

RESOLUTION NO. 2019-13

Conducting an Advisory Referendum to Create an Independent Nonpartisan Redistricting Commission

Executive Summary

Under current law, the district boundaries for congressional and state legislative districts must be redrawn every 10 years after a census in a process known as redistricting. The method by which redistricting occurs is governed by state law. In most states, these district lines are drawn by the state legislatures. This creates a serious conflict of interest, whereby legislators can draw the districts in such a way so as to give an unfair partisan advantage to both themselves and to the controlling political party, commonly referred to as “gerrymandering”. This can have a chilling effect on democracy as one political party can grant itself an artificial level of dominance over the political system.

Some states have addressed gerrymandering by creating independent nonpartisan commissions for redistricting. Wisconsin can adopt a similar method, but such a change can only be made by the state legislature.

This Resolution authorizes Jefferson County to conduct a county-wide advisory referendum to be held at the November 2020 general election. The Executive Committee considered this resolution at its meeting on April 24, 2019, and voted to forward to the County Board for approval. This will allow voters to communicate directly to the state legislature about their views on the subject.

WHEREAS, the Executive Summary is hereby incorporated into this resolution, and

WHEREAS, current state law entrusts the power of redistricting to the state legislature, and

WHEREAS, the current redistricting process creates a heightened risk of legislators “choosing their voters” instead of voters choosing their legislators, and

WHEREAS, several other states have reduced gerrymandering by removing redistricting from the partisan political process, and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin could similarly benefit from such an independent nonpartisan solution, and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin State Statute section 59.52(25) allows for a county board to conduct a county-wide referendum for advisory purposes, and

WHEREAS, a county-wide advisory referendum on the issue of creating an independent nonpartisan redistricting commission would provide guidance to the state legislature as to the will of the County electorate on this issue, and

WHEREAS, this resolution seeks to conduct such a county-wide advisory referendum.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors that a county-wide advisory referendum be conducted at the November 2020 general election with the question stated as follows:

