsibility for the system can be owned up to. If the mayor is responsible for the hiring and firing of the superintendent, the buck stops there.

Next, the proposal maintains an elected school board. From the very beginning of this discussion, this was one of my primary goals. This compromise ensures that kids, parents, and concerned citizens will have a place to go to voice their opinions and get assistance with problems they encounter. While the role of the elected board is transformed to be less involved in day-to-day decision making, they will maintain an important advisory role that will allow them to help shape the policies of the school district.

Even those who do not agree with the proposal on governance concur that we need change in MPS and have proposed reforms, most of which should be adopted. The time for change is now. I will not stand on the sidelines and allow this unprecedented opportunity to improve the quality of education within MPS pass us by. I encourage you to do the same. I call on all interested parties to come to the table with ideas about how to improve our schools. Let's come together to make a meaningful commitment to the education of our young people.

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