



# MEMORANDUM

## LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE BUREAU

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**To:** Ronald D. Leonhardt, City Clerk  
Richard Pfaff, Legislative Reference Bureau Manager

**From:** Rich Watt, Legislative Fiscal Analyst, 286-2253

**Date:** March 29, 2012

**Subject:** Redistricting Issue in Aldermanic District 11, State Assembly District 9

Provided below is information relating to two ward boundary discrepancies between the City of Milwaukee voting ward plan and the state assembly district plan. We are requesting that the court consider changing the State plan in these two areas to reconcile the discrepancy. We also request that any changes to the State redistricting plan following the City's voting ward boundaries, as adopted in September 2011.

In late December 2011, Sarah Whitt of the Government Accountability Board (GAB) informed City of Milwaukee staff of a few discrepancies between Milwaukee's voting wards and the new state assembly district boundaries. The City's GIS department staff coordinated efforts between the GAB, the City and Tony Van der Wielen of the Legislative Technology Services Bureau (LTSB) to correct these errors.

The errors between the state and city boundaries occurred due to the nature of U.S. Census Bureau blocks. Census blocks provide the basic level of geography upon which voting wards are assembled. Typical census blocks contain between 100 and 400 persons, and represent a geographic and demographically contiguous area. In addition to these blocks, the census also includes many smaller blocks that contain little to no population. These blocks are included to correct errors in mapping and usually occur near physical features like rivers and shorelines, or near political boundaries like the City of Milwaukee boundary.

The City was able to correct three of the five errors identified by the GAB. The two remaining discrepancies, if changed to follow the State plan, will cause an increased burden on the Election Commission and could result in the loss of vote anonymity for six individuals. The state plan defines a long section of the boundary between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly Districts as following the City of Milwaukee border, except for in two small areas. The two outstanding discrepancies are as follows:

1. **Ward 281 is bisected by the boundary of Assembly District 7 and 9.** The state plan includes City of Milwaukee census block 550791204001000 in the 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, while placing all surrounding City census blocks within the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly District. This block is on the border of Milwaukee and Greenfield and, according to the 2010 Census, has a population of 5. To comply with the state plan, the City would have to create a new voting ward consisting solely of this one block. We request that the court follow the City's voting ward plan in this location and place all of the City of Milwaukee census blocks in this area within Assembly District 9.

2. **Ward 282 is bisected by the boundary of Assembly District 7 and 9.** The state plan includes City of Milwaukee census block 550791204001006 in the 7<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, while placing all surrounding City census blocks within the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly District. This block, while not contiguous with the block described in the item above, is also on the border of Milwaukee and Greenfield and, according to the 2010 Census, has a population of 1. To comply with the state plan, the City would have to create a new voting ward consisting solely of this one block. We request that the court follows the City's voting ward plan in this location and places all of the City of Milwaukee census blocks in this area within Assembly District 9.

The City of Milwaukee and its Election Commission has concerns that administering these two small wards will be burdensome. The city is also concerned that the privacy of individual voting in such small wards would be compromised.

Wards 281 and 282 have not been adjusted from the boundaries set by the Common Council in September of 2011. These boundaries were used for the February primary, and will be used for the election in April. The state offices affected by this issue are not on the ballot this spring; this issue will have no effect on the state districts until the fall election cycle. We request that any changes to the State redistricting plan follow the City's adopted voting ward plan, both for the reasons detailed above and to ensure that individuals voting in the spring election will remain in the local legislative districts for which they cast their votes.

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Attachment: Wards 281 and 282, with State Assembly Districts 7 and 9. The City of Milwaukee requests that the court follow the red lines when redrawing District 9.