

Support Pa. Redistricting Bills

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As you read this letter, the 2020 Census count is finished, which means voting districts all over the country, including Pennsylvania's, will be redrawn next year.

I have recently seen the documentary "Line in the Street," a film about the landmark 2018 Pennsylvania Supreme Court case that overturned the gerrymandered congressional districts drawn in 2011. (The decision did not affect the way that state House and Senate districts are drawn.)

Although I applauded the decision that was reached at the time, it was only a Band-Aid about to be painfully ripped off as the next round of redistricting will nullify it and possibly bring us back to where we were in 2011 when voting districts were drawn in secret with no public input.

Though the documentary chronicles a court decision that resulted in fairer congressional districts, I do think it's sad that the only way for Pennsylvania citizens to be heard by their Legislature is to sue them. I would prefer that this not happen again.

However, it may be necessary because the Legislature has steadfastly refused to listen to 67 percent of Pennsylvanians (of both political parties and independents) who favored bills that would have established an independent citizens' commission to draw district lines.

Those bills died in committee or on the floor under the weight of hundreds of amendments. The current bills (Senate Bill 1242 and comparable House Bill 2638) leave the foxes in control of the hen house because legislators will again be drawing the districts.

The newly proposed laws are different because they were written to ensure transparency, public input and measurable criteria for mapping.

I intend to devote my time to supporting these bills as opposed to lawsuits (which are probably already written and waiting to be filed). I hope you will join me in contacting your state senator to give SB 1242 a vote and your state House representative to give HB 2638 a vote.

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