

Dear Senate Special Committee on Redistricting,

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak about the proposed Senate and Executive Council maps. I sincerely hope that you will take my comments and the comments of other Granite Staters into consideration before you finalize your decisions.

My Republican parents raised me to believe in the power of the vote, and in the importance of civic participation. As I grew and my understanding of politics changed, my political alliances shifted more to the left. This led to ardent and at times heated debates around the dinner table! My family often disagreed about policy, but we were united in our belief that participation by voting was an essential civic responsibility and a fair and just way to determine the leadership of our town, our state and our country.

Today, I find myself doubting that our elections are fair. I am deeply disturbed and disheartened by the majority party's proposed Senate map, SB 240 and Executive map, SB 241. I am urging all my Republican and Democratic friends to speak out about these maps.

According to the Senate election data from 2020, the NH senate races have the potential to be competitive. In 2020 49.8 % of the vote went to Democrats, and 50.2% Republicans. If the breakdown of Republican and Democratic voters holds true through the 2022 election, you would expect the Republicans to capture slightly over 50 % of the 24 seats.

Instead, Senator Gray and the majority have taken the already gerrymandered and unfair map created in 2010 and made it worse. They have succeeded in splitting and packing districts in a way that will assure that Republicans gain more than their fair share of representation. For example, the majority map packs college towns, including Plymouth and Hanover into one district, creating a democratic stronghold in District 5 and making all the surrounding districts more conservative. Under this plan, the Republicans will more than likely capture 15 seats leaving the Democrats 9. This does not reflect the actual breakdown of voters in the state. In addition, this map ignores communities of interest; it is clearly drawn for the sole purpose of partisan gain.

The majority plan for the Executive Council SB 241 has the same problems. It takes a bad map drawn in 2010 (that even the Republican Governor recognized needed to be fixed,) and makes it worse.

If you support these clearly gerrymandered maps, you run the risk of losing all credibility with voters and increasing the divisions already existing between parties in this state. Voters want competitive districts, and we know that competitive races bring out the best candidates and increase voter participation.

Voters want the members of their senate, Republican and Democratic, to work together to solve problems. Please solve this problem now! I ask that the majority party reconsider the maps currently proposed, or support the maps drawn by the minority party. A third alternative is to support the maps created by the independent nonpartisan group Map-a Thon

Thank you for this opportunity to speak,

Ellen Farnum, Tamworth NH

