



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT REDISTRICTING REFORM

The Process

- Redistricting happens every ten years, after the federal census. Purpose is to equalize the population of Congressional and legislative districts – “one person, one vote” (1964 Baker v. Carr)
- In all states but six, state legislatures are in charge of redistricting
- In Indiana, the General Assembly draws the maps for Congress and the state legislature. The only requirements are equal population, compliance with the Voting Rights Act and contiguity
- No maps have ever been overturned because of gerrymandering for partisan reasons, despite Davis v. Bandemer

Why it Matters

- Gerrymandering leads to uncompetitive districts and no competition leads to low voter turnout. In 2014, 44 out of 100 candidates for the Indiana House, and 10 of the 25 candidates for the state Senate had no opponents. Indiana’s voter turnout rate of 28% was the lowest in the country.
- When districts are lopsided from a partisan perspective it creates polarization, with candidates appealing to the fringes, instead of the middle. Compromise becomes a dirty word, there is no reward for consensus building.
- Communities of interest, like cities and counties, school districts, neighborhoods and minority groups can be splintered by where the lines are drawn. This makes it difficult for them to make themselves heard, sometimes leading to their interests being ignored or under-served.
- It creates an unfair electoral advantage for the majority party. A 2014 study by the Univ. of Chicago found that Indiana’s House districts are among the most gerrymandered. In 2012, Democratic candidates received a total of 999,219 votes, Republicans received 1,342,237 votes. If districts were fairly drawn, this would work out to Democrats holding 43% of the House districts, with Republicans holding a 57% majority. But with gerrymandering, Republicans held a 69% majority (which has climbed to 71% currently)

Solution? Take Redistricting Out of the Hands of Legislators

- Both President Pro Tem David Long and Speaker of the House Brian Bosma have said they want the General Assembly to pass legislation to create a redistricting commission. But, they haven’t been specific about how its members would be selected. Legislation

passed the House in 2014 that would have created a 5 member redistricting commission, with 4 members appointed by the legislative leadership. We had concerns about just independent and representative those appointments would be.

- A better approach is to create a hybrid of the Iowa and California systems. A diverse group of citizens, representative of Hoosier voters would direct the non-partisan Legislative Services Agency in drawing the maps, using ranked statutory criteria.
- Map-drawing criteria must be ranked in order of importance. Equal population and respect for the Voting Rights Act must come first because of legal requirements. Contiguity, compactness and political competition should also be considered.. There should be special consideration giving to identifying communities of interest and care should be taken to ensure that district lines do not divide communities or inhibit their ability to make their voices heard in political and legislative arenas.
- The redistricting process must be open and transparent, with opportunities for citizens to impact the map-drawing throughout. The public should have access to map-drawing software and all tools available to the official map drafters, so they will be able to submit their own map proposals to the Commission.

Does the Indiana Constitution have to be amended for a redistricting commission?

- Depends on who you talk to. We, and several constitutional scholars we've consulted say no, since the General Assembly will still vote on the maps created by the independent commission. Some members of the General Assembly, who support the concept of a commission disagree. In addition to being a more cumbersome and lengthy process, amending the Constitution would also require a statewide vote. Well-funded opposition could easily defeat a pro-redistricting commission referendum so we want this reform made by the legislature, which will require significant public pressure

How You Can Help Pass Redistricting Reform

- The 2015 General Assembly passed HEA1003, which created the Special Study Committee on Redistricting. It is composed of legislators and citizens and will work until December 2016 to come up with a reform recommendation for the legislature. Contact the study committee chairs and vice-chair and tell them to hold hearings around the state and at times when working people can attend. Contact Rep. Torr (Chair) at h39@iga.in.gov. Senator Brandt Hershman is vice-chair, Senator.Hershman@iga.in.gov.
- Join the Indiana Coalition for Independent Redistricting email alert network. We'll send you alerts about study committee meetings and other important events. Send an email to jvaughn@commoncause.org to sign up.
- Write a letter to the editor about reform. Tie gerrymandering to our shameful and embarrassing voter turnout statistics.
- Belong to a political group, civic association, neighborhood group or service club? Invite Common Cause Indiana to make a presentation about redistricting reform. Ask your organization to become a member of the redistricting coalition.
- Host a screening of the documentary Gerrymandering: The Movie.
- Ask your city council representative to sponsor a resolution urging the General Assembly to create an independent redistricting process.