

Daily Herald

There's still time for true redistricting reform

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Daily Herald Editorial Board

State Sens. Michael Bond of Grayslake, Susan Garrett of Lake Forest, Linda Holmes of Aurora, Dan Kotowski of Park Ridge, Michael Noland of Elgin and Arthur Wilhelmi of Joliet told us in May they wanted to take politics out of the redistricting process. On Wednesday, they proved otherwise and failed their constituents.

These suburban Democrats were among the state senators who passed up an opportunity to give an independent commission the power to redraw legislative maps that will determine who will serve in the state legislature for the next decade. Taking the map-drawing power away from those who seek to serve is a crucial and necessary step toward fixing the problems that have fostered corruption, centralized power and almost guaranteed incumbents' re-election regardless of performance.

Instead, Democrats backed a plan that still leaves the fox in charge of the henhouse. Lawmakers get the first shot at drawing a map and protecting their incumbency. If that fails, legislative leaders appoint a commission. If that also fails, the Supreme Court would step in. As lawmakers head out to the campaign trail, **we hope they won't try to pretend this is a vote for reform. The people aren't stupid.**

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We suppose we should be grateful it removes the ridiculous tiebreaker that ultimately delivers power to whichever party's name is drawn from Lincoln's hat. But we have grown tired of baby steps toward reform. **And we hold these elected officials accountable - for their unimpressive leadership, their shortsighted deals and this cowardly vote.**

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This is yet another missed opportunity for reform this state desperately needs.

The constitutional amendment, which requires a three-fifths majority, moves to the state House. We have a special message for Democratic Reps. Linda Chapa LaVia of Aurora, Fred Crespo of Hoffman Estates, Keith Farnham of Elgin, Jack Franks of Marengo, Paul Froehlich of Schaumburg, Elaine Nekritz of Northbrook, Mark Walker of Arlington Heights and Eddie Washington of Waukegan: Show more courage and vote as you told us you would in that survey. Fight for the more meaningful proposal that mirrors recommendations of the Illinois Reform Commission.

That proposal, which is sponsored by Republicans, is similar to the Illinois Fair Map Amendment, an effort by the League of Women Voters, the Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Chamber of Commerce to let the people decide how this important process should happen. We have endorsed that effort as Illinois' best hope for the future, and we continue to believe in it.

Supporters have been collecting signatures to put the question to voters on the November ballot. The state requires 280,000 valid signatures by May 3. In the final stages of their push, organizers aren't indicating whether they think they'll make it.

We renew our call for voters who are tired of Illinois' corrupt politics as usual to sign the petition or download it at ilfairmap.com and collect signatures to help this effort. You must act fast. Organizers need time to compile the petitions and make sure they meet strict guidelines to survive a challenge.

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That means real change will happen only if the people stand up and show the legislature who's boss. It's up to you.