

WHY REDISTRICTING MAPS MATTER

Republican Senate and Executive Council redistricting bills SB 240 and SB 241 are prime examples of gerrymandering that do not serve New Hampshire voters.

My father was a thoughtful Republican who believed in our capitalist economy in which a free market and lively competition insured that business would work hard to produce products and services that would be purchased by consumers.

Having examined the Republican Senate and Executive Council redistricting maps, one must ask: Do Republicans no longer believe in fair and lively competition? You know and I know, and even casual reviewers of these maps can see that these maps have been blatantly gerrymandered. Indeed, a Republican legislator publicly remarked that the maps have been deliberately drawn so that now there are districts where it is virtually certain that a Democrat will win and others where a Republican is virtually a sure winner. So, this legislator proclaimed, the maps are “fair.”

These maps would be “fair” if the only persons who mattered were the politicians, but in our democracy, it is the voters who are supposed to matter. These maps make a mockery of our democratic system because voters’ votes are practically meaningless in gerrymandered districts. Of course, there is the argument that both parties have been guilty of gerrymandering. That is true. But the “everybody does it” argument does not make gerrymandering right, and the more the general public learns of this on-going travesty, the more politicians will be held to account.

Indeed, if this blatant 2022 gerrymandering is allowed to stand, then the argument can and will be made that Republican politicians created their gerrymandered maps because their policies and programs cannot attract enough votes to allow them to win fairly in competitive districts. Thus, gerrymandering is required to tip the scales in their favor.

If maps were drawn fairly, taking into account the proper work of legislators which is the effective representation of his/her constituents, then districts would be drawn in such a way that constituents’ critical interests and needs would be the primary consideration. Thus, for example, citizens who share a high school SAU would be grouped in the same district. In the Republican redistricting map, 35 high school districts are split up because political considerations have trumped the needs of voters. Even accounting for legal redistricting requirements, would it be possible to do better? Absolutely! The nonpartisan group OPEN DEMOCRACY ACTION and other groups involved in MAP-A-THON have offered voter-centered, non-partisan redistricting mapping alternatives for legislators to consider.

Citizens are becoming much better informed about the practice of gerrymandering. Legislators would be wise to consider the political liability of approving blatantly gerrymandered maps. Truly fair redistricting maps focus on the duty of legislators to the citizens of New Hampshire and not on the ambitions of politicians. Voters deserve fair and honest bipartisan redistricting maps.

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