

January 9, 2022

To the members of the Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee,

Dear distinguished committee members, my name is Deborah Bacon Nelson, and I am from the town of Hanover. Until I recently retired, I taught American Studies for almost three decades at Lebanon High School. Over the years, I taught my students to take the act of voting seriously and encouraged them to volunteer on campaigns so they would understand the importance of political engagement. They studied the foundations of representational government, and they learned to research positions and then to select candidates based on those positions. As a result of their work, they spent a part of their summer, and many fall weekends, canvassing, exploring issues with voters, conducting visibility, and volunteering in the offices of the candidates *they selected*.

The one subject that inevitably caused them tremendous dismay was gerrymandering, and we looked at many egregious examples and discussed the insidious reasons why committees choose to make it very difficult for members of one party to be successful when running for office. Students can become cynical very quickly, and gerrymandering often resulted in expressions of frustration and questions about being engaged if their votes did not count. I ask you today to consider the young people of this country as you decide on the maps before you.

From the earliest days of our Republic, leaders in the Executive branch, members of Congress, and State Legislatures have all seen the critical importance of educating future citizens. Witness the Land Ordinance of 1785, which underscores the key importance of providing public education to future citizens. The following points are taken from a paper published by the Center for Educational Policy:

- **Federal support for public schools is not a modern concept. Rather, it goes back more than two centuries to the time of George Washington and the nation's founding. Two early federal Acts—the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787—granted federal lands to new states and set aside a portion of those lands to be used to fund public schools.**
- **The nation's founders saw these land grants as a way to encourage public education and incorporate the principles of democracy throughout the vast**

western territory. Many of the founders viewed education as a primary way to ensure citizens were prepared to exercise the freedom and responsibilities of a democratic society. By the end of the 18th century, there was a general consensus in favor of using public funds to support public schooling for the common good.

You might ask why I am including these historical references to funding, and it is because I believe that the very fundamental principle of educating future citizens to vote thoughtfully and patriotically, is challenged by gerrymandering. I suggest that you consider gerrymandering to be not only unpatriotic, but counter to the very ideals upon which this country was founded. When I look at the Majority's maps for both the Senate and the Executive Council, I cannot help but see egregious examples of gerrymandering. The new borders for my Senator, as an example, extend in a peculiar fashion from Hanover, on the western portion of the state, over to Plymouth. Aside from each town containing a college, we have virtually no interaction or connection. Clearly the intention is to pack Democrats into one District, but what does this mean to erstwhile Republican voters? The Majority's Executive Council map continues to consider that a snaking district, running from one side of the state to the other, is somehow legitimate. We know that this is not the case.

On behalf of idealistic students, who our Republic needs to have invested and involved in order to thrive, I implore you to vote against SB 240 and SB 241, and instead to vote in support of SB 253 and SB254. Such votes are consistent with the ideals of the Founding Fathers, with the importance of educating future citizens, for the legitimacy of elections, and for both Democrats and Republicans living in New Hampshire.

Sincerely,
Deborah H. Bacon Nelson

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