

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

From: Jim Contois, Claremont, NH, Councilor, Ward II

In 2021 NH considered a constitutional amendment, a house bill, and a senate bill on establishing an independent advisory commission on redistricting. Every 10 years states re-draw the boundaries of congressional and legislative districts for the purpose of reflecting changes in population and ensure that everyone is fairly represented. Members of Congress, state legislators, and many cities council and school board members are elected from districts. At least once per decade, the district lines are redrawn. The way that district lines are drawn puts voters together in groups — some voters are kept together in one district and others are separated into different districts. And in our system, whichever group has more votes within a district usually decides which representative wins.

New Hampshire's Republican State Committee party chair Stephen Stepanek has guaranteed that at least one of New Hampshire's two U.S. House members will be a Republican as a result of the 2022 election because Republicans are in the majorities of the New Hampshire House and Senate and will control the every-10-years redrawing of boundaries for congressional and legislative districts. In 2016, NHPR crunched the numbers on gerrymandering in New Hampshire and found that persistent gerrymandering over the course of 30 years has almost entirely benefited Republicans.

In 2021, gerrymandering has gotten worse, not better, we the voters want to make sure that legislators know that the voters demand a fair, nonpartisan, and transparent process. We need an independent redistricting commission, this idea passed the legislature with bipartisan votes but was vetoed twice, we again are depending on the good consciences of our state legislators. We must have fairness.

My district, under the current proposed map, will lose our Senator: Sue Prentiss. This is a travesty, and it feels like a death in the family. Stand for integrity, fairness, and a democratic process. Do not manipulate but represent the people....please.