



FAIR DISTRICTS PA

Working to Ensure Fair Districts & Fair Elections

Legislative Contact Talking Points

It takes just a few minutes to call or write your legislator and ask for support of redistricting reform. To find contact information for your senator or representative go to <http://www.legis.state.pa.us>. For even more impact, make an appointment to visit your legislator's regional office. Visits are even stronger when you go with several other constituents.

Whether you write, call or visit, give your name and where you live. Ask for support for redistricting reform, specifically co-sponsorship of an independent citizens commission (or a specific bill, not yet available). Be prepared to offer the reasons you think would be most convincing to your own legislator.

Don't forget to contact both representatives and senators, whether they're Republican or Democrat. This is a bipartisan effort. And regardless of their positions, be polite and thank them for their time.

- Pennsylvania is regularly cited as one of the most gerrymandered states in the nation.
 - Using the Efficiency Gap standard recently applied in a case heard in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania's congressional districts are the most gerrymandered in the country.
 - The December 2016 Electoral Integrity Project report rated Pennsylvania among the lowest states in the nation on electoral integrity (56/100). That low rating was in large part caused by Pennsylvania's district boundaries, rated third worst in the country (11/100).
- Gerrymandered districts create safe districts that deprive voters of choice at the polls.
 - In the 2016 primary elections, 86.6% of incumbents ran unopposed in their party's primary (Ballotpedia).
 - In the 2016 general election, 13 out of 25 PA Senate races and 97 out of 203 House races had no other-party challenger (tally from Department of State web site).
Competitive elections are essential for government that is accountable to the voters.
- Politicians in safe districts have little incentive to work across party lines. This creates the gridlock that has made it impossible to collaborate effectively on many issues of critical importance to Pennsylvania.
 - A survey of Harvard Business School alumni recently identified dysfunctional government as the leading cause of weak economic growth. Redistricting reform was the top correction recommended in that survey
- Our current system undermines the principle of one person, one vote.
 - The situation leads to repeated court challenges such as those in Pennsylvania after the 2011 redistricting cycle.
 - Given the recent case in a Wisconsin federal court that struck down that state's partisan gerrymander, a similar suit may be brought in Pennsylvania.

- According to a Franklin & Marshall poll published in January 2016, more than four in five (82%) registered voters think the state government needs to be reformed. This sentiment is strongly held among voters of all parties (76% of Republicans, 86% of Democrats, and 88% of Independents). Only one in seven (14%) registered voters believes that the state legislature is doing an excellent or good job.
- The current process allows party leaders inappropriate influence over rank-and-file legislators. HB 153, a constitutional amendment to reduce the size of the PA House from 203 to 151 members won first-round passage in the 2015-2016 session. Reducing the legislature without also addressing the redistricting process would allow those leaders even more influence, possibly reducing lawmakers' independence to represent their own constituents.
- Legislators in gerrymandered districts find it difficult to represent populations spread across multiple jurisdictions, and people in those jurisdictions find it difficult to know where to go for assistance. Legislators report excessive time driving between offices and meeting with constituents, or even knowing which citizens are their own constituents.
- National partisan PACs and super PACS (RNCC REDMAP 2020, DLCC Advantage 2020, DGA Unrig the Map, National Democratic Redistricting Committee) have identified Pennsylvania as a top target for flipping state legislative districts to capture more Congressional districts.
 - PA is a prime target due to our large legislature, our status as one of the largest remaining swing states and our lax campaign finance laws.
 - Unprecedented outside money in our Pennsylvania legislative districts will create an even more negative tone and will discourage good people from both parties from seeking public office.
- In the current legislative redistricting process, if the four legislative leaders can't decide on a fifth commission member, that member will be chosen by the state Supreme Court. With that court now dominated by judges who were elected as Democrats, there may be a new attitude toward redistricting plans that favor Republicans.
- Many citizen groups have identified redistricting as an essential reform. As voters educate themselves on the structures of our democracy, they see the conflict of interest in our current system, question the intent behind our tortured district lines and look for leaders willing to correct this.
- Any legislator considering statewide office should want to demonstrate an interest in a fair, transparent democracy that serves the needs of all Pennsylvania citizens, rather than a system that carves up communities for the benefit of one party.
- Loss of confidence in our elections and leaders is detrimental to democracy. Reform is needed so that our government truly is of, by and for the people.

Be prepared to give examples of the impact of gerrymandered districts in your own community, if you know of specific problems. These might include fractured municipalities, where residents of a single borough or township can't be sure who represents them in Harrisburg, or districts so elongated that they make it difficult for lawmakers and constituents to meet with each other.