

Public Hearings on Redistricting | Core Messages

Background

In August 2016, a three-judge panel ruled that 28 of the 170 N.C. House and Senate districts were drawn to segregate and weaken the power of African-American voters; they were illegal “racial gerrymanders.” Republican lawmakers appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, but it agreed with the panel. On August 1, 2017, that panel gave legislators a new deadline: present redrawn district maps to the judges by September 1 for use in the 2018 legislative election.

Public Hearing Testimony – 3 minutes

Legislators will release preliminary maps soon and hold a public hearing at 4 PM on August 22 in several locations to receive comments. Here are 4 themes to emphasize at public hearings (or through comments submitted online). Share the themes or concerns most important to you, politely, in your own words. You only have 3 minutes – about 1 page, double-spaced.

A Sham Redistricting Process Is Insulting.

Legislative leaders continue to stall and avoid fixing their unconstitutional maps. Federal judges have rebuked them for not “taking seriously” the urgency of correcting their illegal maps. Republican lawmakers say they are serious, but they have:

(1) hired the same consultant (Thomas Hofeller) who drew the current illegal maps. He is nationally known for rigging maps to help his Republican clients.

(2) declared they will not consider the race of voters, as if that would stop them from drawing biased maps. In fact, that approach ignores the directive of the courts to examine whether black voters have a fair chance to elect candidates of their choice in the new districts. *(Do legislators want the court to reject the new maps in order to continue stalling?)*

(3) declared they will consider past election outcomes and the ability of their party to win elections in the districts. They admit they will draw districts for partisan advantage.

(4) refused to reveal the new maps Hofeller has already drawn, which would give North Carolinians time to provide informed input during public hearings. This process is a charade.

Any Maps from an Illegal Legislature Are Suspect.

How can the public trust legislators elected from illegal districts to draw fair maps, especially when they use the same mapmaker and highly partisan goals?

(1) N.C. lawmakers have used unlawful gerrymandering to win elections in 2012, 2014 and 2016; they then passed countless laws in an essentially illegitimate General Assembly.

(2) The illegal maps have protected legislators from being held accountable by voters. About 90% of state legislators now have safe seats, with no or little partisan competition.

(3) General Assembly leaders have spent \$4.8 million of taxpayers’ money to defend their maps in court, but they keep losing. In short, they are an illegal legislature.

Racial Gerrymandering Is White Supremacy.

Racial gerrymandering is used to promote racial divisions and give white elites political power.

(1) In the 19th century, Democrats used racial gerrymandering to destroy the fusion

coalition of black Republicans and white Populists. It was coupled with Klan violence, anti-black propaganda, and Jim Crow laws such as the literacy test to restore white supremacy.

(2) In 2011, N.C. Republicans purposefully used racial gerrymandering to undermine the new fusion coalition that elected Barack Obama and many progressive state legislators. They drew new district maps with zigzagging boundary lines to pack black voters into a small number of districts and separate them from white allies who had helped elect coalition candidates.

(3) Those 2011 district lines split more than twice as many precincts as any maps ever drawn by N.C. Democrats. Black voters were 50% more likely than whites to live in the split precincts, which made political organizing more difficult. This is computerized apartheid.

(4) Republic lawmakers coupled racial gerrymandering with a comprehensive anti-voter law that targeted African Americans, as the court said, “with almost surgical precision.”

(5) Racial gerrymandering has reduced political competition and accountability; it has produced rigged elections that hurt all North Carolinians except the wealthy, white, mostly male power brokers.

(6) Like the Klan violence of yesterday and today, racial gerrymandering must be ended in order to fulfill the N.C. Constitution’s edict that government serve “the good of the whole.”

North Carolinians Demand Reform

North Carolinians are tired of gerrymandering and the politicians who practice it.

(1) A new poll shows that four out of five North Carolina voters (80%) say it’s not fair for politicians to draw their own districts. That includes 85% of Democrats, 74% of Republicans, 80% of independents – as well as 70% of Trump supporters and 80% of African Americans.

(2) The redistricting process must be open, avoid racial or partisan gerrymandering, and allow voters to pick their political representatives, not the other way around.

(3) We should research the practices used in other states and adopt principles that encourage deep community involvement. Fair redistricting should follow these basic principles:

- Race is Key: Map drawers must ensure that it is possible for black voters to elect their candidates of choice, as required by the Voting Rights Act.
- “One person, one vote:” Districts must be very equal in population and obey other laws.
- Geographic Compactness: Map drawers must create compact districts, without odd tentacles. Districts must not skip over areas or join two areas at just one point.
- Count Incarcerated Persons as residents of their pre-incarceration home or family residence for purposes of redistricting.
- No Favoritism: Map drawers must not use the addresses of current lawmakers, or the party affiliation or voting history of voters, or other data to help a party or politician.
- Respect Communities of Interest: Map drawers must avoid dividing a communities with similar cultural, ethnic and economic interests; a local government district; etc.
- Respect County Boundaries: Maps should make every effort to keep counties whole.
- Evaluate Fairness: Before it is approved, a map must be evaluated for overall racial bias and partisan competitiveness, using tools recognized by courts to measure fairness.