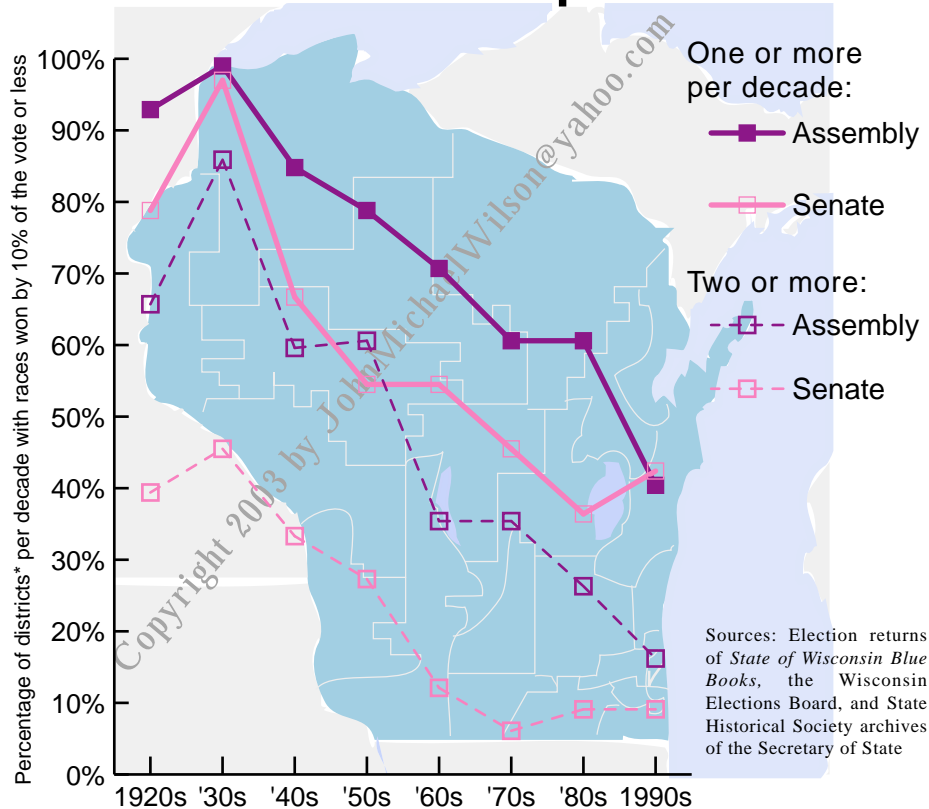


Representative democracy in Wisconsin?

Fewer Districts Spark at least One Close Race per Decade



By John Michael Wilson, October 2003 – During the 20th century, Wisconsin's share of Senate and Assembly districts with at least one close race per decade – including the winner's primary – plummeted.

After each new decade's census, legislators redraw district boundaries to equalize populations and – by the way – to avoid close races (pluralities of 10 percent or less) for their seats. That is, by mining data bases, incumbents of both parties identify and swap prospective supporters. In effect, *they vote us* in or out.

By contrast, during the 1990s, almost 60 percent of Wisconsin's voting-age population had no chance to choose between viable candidates in a close Assembly race; and on average, given declining voter turnout, only 20 percent voted in at least one such contest.

*Note: As practical, elections governed by the same apportionment are grouped into the same "redistricting decade."