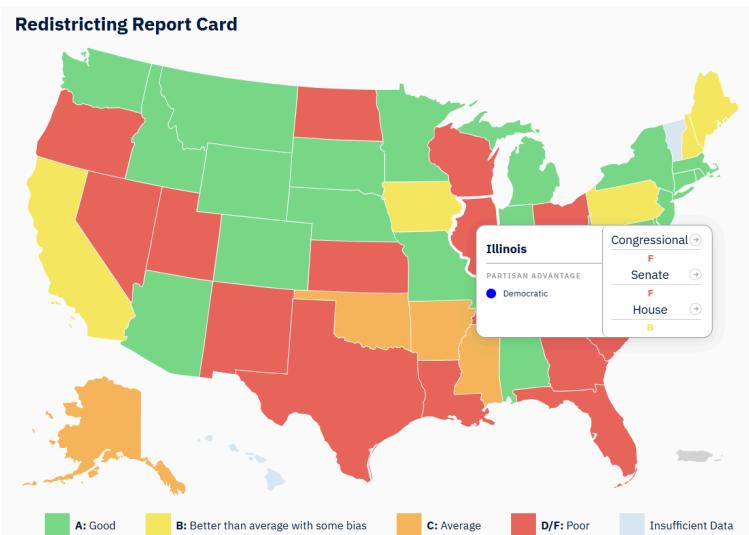




Gerrymandered? Primaries, Proportional Representation and Direct Democracy

What Is Gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering happens when the party in power redraws voting districts to increase its political advantage and to protect incumbents. Instead of voters choosing their representatives, representatives choose their voters. It relies on two techniques: “packing” (concentrating similar voters into a single district to limit their influence and “cracking” (spreading certain voters among many districts to deny them a voting block.) [The Princeton Gerrymandering Project provides nonpartisan state-by-state analysis](#) to understand and eliminate partisan gerrymandering. It issues a Report Card. The state of Illinois, and all other states in red, get a “poor” rating of D/F.



Gerrymandering is Voter Suppression

Gerrymandering is considered voter suppression. It doesn't stop people from voting but it makes their votes meaningless. By drawing districts to predetermine winners, splitting communities, and eliminating real competition, gerrymandering dilutes the power of entire groups of voters. When maps are rigged so outcomes are already decided, voters lose choice, candidates stop listening, extremism grows, and the fundamental promise of one person, one vote is weakened.

Unprecedented Mid-cycle Redistricting

Redistricting is typically done every 10 years after the census to ensure fair representation based on population changes. President Donald Trump's push for mid-decade congressional redistricting to give Republicans an edge before the 2026 midterm elections has reached a critical turning point. What began in mid-2025 as an aggressive and unusual effort—rarely seen at this scale since the 1800s—has produced mixed results and mounting resistance.

Republicans successfully redrew GOP-friendly maps in Texas, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, and Utah, while Democrats scored gains in California and North Carolina. Overall, Republicans believe they net about three seats, Democrats also expect gains, and many maps are tied up in court, making outcomes uncertain.

In Indiana, the GOP-controlled Senate rejected a heavily gerrymandered map despite intense pressure from President Trump, halting further momentum. Since then, enthusiasm for redistricting has cooled in several targeted states.

Key battlegrounds to watch include:

- Virginia, where Democrats are pushing a constitutional amendment to allow mid-decade redistricting, potentially aiming to gain multiple seats.
- Florida, where Gov. Ron DeSantis plans a special session in April, possibly influenced by a pending Supreme Court Voting Rights Act ruling.
- Illinois, Maryland, and Kansas, where lawmakers in both parties remain largely opposed to reopening maps.

As of late 2025, the House landscape remains highly fluid: Democrats need three seats to retake control, and the final balance may hinge less on legislatures than on court rulings in multiple states. The redistricting wars are ongoing, legally contested, and far from resolved heading into 2026.

Supreme Court ruled political decisions are not in their jurisdiction

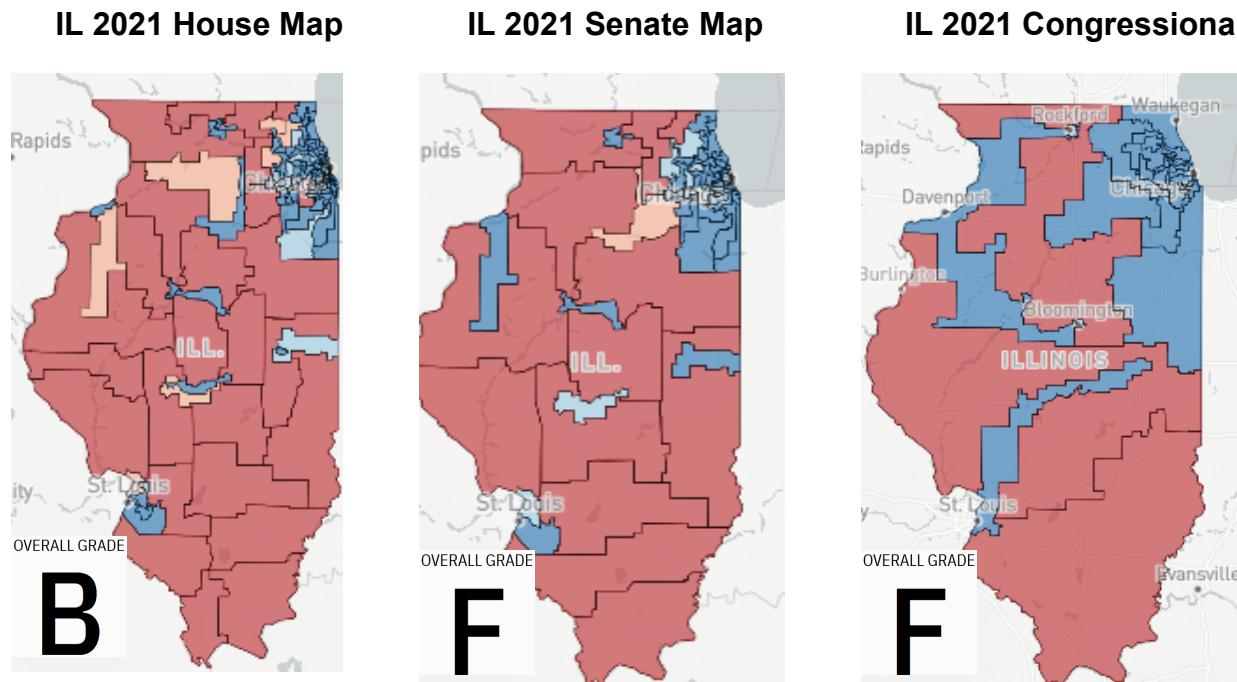
The ground for this unprecedented redistricting arms race was laid in large part by the Supreme Court. In its 2019 *Rucho v. Common Cause* decision, the high court's conservative majority ruled that while such gerrymandering may conflict with democratic principles, federal courts cannot intervene in these claims as they are considered political questions beyond their jurisdiction. Celina Stewart, CEO of the League of Women Voters, which helped bring the *Rucho* case to the Supreme Court commented, "What we tried to do at that time is show them how important it was for the court to set a standard when partisan gerrymandering goes too far. They declined to do that . . . now we are having a moment of reckoning because of that decision."

The U.S. Supreme Court's 2025 decision in *Abbott v. LULAC*, allowing Texas' controversial GOP-leaning map to stand, has intensified concerns among voting-rights advocates. Critics argue the ruling weakens protections against racial and partisan gerrymandering and signals greater judicial tolerance for politically motivated maps.

Illinois House Map Gets a B; Illinois Senate Map Gets an F

Illinois's state legislative and congressional districts are drawn by the state legislature and are subject to the Governor's veto. The Princeton Gerrymandering Project gave the current Illinois House map an overall score of B: It represents no partisan advantage; average competitiveness, but the districts are non-compact, 60 counties are split. The

current Illinois Senate map got an F: it creates a significant partisan advantage, average competitiveness, and non-compact districts. Our Congressional map received an F in all categories.



Why Should I Care About Fair Maps if my Party is in Control?

Rigged, noncompetitive elections lead to a lack of meaningful choices for voters and . . .

- Uncontested races; over ½ of IL legislative races were uncontested
- Lack of transparency
- Reduced accountability due to “safe seats”
- Reduced information and discussion around solutions to state issues
- Increased partisanship, extremism and polarization due to primary voter choices
- Split communities, reducing community voice through “cracking” for political gain
- Unrepresentative outcomes
- Declining faith in government and low voter turnout

Ending gerrymandering isn't a partisan issue, it's a democracy issue. The League works for a transparent, accountable, representative government to defend democracy.

Gerrymandering Solutions!

VOTE IN PRIMARIES! The vast majority of US House seats are uncompetitive in the general election. The race is decided before you get to the polls. This means most elections are decided in primary elections, in which a smaller and less representative group of voters participate. Because extreme voters are those most motivated to vote in primaries, major-party candidates are chosen or create campaigns that appeal to their parties' extremes. When that happens, the parties differentiate themselves by

competing intensely on extreme ideology. Bipartisan compromise and solutions such as we had in the 80s and 90s is reduced.

DuPage County had the highest voter turnout in the Chicagoland region in the 2022 Midterm Primary Election. Nearly 22%. This increase was attributed in part to its new voting equipment and the Vote Anywhere initiative. But 22% is still very low. If primary voting is the only choice you get, vote in primaries.

LEARN ABOUT PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Proportional representation, achieved through multi-member districts, prevents gerrymandering by ensuring voters across the political spectrum receive representation that matches their share of the vote. Instead of one winner per district, seats are allocated proportionally—for example, a 60/40 vote split yields roughly 60/40 seat distribution. [Rep. Don Beyer's \(D-VA\) Fair Representation Act](#) would implement ranked-choice voting and multi-member districts for the U.S. House, creating a more proportional, gerrymander-resistant system and banning mid-decade redistricting. There are three types of proportional representation. You can learn more about them and where they are used in the US and other countries at [FairVote.org](#).

DIRECT DEMOCRACY!

Not surprisingly legislators are resistant to checking their one power. That's where direct democracy comes in. Direct democracy is where a petition -- signed by a certain minimum number of registered voters – can put laws, especially anti-corruption laws, directly to a public vote. In short, ballot initiatives bypass entrenched politicians.

Twenty-four states -- including Illinois -- allow some form of direct democracy. Although Illinois is technically one of the 24 states that allow ballot initiatives, citizens may only initiate constitutional amendments that are “structural and procedural” and the process is so prohibitively difficult, many initiative scholars do not truly count Illinois as an initiative state. The League has pushed for fair maps many times. Twice, reform groups tried to overhaul redistricting through the petition process, but were struck down by the courts on the “structural and procedural” technicality.

FAIR MAPS ILLINOIS!

Fair Maps Illinois is a citizen-led, bipartisan 2026 ballot initiative to amend the Illinois Constitution to change our state’s redistricting procedure. It is NOT about the federal Congressional redistricting wars. The power to draw federal and Congressional maps is given to the state legislature by the US Constitution. We cannot change that through direct democracy. Fair Maps Illinois improves the redistricting process for our state of Illinois ONLY by creating a [Legislative Redistricting Commission that will draw district maps using rational, neutral criteria, instead of “hyper-politics.”](#) The new Legislative District maps will follow the decennial census in 2030, as it should. This is what it offers:

- Creates a 12-member bipartisan Commission created by House and Senate leadership

- The Commission shall have no more than 6 members from the same party; only four can be legislators, 8 will be non-legislators
- Bans the use of political party affiliation or voting history when drawing districts.
- Requires districts to be compact and to follow county, municipal, and township boundaries. No packing and cracking!
- Protects communities of interest
- Follows the law. Aligns with Illinois Supreme Court precedent, including the *Schrage v. State Board of Elections* compactness standard
- Ensures transparency and fairness. Shifts power from political insiders to a redistricting process designed to reflect the will of the people

This is what it does not offer:

- Map-drawing that is fully independent of the Illinois state legislature
- A process subject to open meetings, transparency, and input from communities
- A commission that is structured to drive consensus rather than simple majority decision-making

Why Our Amendment Can Succeed Where Others Failed:

- Built within current constitutional framework to modify the “process;” avoiding the “procedural” legal pitfalls that sunk previous citizen-led initiative attempts
- Builds on proven, streamlined reform models, drawing lessons from Arizona (A), Iowa (B), and Pennsylvania (B)
- Backed by bipartisan legal experts and authored by former Obama administration officials who understand Illinois’ political and legal landscape (Ray LaHood, a Republican, and Bill Daley, a Democrat, secretaries of Transportation and Commerce, respectively)

Given the history of Illinois Supreme Court rulings that limit what citizens may do via referendum, the League is choosing to focus on what voters could gain from the current proposal. The League is endorsing the Fair Maps Illinois Initiative and is helping to gather signatures. For more information visit: FairMapsIllinois.org.

How to Get it Done

For a question to be placed on the November 3, 2026 ballot, a petition will require 328,371 signatures of registered voters. Our goal is 600,000 to avoid challenges. Each League member should commit to getting at least 10 signatures. To participate, please gather signatures and mail completed notarized petitions to the state League no later than **Friday, May 1, 2026** so the LWVIL can review and submit them in a timely manner. You can get petition sheets and step-by-step circulation Instructions at:

<https://www.lwvil.org/fair-maps>

