

To: House Special Redistricting Committee & Senate Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee

Fr: Marie Morgan, Goffstown 10.18.21

Thank you for your service as NH Legislators and your willingness to participate in this extremely important effort to update New Hampshire's electoral districts.

Garry Rayno, wrote the following in his In Depth NH article dated August 19, 2019:

In New Hampshire, the two Congressional districts are not gerrymandered, but the executive council, senate and house districts certainly are.

Executive Council District 2 (held by Andru Volinsky - D), is a perfect example of how gerrymandering works, packing members of one party into a district while leaving few members of that party in surrounding districts making them easier for the other party to win.

District 2 was redrawn in 2012 when Republicans held veto-proof majorities in the House and Senate and controlled all five Executive Council seats. Democratic stronghold Keene had been in District 5 for many years and Portsmouth, another reliably Democratic city, was historically in District 3. When the political map was redrawn, Keene and Portsmouth joined other Democratic strongholds Concord and Dover in District 2, making it prohibitively Democratic, while districts 3 (held by Russell Prescott - R), and 5 (held by Deborah Pignatelli - D) became much more Republican.

*The state Senate map redrawn in 2012 also favored Republicans. The next election was in 2012, and **even though Democratic Senate candidates actually won more votes**, Republicans held on to their majority. In other words, the people of New Hampshire leaned one way, but the Senate went the other.*

*In 2019, **House Bill 706** was introduced in the NH legislature. It would have established a redistricting commission of equal numbers of both parties and **give the legislature a final vote on the plan.***

The bill passed the House and Senate election law committees unanimously, had a somewhat bipartisan vote in the House with more than a dozen Republicans voting in favor, and no opposition during the voice vote in the Senate. Governor Sununu vetoed the bill saying the Constitution requires lawmakers to redraw the lines not a commission, although that somewhat misrepresents the selection process. House Republicans voted 145-7 to support the governor's veto.

*During a public hearing regarding **HB 706** on May 1, 2019, Mr. Yuriy Rudensky with the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice in New York testified in support of the Bill. He stated that "the Brennan Center enthusiastically supports HB 706. It is refreshing to see a bipartisan coalition of elected officials and community stakeholders understand the critical role that redistricting plays in maintaining a healthy democracy and to work together to find solutions that work for the Granite State. By passing HB 706, New Hampshire has an opportunity to set an example for the rest of the country".*

On July 25, 2019, the Union Leader published an opinion piece by John T. Broderick, Jr, a former NH Supreme Court Justice and Atty Bradford Cook, a Republican and Chair of the NH Ballot Law Commission. The gentlemen wrote that New Hampshire is “ *not immune from partisan efforts to manipulate the voting districts to the advantage of the party in power...HB 706 would be good for Republicans, good for Democrats, level the playing field, and make NH a shining example to other states on how to improve the political process and faith in it.*”

Two prominent NH men and a nonpartisan, redistricting expert agreed that HB 706 would have been good for New Hampshire. **What was in HB 706 that you should consider as you move forward?**

Developing Redistricting Maps.

1. The commission shall post proposed maps on the commission website for a minimum of 7 days for public comment and by distribution to the news media in a manner designed to achieve the widest public access reasonably possible before establishing a final plan.
2. When releasing a proposed map, the commission shall also release the data used to create the plan, such as population data, geographic data, and election data.
3. The commission shall issue with the proposed and final maps written evaluations that measure the maps against external metrics which may include efficiency gap and compactness. These metrics shall cover all criteria set forth in RSA 662-B:6.

Redistricting Criteria.

1. Districts shall comply with the United States Constitution and all applicable federal laws. Districts shall be drawn on the basis of total population.
2. Districts shall comply with the New Hampshire Constitution’s Part 2, Article 11 which states “*When the population of any town or ward, according to the last federal census, is within a reasonable deviation from the ideal population for one or more representative seats, the town or ward **shall** have its own district of one or more representative seats.*”
3. Districts shall form single boundaries and shall not be bisected or otherwise divided by other districts, and shall respect the geographic integrity of political boundaries to the extent practicable without violating the requirements of state law or any preceding subdivisions.
4. Districts shall be drawn in compact shapes and shall avoid jagged edges and extensions.
5. Commissioners shall consider the integrity of **communities of interest** to the extent practicable. For purposes of this section a community of interest is defined as an area with recognized similarities of interests, including but not limited to racial, ethnic, economic, social, cultural, geographic, or historic identities. **Communities of interest shall not include common relationships with political parties or political candidates.**