

Senate Election Law & Municipal Affairs Committee
107 North Main Street, Concord, NH 03301

Dear Chairman Gray and Members of the Senate Election Law & Municipal Affairs Committee,

I urge the Committee to OPPOSE HB52 and HB50, and instead commit to creating new maps which are more consistent with constitutional and legal constraints; more consistent with New Hampshire tradition, competitiveness and democracy; and less geographically disruptive. We know it can be done.

HB52 “Apportioning Congressional Districts”

As a resident of Epping, I urge you to OPPOSE HB52 “Apportioning Congressional Districts”, as amended, and produce a new and better map. Why? Because HB52

- Breaks sharply with 140 years of precedent.
- Moves 75 towns and a third of NH’s population into a different district, ultimately angering votes and town officials.
- Converts what had been two competitive Congressional districts into a strongly Democratic-leaning and a substantially Republican-leaning district, thereby reducing competition and likely cutting turnout of Republicans in District 2 and Democrats in District 1.

As friends of the free market, we support competition in the provision of goods and services. And as patriotic supporters of democracy, we should promote competition in our elections. Competitive electoral districts create a vibrant market for public policy ideas and encourage civic engagement by our Granite State citizens.

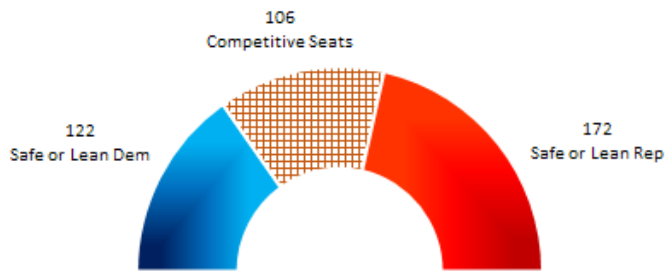
Conversely, uncompetitive districts discourage voters in each district’s disadvantaged party from even bothering to vote. Such districts also add weight to the party primaries and reduce the importance of the general election – a bit like making the NFL playoffs more determinative than the Super Bowl.

HB50 “Apportioning State Representative Districts”

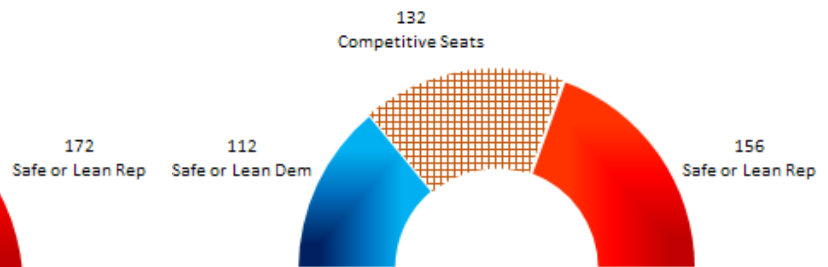
I also urge you to OPPOSE HB50 “Apportioning State Representative Districts”, as amended, and produce a better map. Why? Because the current proposal

- Denies 56 town dedicated seats. Map-a-Thon has shown that this can be as low as 40, so HB50 may lead to, and lose, a court challenge.
- Is obviously gerrymandered. Using NH’s 2020 statewide voting results for Executive Council and Senate, which were almost exactly 50-50 GOP-Democrat, we’d expect a roughly even predicted party split for the statewide NH House results. And yet the Map-a-Thon team (of which I am a member) predicts HB50 would result in 172 GOP, 122 Democrat, and only 106 competitive seats. Meanwhile, Map-a-Thon’s own maps are far less polarized and more competitive, showing what is possible:

House Seat Competitiveness - HB50 with Senate amendment



House Seat Competitiveness - Map-a-Thon



Summary

The Map-a-Thon team and others have produced Congressional and state representative maps which are much more competitive, less polarized, and less geographically disruptive. So I urge the Committee to use one of those or generate one of its own that is more consistent with tradition and democracy.

I also urge the committee to OPPOSE CACR36 as it serves only confuse and discourage eligible voters from casting a ballot; and to SUPPORT SB255 to improve the transparency and consistency of the redistricting process.

Meanwhile, thank you for the work being done by all members of the Committee.

Respectfully,
C. Jeffrey Smith (Epping)