



Gerrymandering Blocks Good Government ...

... But We Can Fix it

*Gerrymandering may not be the issue
you care about most ...*

It's just the issue we need to fix first.

Fair Districts PA is a citizen-led coalition of the League of Women Voters PA
and good-governance groups across PA

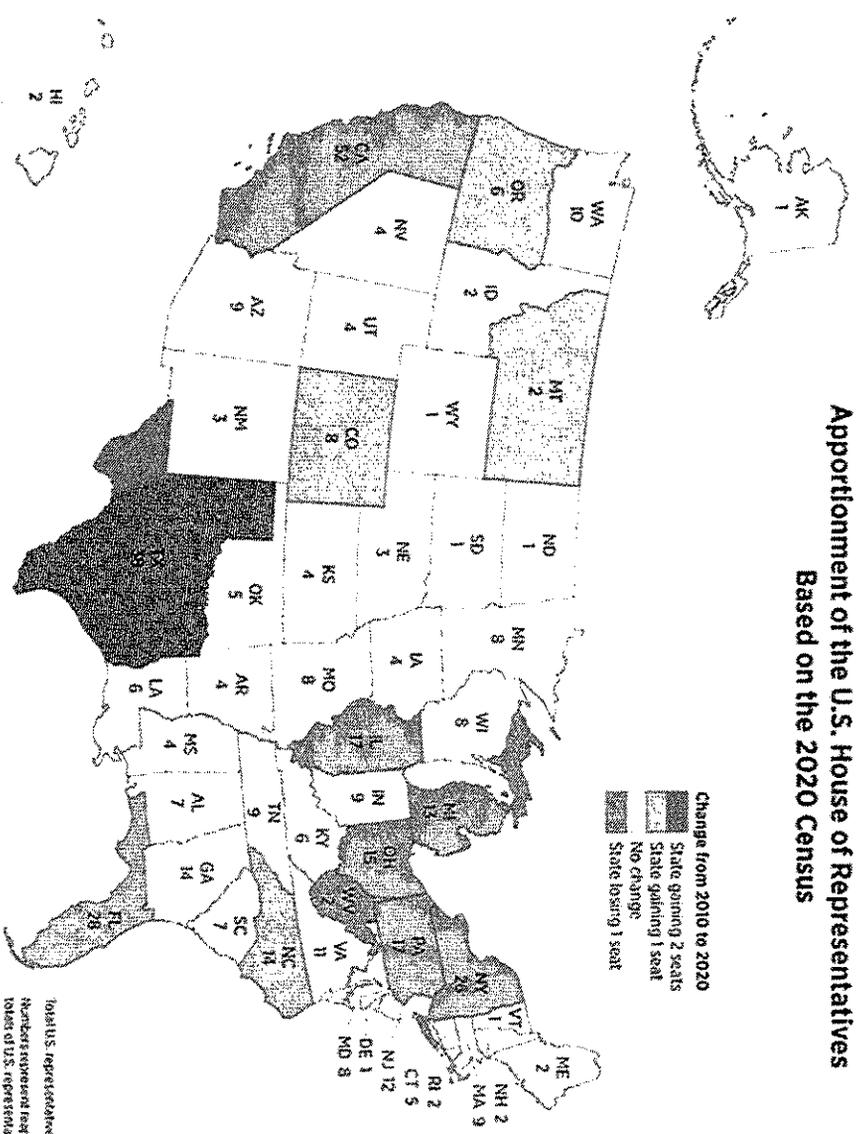
www.FairDistrictsPA.com

Presenter: Rich Rafferty, fdpa.montco@gmail.com

Reapportionment – US Congress

- After every U.S. Census, the 435 Congressional seats are reallocated based upon population changes
- ~782,000 residents/district (2020)
- Some states gain, some states lose

PA's Trend	
1990 – 21	
2000 – 19	
2010 – 18	
2020 – 17	
2030 – ??	



Apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives
 Based on the 2020 Census

Change from 2010 to 2020
 State gaining 2 seats
 State gaining 1 seat
 No change
 State losing 1 seat

Total US representatives: 435
 Number of representatives apportioned to each state of U.S. representatives.

Redistricting – Harrisburg Focus Each State Draws It's Maps

PA has two redistricting procedures

Congressional Districts

- Regular legislative process
- Voting Rights Act Only Guideline

State Legislative Districts (50 State Senate, 203 State House)

- Legislative Reapportionment Commission, 1968 PA constitutional amendment



No other major democracy allows legislators to have a dominant role in drawing their own district's lines



How Does PA Redistrict?

Who Creates the Maps: The 1%

203 State House and 50 Senate Districts

17 PA Congressional Districts

- Commission of 5 individuals – The LRC State Legislature – via standard legislative process – *and controlled by Majority Party Leaders – The 1%*
(Four Party Leaders and a Chair) – The 1%
- House & Senate do not vote on plan
- Governor does not sign it
- Commission plan final unless overturned by State Supreme Court or Federal Court

Laws The 1% Must Follow

PA Constitution Article II, Section 15*

Federal Voting Rights Act

- All districts for the same level office must have equal population. Blocks district lines that deny minority voters an equal opportunity “to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice.”
- Districts must be geographically compact and contiguous.
- District cannot divide existing geopolitical entities “... unless absolutely necessary.”

State Districts Only



Redistricting Rules in the PA Constitution

Article II, Section 16 regarding state legislative districts:

- “ ... shall be composed of compact and contiguous territory as nearly equal in population as practicable.”
- “Unless absolutely necessary no county, city, incorporated town, borough, township or ward shall be divided ...”

Simple, right? Well, not quite:

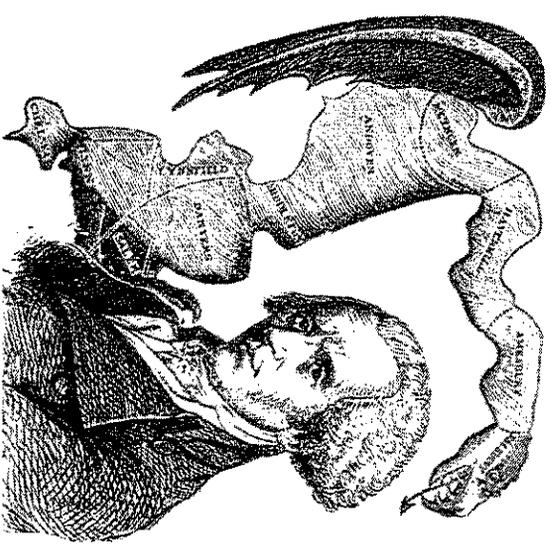
For decades, LRC has often ignored these constitutional rules. Why?

In order to gerrymander

So, what is Gerrymandering?

Drawing district boundaries to benefit a party or candidate

In 1812 MA Gov. Elbridge Gerry approved districts maps favoring his party. One district map looked like a salamander — hence the term Gerrymander.



Why does it matter?

“Safe” districts contribute to polarization and gridlock

Gerrymandering Negatively Impacts Legislators and Constituents

- Major parties focus on control, not governance
- Incumbents (especially leadership) are protected
- Very high re-election rate (many run unopposed)
 - Note: Legislative leaders draw the maps
- Rank & File beholden to party leaders, not constituents. Why?
- Redistricting every 10 years. In between - legislative rules, budget
- Elections increasingly decided in our primaries



Gerrymandering Negatively Impacts All Pennsylvanians

Increasing polarization makes compromise difficult (*Pew Research Ctr, 2014*)

And the resulting gridlock (*Fair Districts PA, January 2025a*) ...

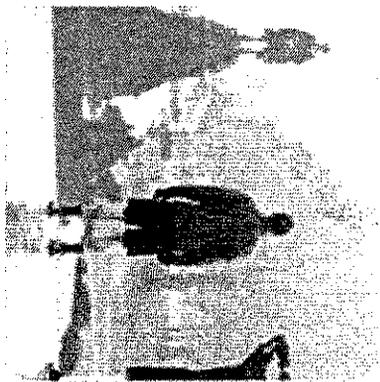
... is bad for business and communities

- PA less competitive & economy threatened (*Harvard Business School, 2016, 2017*)
- Gerrymandered districts receive fewer discretionary federal funds *and have less access* to consumer credit (*SSRN, 2018, 2021*)
- **Safe Seats = No Urgency To Tackle Difficult State-wide Issues**

Polarization & Gridlock Negatively Impacts All of US

PA: Failing Grades and Overdue for Reform

2024 Best States Rankings, *US News & World Report*, 2025



 **Pennsylvania**

#40 in Best States

--

#16 Crime & Corrections

#41 Economy

#39 Education

#44 Fiscal Stability

#11 Health Care

#43 Infrastructure

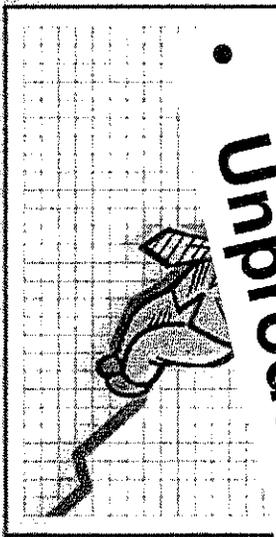
#37 Natural Environment

#24 Opportunity

And that Polarization & Gridlock Play a Role in our Legislature's

PA's legislature:

- Largest Full-time
- Very Expensive
- Unproductive



Inaction & Dysfunction

In past 10 years

< 10% of proposed bills enacted

One example (*Fair Districts PA, Jan. 2025a, p7*)

Bills with UNANIMOUS Committee votes:

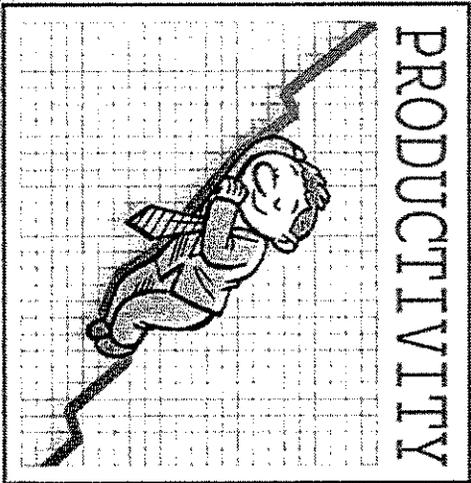
- 25% no floor vote in full chamber (23/24)
- 56% no floor vote in other chamber (21/22)

Leaders say it's about Quality, not Quantity

Quality and Quantity Matter

Critical issues directly affecting local governments and schools ... Not dealt with for years ...

- Provisions affecting Local Governments (many > 50 yrs old)
 - Analysis of Gen. Assembly Local Govt. Commission database Identified 6,000 statutory provisions / >3,000 mandatory / many of them regarding taxation (*PEL*, 2017, 2022)
- Election Administration Reforms (post Act 77, 2019)
 - Mail-in Ballots: Pre-canvassing, 15-day application deadline (*CCAP 2021, 2025*)
- **** Equitable School Funding** (decades)
 - 2023 decision / \$5.4B Adequacy Gap / FY2025 \$500M (*Basic Ed Funding Commission, 1/11/24; Spotlight PA, 1/14/25*)
- **Pick an Issue You Care About _____!!**

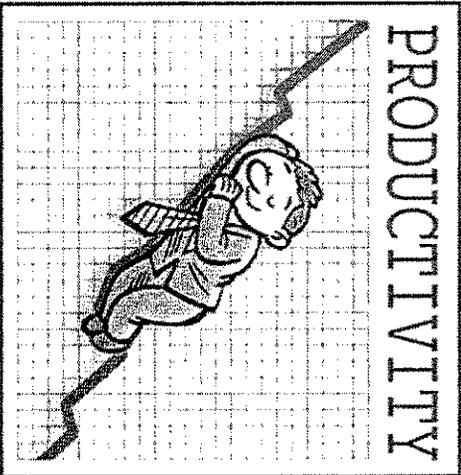


Quality and Quantity Matter

Critical issues affecting all of us ...

Not dealt with for years ...

- **Redistricting Reform**
 - LWVPA working on this **for more than 30 years!**
- **** Testing for Lead in Children (2017 study / 2022 bill amended)**
 - Violating House rules, the Appropriations Committee changed **mandate to suggestion (Fair Districts PA, Jan 2025a, p12)**
- **Pick an Issue You Care About _____!!**



Recent redistricting reform bills illustrate the legislature's ***Inaction and Dysfunction*** ...

LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE

AS of April 2023

110 House cosponsors in 2018 - more than 1/2 the PA House

Over 104,000 petition signatures - from every county in PA

~1200 public presentations attended by over 46,000

Thousands of calls, emails, letters & postcards

Hundreds of in-person legislative

Bipartisan

more than 70% of PA population

Reform Bills Never Got a Floor Vote

Public comment in support

600+ editorials, op-eds and columns

600+ letters to the editor, published in...

100+ media outlets in cities and towns across PA

1700+ news articles

66% support redistricting reform

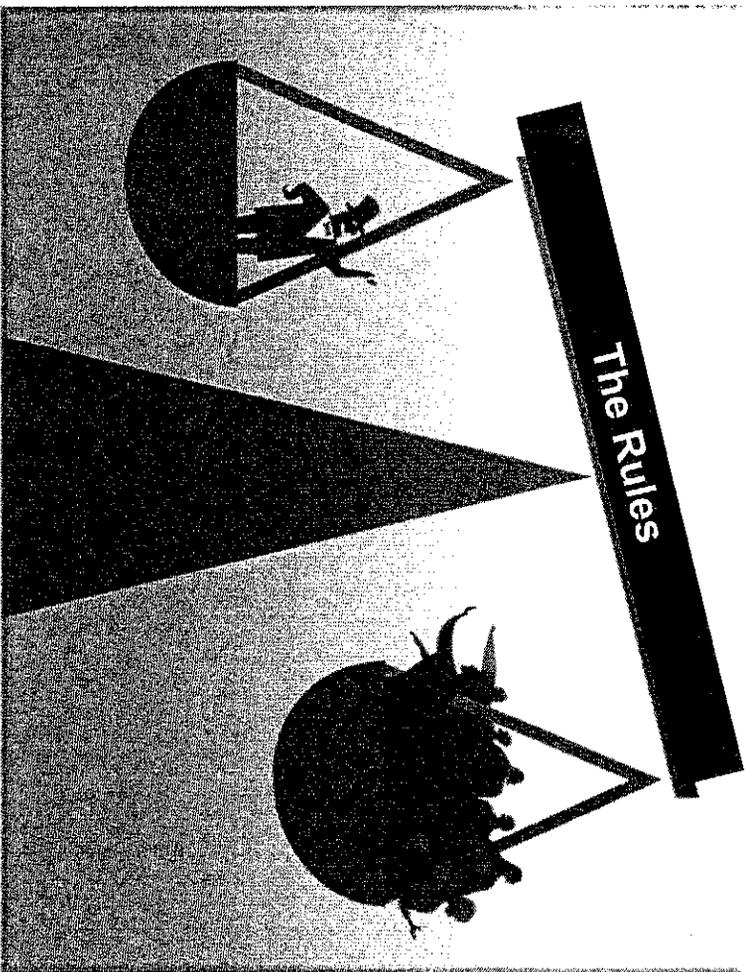
67% want an independent commission to draw state legislative district lines

*F&M Poll August 2019

FLX Harrisburg: Bipartisan Bills Deserve a Vote



Why No Debate or Vote?



Legislative Rules Are The Problem

- Rules Govern the Process
- Majority Party Makes the Rules
- Rules Give Party Leaders Control

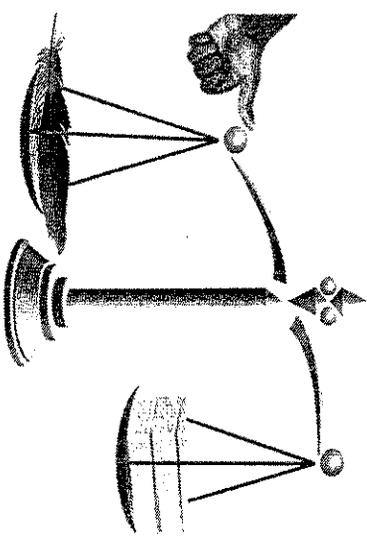
Unchecked Power Creates
Dangerous Imbalance

One Committee Chair Outweighs:

- The House and Senate
- The Will of the People

It Doesn't Have to Be This Way!

Rule Changes that hopefully would get
Hyper-partisan Thumbs off the Scale



- A committee vote for bipartisan bills
- A floor vote for bipartisan bills voted out of committee
- Bipartisan bills that pass one chamber get a committee vote in the other chamber

**We've seen what gerrymandering is and why it's part of the problem.
Let's take a look at how it is done.**

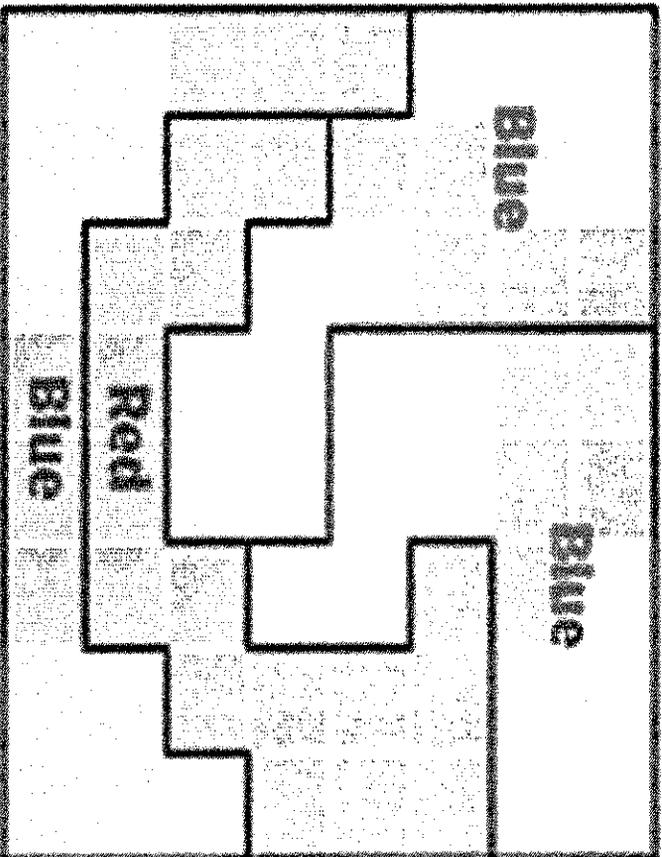
How Does Gerrymandering Happen?

First, Harrisburg Majority Leaders Gather Info on

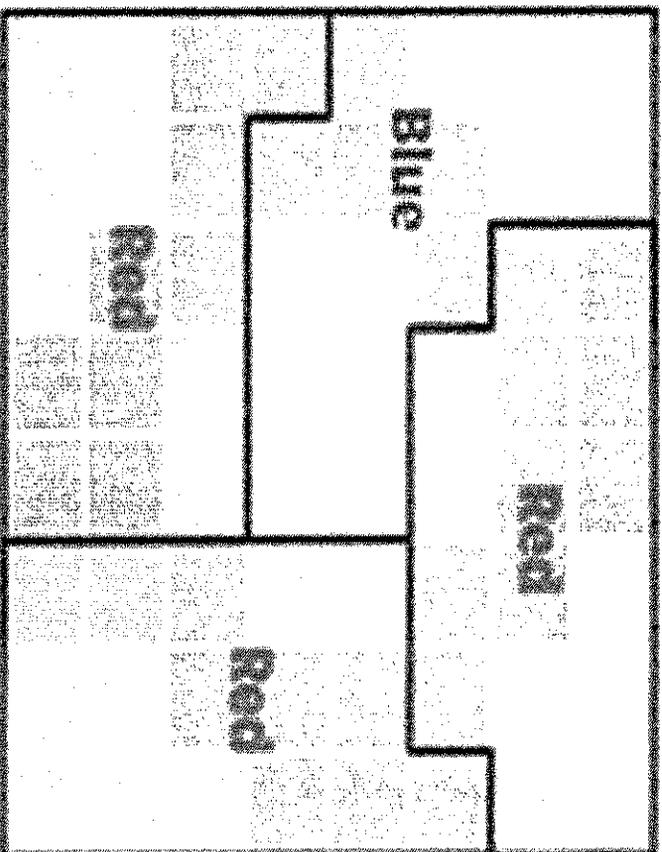
How Households Tend to Vote ...

Even	Even
Even	Even

... Then They Can Pack & Crack Voters into
 Districts That Favor the Majority Party, not Voters



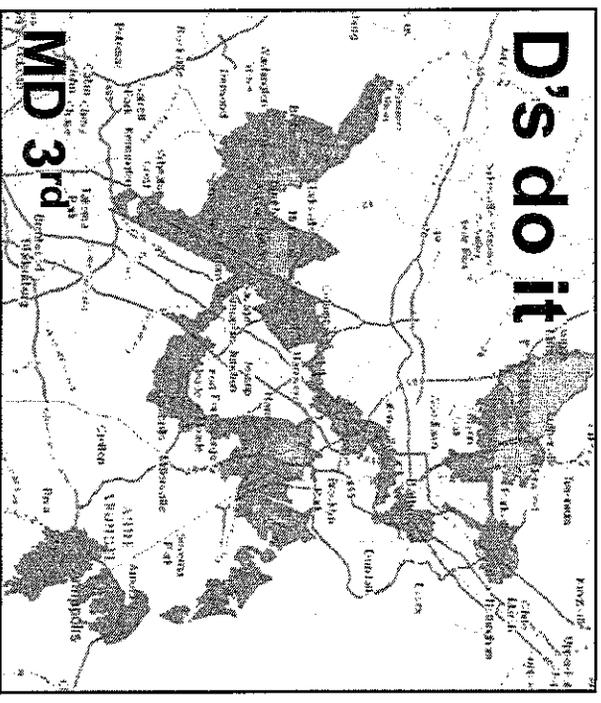
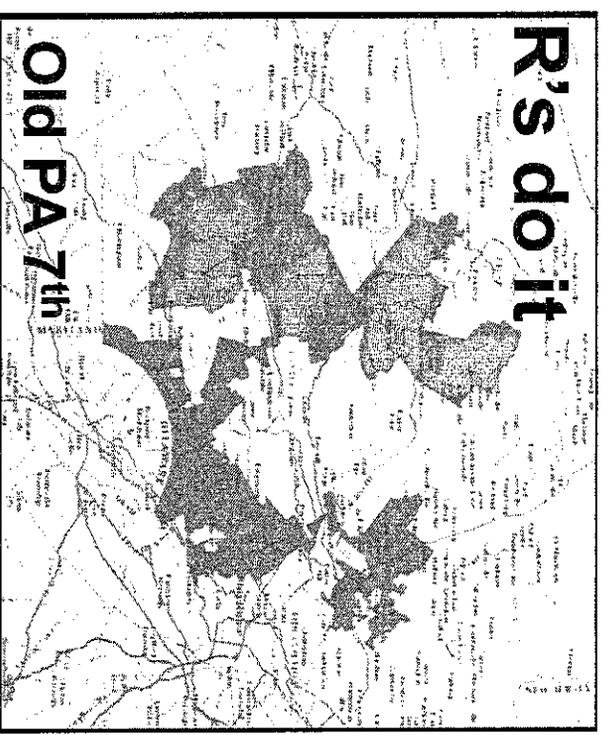
Packing
 1 red, 3 blue



Cracking
 3 red, 1 blue

Gerrymandering is

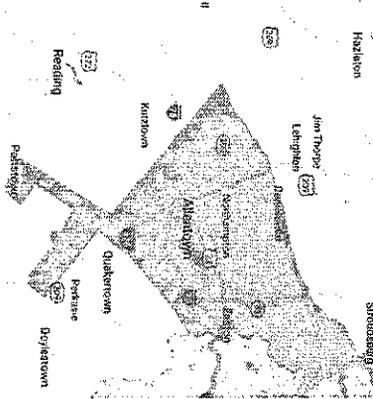
An equal opportunity power grab ...
relished by BOTH major political parties



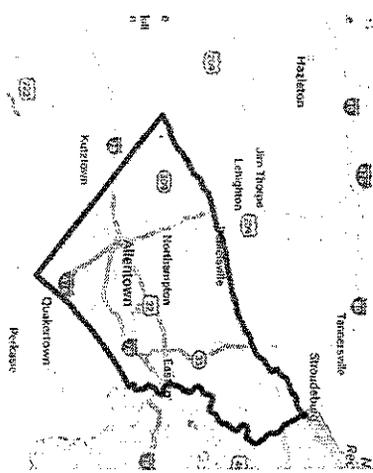
**Lehigh Valley's Congressional District
 1972 to 2010**

1970's

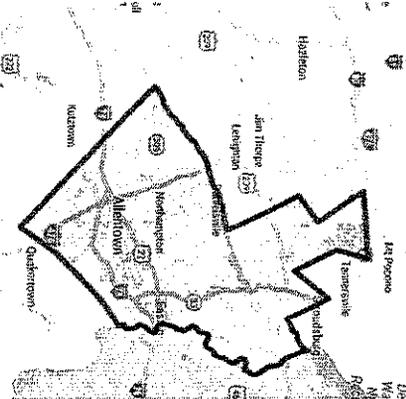
For 40 years the
 Lehigh Valley
 remained fairly
 intact



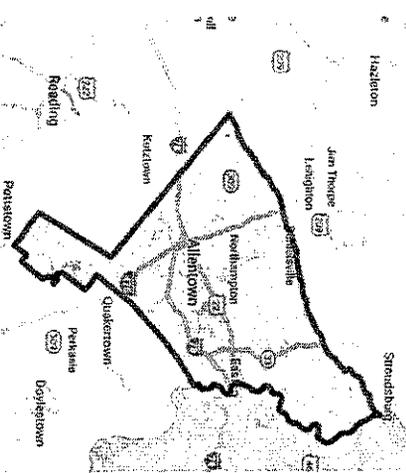
1980's



1990's

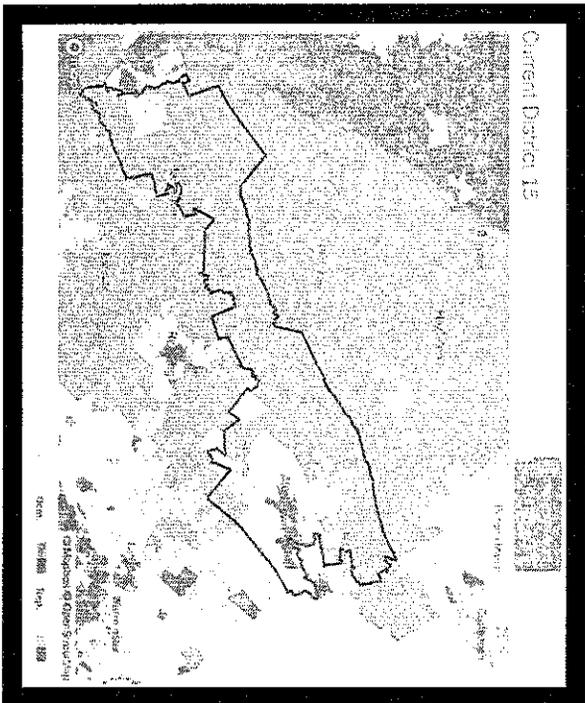


2000's



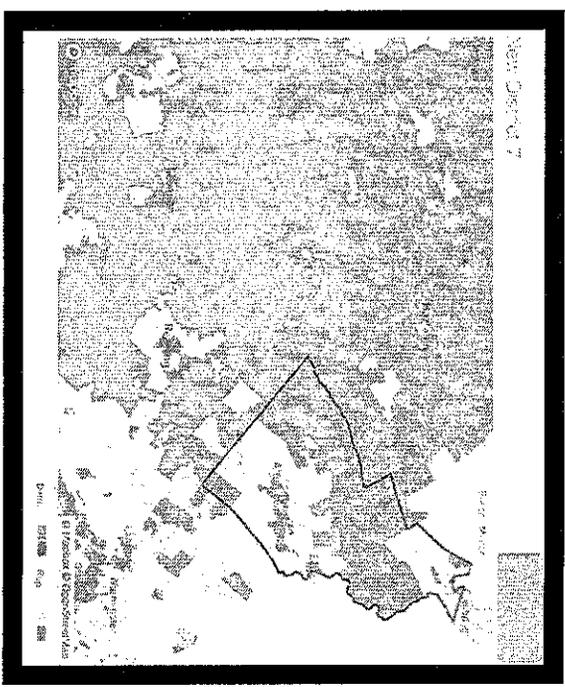
Lehigh Valley's Congressional District 2012 through 2020

PA15: 2012, 2014, 2016



What is Going On?

PA7: 2018, 2020 Only



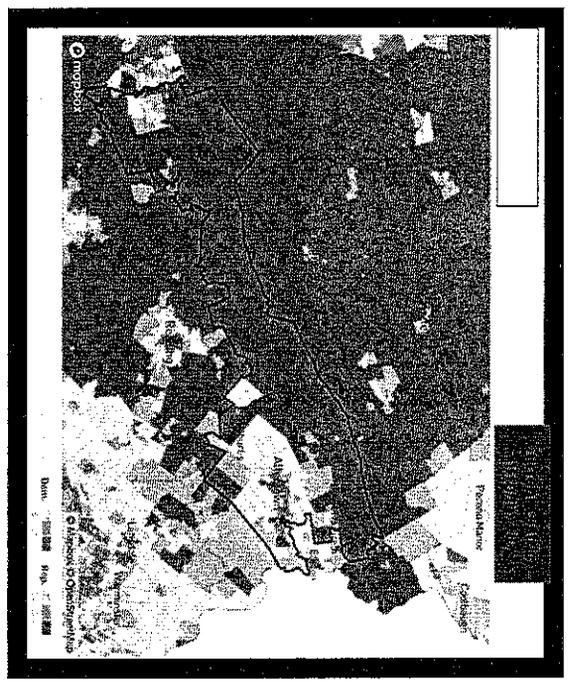
Looks Familiar, right?



Lehigh Valley's Congressional District 2012 through 2020

PA15: 2012, 2014, 2016

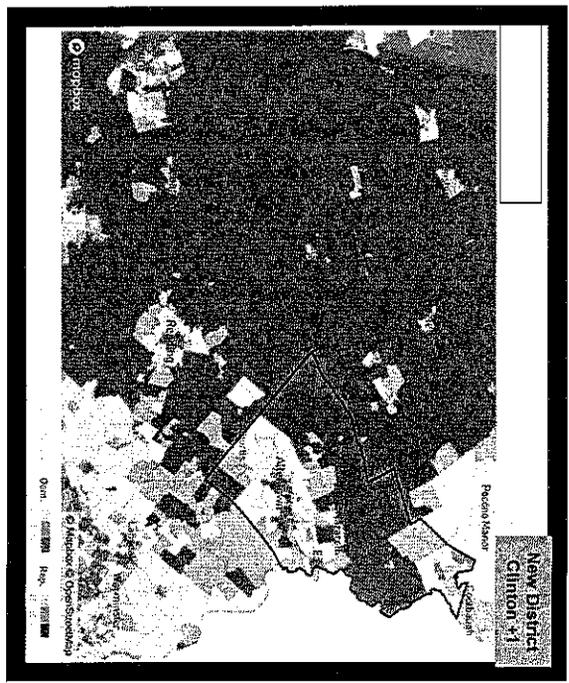
2011: Rs controlled House, Senate, Governorship, SCOPA



LWVPA et al sue

PA7: 2018, 2020 Only

Court appointed Special Master



Process Matters!

**PA Congressional Delegation
Gerrymandered (2016) vs Fair (2018, 2022)**

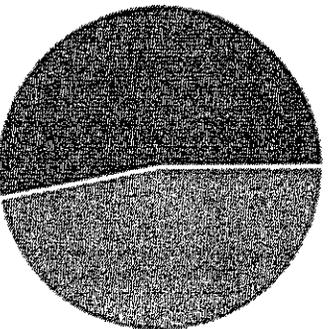
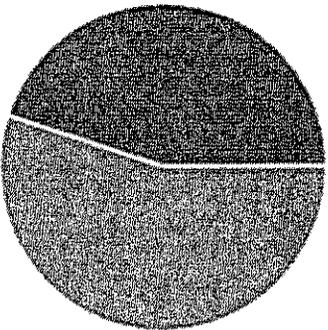
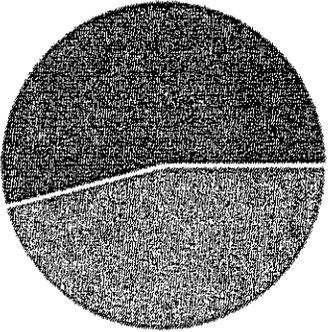
2016

2018*

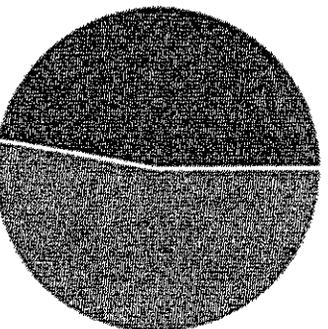
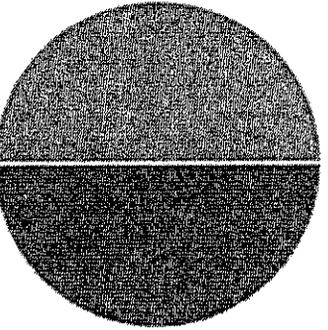
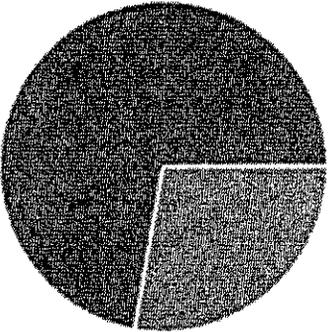
2022*

*Court Mandated

**% Votes
Cast**

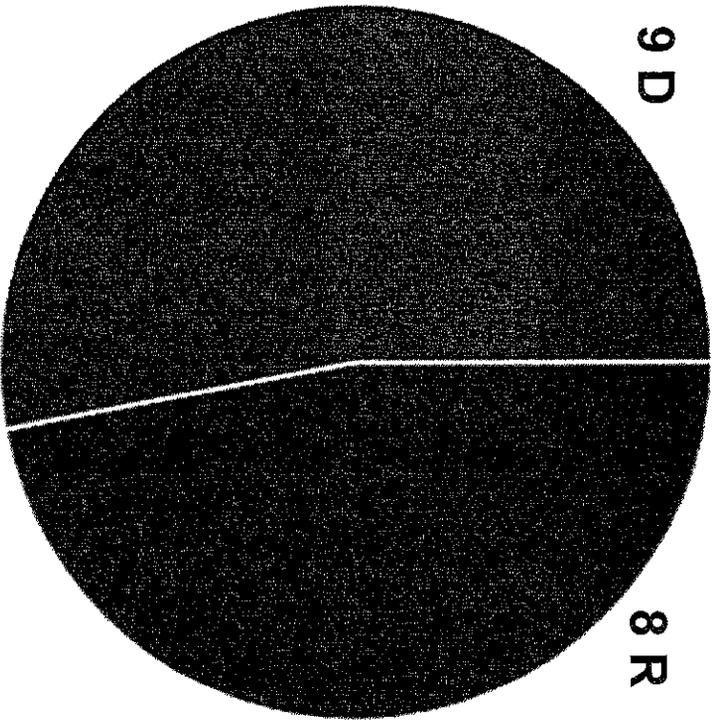


**# Seats
Won**

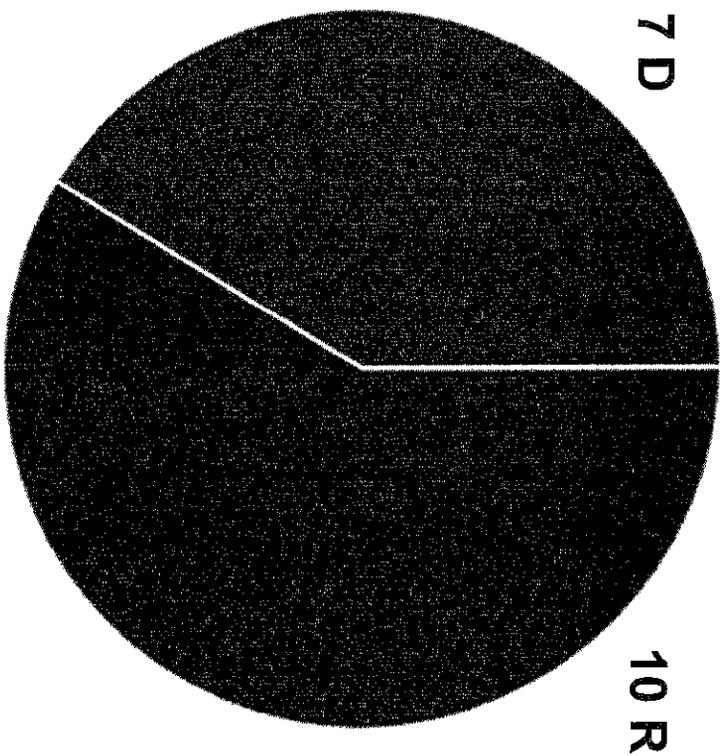


**MAPS
MATTER!**

Congressional Delegation 2022



Congressional Delegation 2024



A Fair Congressional Map ... Responds to Voter Sentiment

STATE Legislative Redistricting
NOT fixed by the Court

Legislative Reapportionment Commission (LRC)

The four legislative leaders (majority & minority leaders from each chamber)

- Elect tie-breaking chair
 - If unable to agree then PA State Supreme Court appoints the chair
 - If SCOPA selects partisan chair, **then maps could be drawn by 3 people**

Wait, aren't the maps approved ... or at least reviewed by ...?

- The full legislature? **No.**

- The Governor? **No!**

- The public? **No!!**

The LRC has long history of partisan-chair-enabled gerrymandering

2021 redistricting cycle was better!

- SCOPA-selected LRC Chair lauded by both parties
Mark Nordenberg, Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Pittsburgh & Chair of the University's Institute of Politics
- Public attention & engagement was very high
- Resulting maps are better than last 2 cycles

Some say, *it worked!* So, no need to change the law ...

Wrong! The law is, and the 4 legislative leaders' participation was...as flawed as ever....

Hmmm ... fair, yet flawed ... let's take a closer look

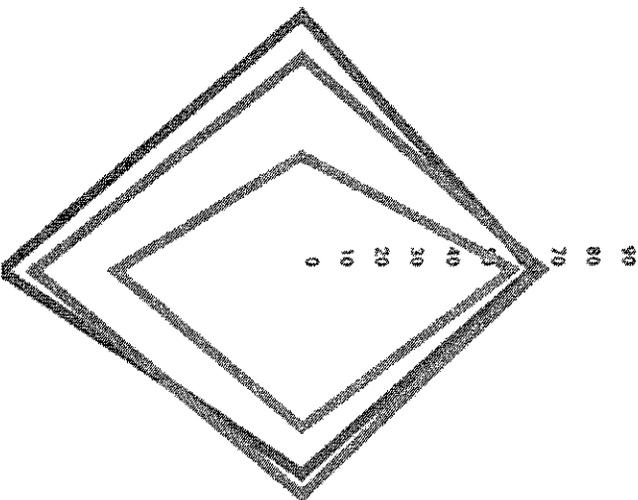
Comparison of House Maps

◆ Final Map 2014

◆ LRC 2021

◆ People's 2021

Minority Representation



Partisan Bias

Compactness

Splitting Municipalities

Scores are normalized composites of accepted metrics from Dave's Redistricting App; bigger is better on a scale to 100



PA House 2021 Redistricting Process

[LRC Chair Report 2022, pp 36-39]

- 2 House Leaders came with incompatible expectations
- Direct negotiations soon stopped
- To keep process moving LRC Chair met with leaders ... separately/privately (Chair held public hearings & had robust website)
- Commission staff produced final “composite” map

***Final House map drawn with input from,
rather than dictated by, party leaders
... thanks to LRC Chair & Staff***

Comparison of Senate Maps

◆ Final Map 2014

◆ LRC 2021

◆ People's 2021

Minority Representation



Partisan Bias

Compactness

Splitting Municipalities



Scores are normalized composites of accepted metrics from Dave's Redistricting App; bigger is better on a scale to 100

PA Senate 2021 Redistricting Process

[LRC Chair Report 2022, pp 36-39]

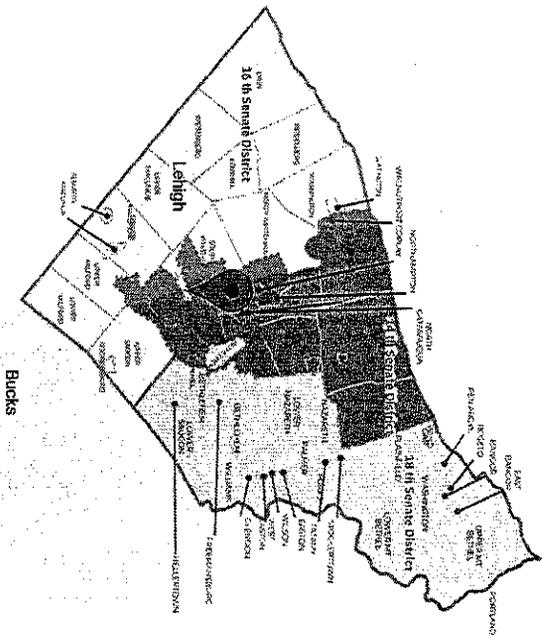
- 2 Senate Leaders attend initial LRC meeting, then ...
- "... regularly discussed reapportionment issues and negotiated between themselves."
- Chair served as mediator, when asked
- So, final "consensus" map dictated by Senate Leaders

A Classic Buddymander...

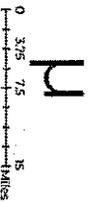
When party leaders make a "Sweetheart Deal" ...
usually to protect *status quo* / incumbents

While there are examples
 across the State ...

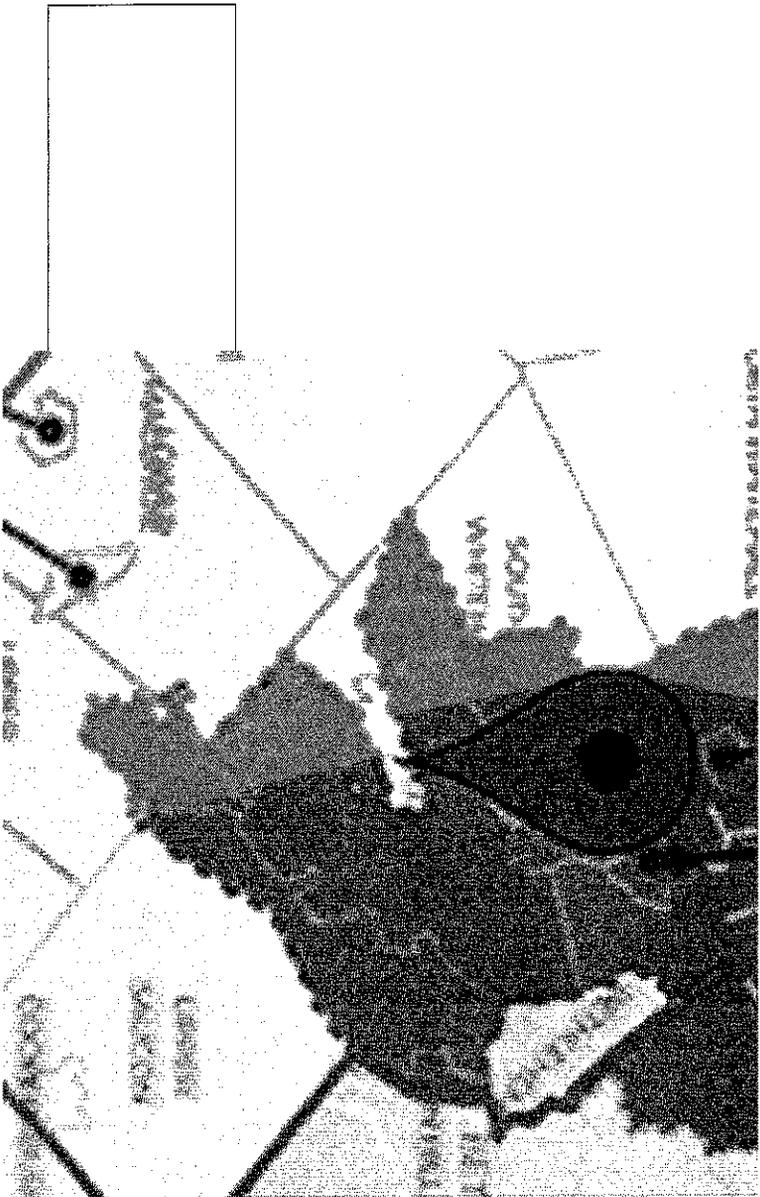
We can see one right here in the LV!



- Lehigh Handicapped Municipality
- Lehigh County
- Northampton County
- 16th District L. Boscola
- 17th District J. Coleman
- 18th District N. Miller



Let's take a closer look at
Senate District 16





How Can We Fix It? UPDATE

PA Constitutional Amendment to Create an *Independent Redistricting Commission*

HB 31 (60*) Pennsylvania General Assembly House Bill 31

SB 131 (20*) Pennsylvania General Assembly Senate Bill 131

*Cosponsors as of March 24, 2026

Bill Summary (*Fair Districts PA, 2025b*)

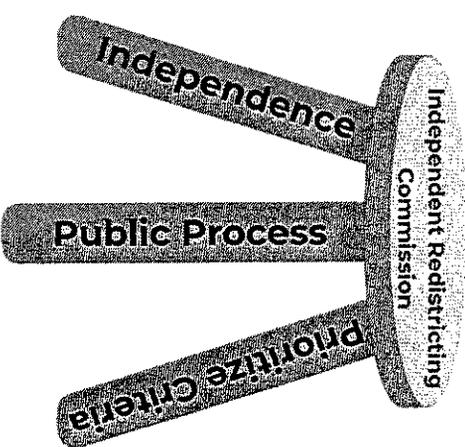
Comparison of Current & Proposed Commissions (*Fair Districts PA, 2025c*)

One Commission would draw district lines for

- Congressional
- State Senate
- State House

No process is perfect but we know these principles help:

- Commission Independence
- Transparent Public Process
- Prioritized Mapping Criteria





Why does PA Need an IRC?

The next redistricting cycle will be in 2031, following the 2030 U.S. Census

No one knows ...

- Who will control the PA House or Senate
- Who will sit in the Governor's Office
- Which party will hold the PA Supreme Court majority

So, no one knows who will have final say in determining PA's legislative districts

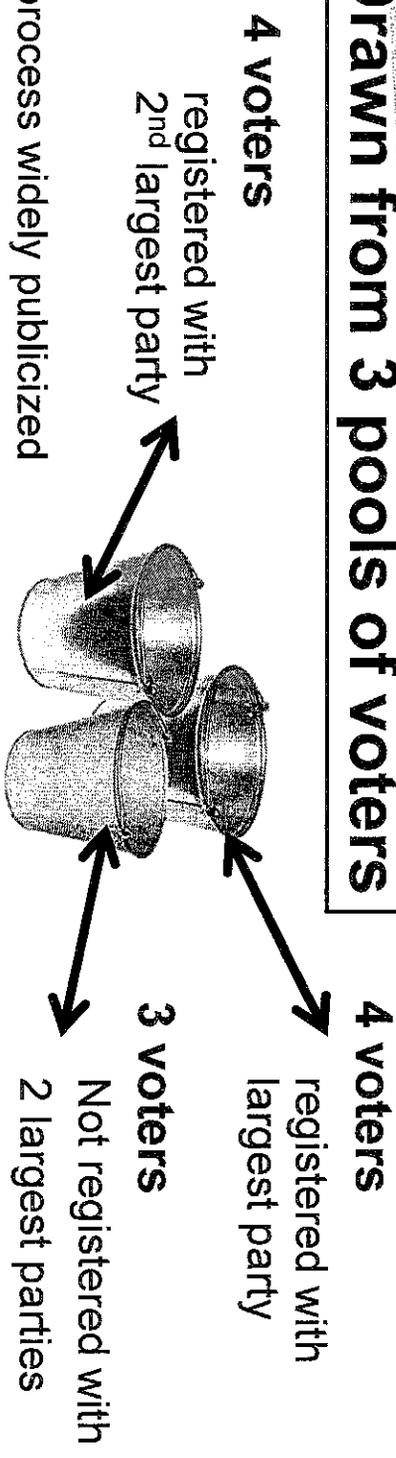
- In 2008 Dems thought they would be in control, then came 2010 Red Wave

What we DO know

- Parties will gerrymander, increasing partisanship and voters' distrust
- True IRCS will draw maps that represent all of us (Campaign Legal Ctr, 2024)

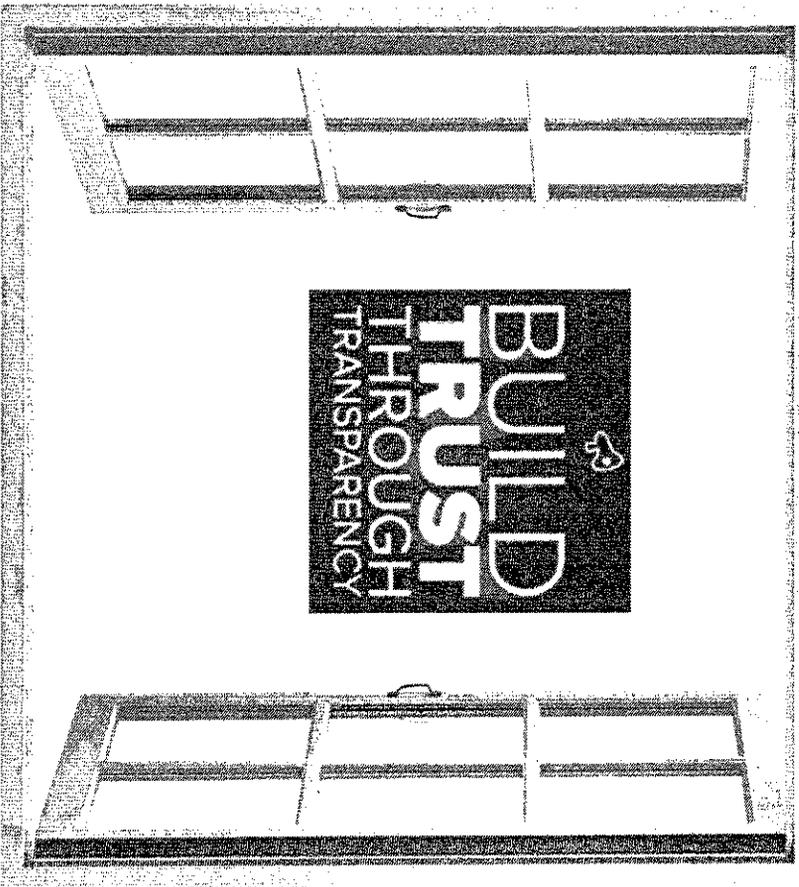
11 member IRC
formed every 10 years during the census cycle

Drawn from 3 pools of voters



- January 1: Application process widely publicized
- Three vetting steps to narrow pools:
 - Ineligible applicants removed (politicians, staff, consultants, family, lobbyists)
 - State Ethics Commission (independent state agency) selects 60 most qualified in each pool
 - Senate & House Majority/Minority Leaders may each strike up to 2 applicants from each pool
- After vetting, first six commissioners selected by public random draw (2 from each pool)
- Six commissioners select remaining 5 for needed skills, geographic & demographic representation

What We Propose: Process Transparency



- Follow Open Meetings Rules
- Public Access to Tools & Data
- Commission Maps Supported by Explanatory Data & Reports
- Public review for 10 days before voting on a map
- Open Commission Votes
 - need 7 to pass
 - at least 2 from each pool
- Fail-Safe Protections
 - Elimination vote
 - Deadline

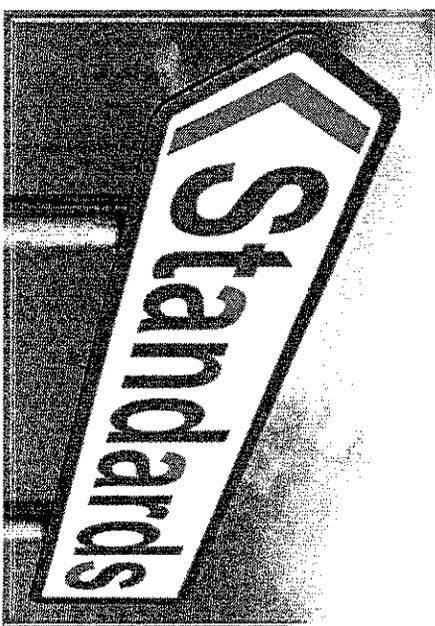
What We Propose: HB31 & SB131 Clearly Defined & Prioritized Mapping Criteria

The redistricting plan must:

- Follow US Constitution, Federal Laws, Voting Rights Act

The redistricting plan shall not:

- Purposefully/unduly favor/disfavor an incumbent, a candidate or prospective elective office candidate
- *On a statewide basis* provide an artificial advantage to any political party.



What We Propose: Clearly Defined & Prioritized Mapping Criteria

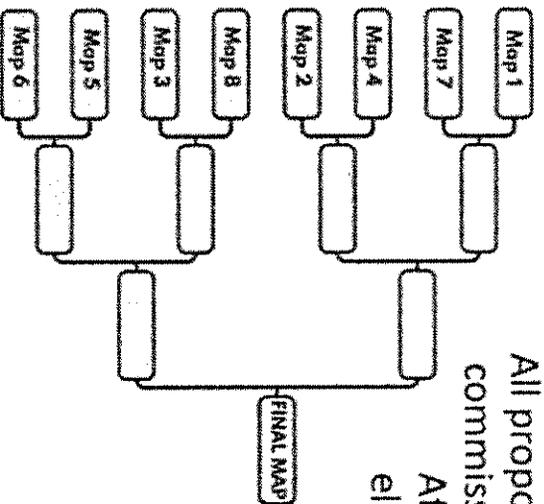
The redistricting plan shall

- Provide equal opportunity of representation for Racial Minorities
- Respect Communities of Interest (to the extent possible)
- Minimize County/Municipal Splits
- Adhere to Population Deviation Ranges
- Be Contiguous*
- Meet Standard Measures of Compactness (to the extent possible)



Avoiding a Deadlock: The Fail-Safe Vote

In the unlikely event the commission fails to approve a map with the proposed voting mechanism, any commissioner would be allowed to propose a map, accompanied by approved metrics and an explanatory report.



All proposed maps and reports would be posted on the commission website for ten days of public scrutiny and comment.

After 10-day review, the commission votes using an elimination bracket, in a publicly accessible voting event.

- All commissioners rank all maps in that category.
- A pair of maps is randomly selected, and the one preferred by a majority is retained, the other eliminated.
- This is repeated until a final winning map is determined.



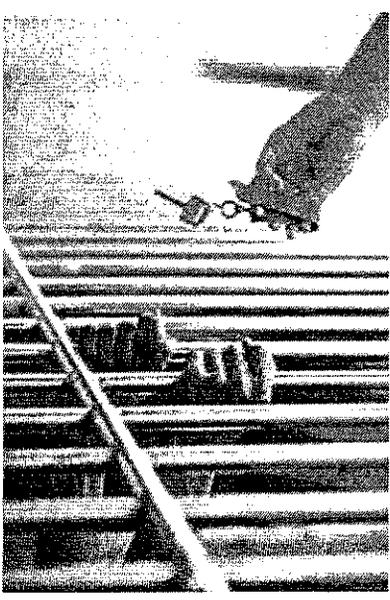
One More Important Change the Bill Makes ...

It Eliminates Prison Gerrymandering

If you lived in PA before you were incarcerated,

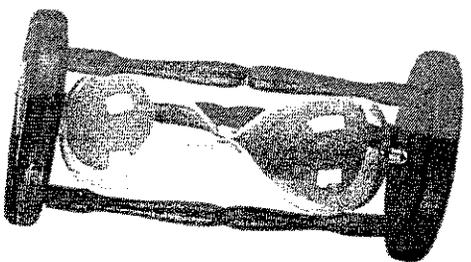
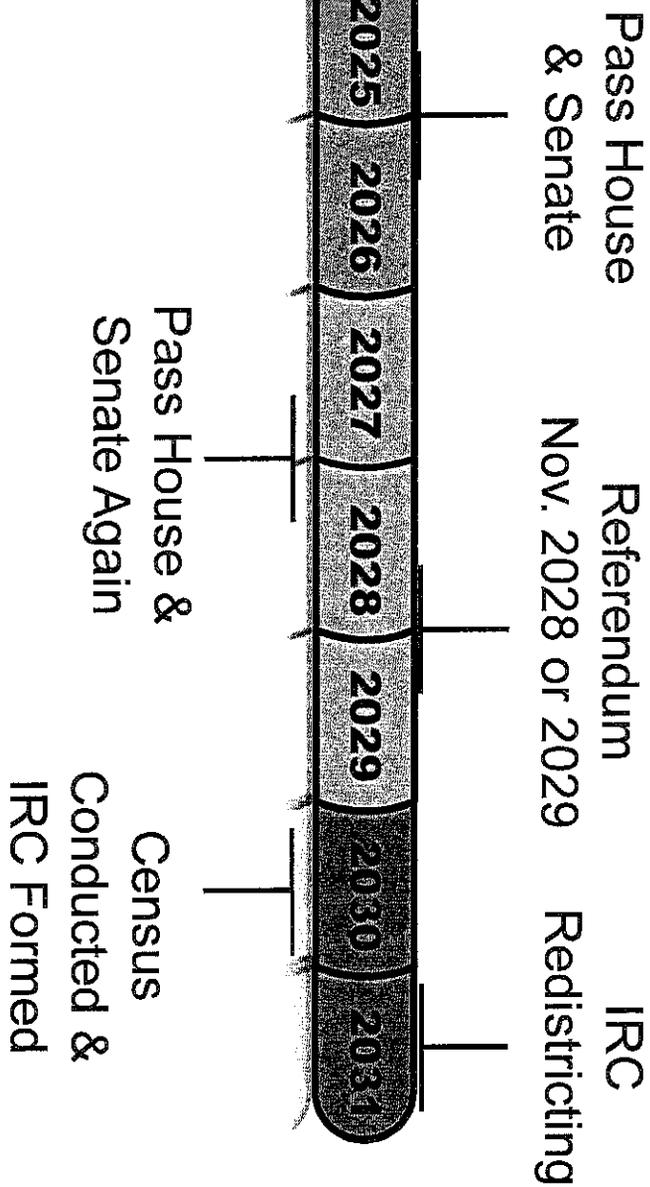
You would get counted

where you lived prior to incarceration



2030 is So Far Away ...
Why Do We Need Your Help Now?

Constitutional Amendments Take a Long Time





UPDATE: LV Legislator Support for Independent Redistricting Commission

District	State Senator
14	Nick Miller
16	Jarrett Coleman
18	Lisa Boscola

District	State Representative
22	Ana Tiburcio
131	Milou Mackenzie
132	Michael Schlossberg *
133	Jeanne McNeill
134	Peter Schweyer
135	Steve Samuelson *
136	Robert Freeman
137	Joe Emrick
138	Ann Flood
183	Zachary Mako
187	Gary Day

HB31 / SB131 Support Co-Sponsor
*** Prime Sponsor**
 Not yet co-sponsoring

As of March 24, 2026



How You Can Help

Spread the word to family & friends. Finally, an issue you can agree on!

Call or Meet with your Legislator: Teams forming now!

- Ask them to co-sponsor; thank them when they do co-sponsor
- Ask them to call for public hearings and a vote on HB31/SB131

Request a Speaker: For your community organization or congregation

Write a Letter to the Editor: Examples available

Staff a Table on Primary Day 2026: Talk to voters AFTER they vote!

Staff a Table at Community Events

Follow Us on Social Media: Help boost our posts

Tips & Help at www.FairDistrictsPA.com/take-action



Learn more ...

- www.FairDistrictsPA.com
 - Background info and latest updates
 - Find online and in-person events and ways you could help
 - Find your legislator .. and see whether they are supporters of HB31/SB131
 - Click *Join Us* button to explore volunteer options to find ones that work for you
- **Monthly FDPA Zoom updates:** at www.FairDistrictsPA.com/events
 - Scroll down to find next meeting, or other events you might like to attend
- **X/Twitter:** [@FairDistrictsPA](https://twitter.com/FairDistrictsPA)
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- **ABA:** [2025 Task Force For American Democracy Report 2025 ABA Report](#)

What's the Take-Away?

*Gerrymandering may not be the issue
you care about most ...*

It's just the issue we need to fix first.

