



November 14, 2021

Making Democracy Work in SC: Redistricting Moving Forward, for Better and for Worse

Senate

League testimony on the Senate redistricting plan proposed by Senate staff can be found at <https://my.lwv.org/south-carolina-state/article/november-12-2021-league-testimony-senate-staff-proposal>. The League found that the Senate map is in most respects reasonable and fair to the citizens of the state. It is comparable by several measures to the LWVSC proposal, which can be considered a benchmark for a map that is fair to voters since we know with certainty that partisan and incumbent interests were not considered and therefore did not outweigh the interests of South Carolinians. The Senate plan also improves on the current Senate map by several measures.

We have concerns about the effects of the growth of Lowcountry suburbs on districts that have long been heavily minority and rural, especially District 39, but we don't ask for revision that would lead to "packing" that or any other district. We recognize that population shifts are real and can be expected to have effects. We would just like to see some change to better protect the voting rights of minority voters in an area in which longtime largely rural residents are being rapidly overwhelmed by high numbers of new suburban residents.

The Senate has taken testimony on Congressional plans submitted to their Subcommittee by the League and other organizations and individuals. The Subcommittee plans to meet again soon to vote on a Senate map plan to forward to Senate Judiciary and to introduce their own Congressional proposal.

House

The House has released its map proposal and the House Redistricting Committee has met to review both map submissions by others and their own plan. They are accepting written testimony on the proposal until noon Monday, by email to Redistricting@schouse.gov. They plan to meet again at 10:00 AM this coming Tuesday, November 16, at 10 AM in Blatt 110 to consider additional written testimony and to vote on their plan. A meeting of the full House Judiciary Committee is scheduled for noon on the same day to consider and vote on the plan.

League testimony on the House plan is posted at <https://my.lwv.org/south-carolina-state/action-alert/proposed-sc-house-maps-bad-news-disenfranchise-voters>. We found the House plan to be an extreme gerrymander, highly protective of incumbents, and extremely non-competitive. One Committee member sees the estimated vote margin in his district go from a highly competitive 6% to a hopelessly non-competitive 31% in favor of his party.

Sophisticated mathematical tests that are widely accepted measures of bias among redistricting experts were conducted. It was found that the House map exhibits extreme bias in both median-mean measures and geometric partisan measures. On the geometric partisan measure, only 130 simulated maps out of a billion simulations that were sampled are more extreme than the House map, at $p=0.00049208$. 627,004 maps more extreme than the League proposal, at $p=0.03446$. The League map is a reasonable benchmark showing a map drawn with current South Carolina demographics and without partisan or incumbent protection; the comparison confirms the very strong bias in the House map.

Overall, the House plans reduces the already discouraging number of competitive House districts (defined as an expected margin of $\pm 5\%$) in the state from 16 to 12. It provides an estimated 7 fewer competitive districts than the League plan, which yields an estimated 19 competitive districts. With more than 41,000 residents in each district, this means that the House plan would unnecessarily deprive more than a quarter million South Carolinians of the right to be represented by someone that they choose in the November general elections. The damaging impacts would be felt by voters who identify with both major parties.

The Process Continues

It is important for everyone to remain engaged in this process. We are a long way from the finish line. Please continue to testify when there are opportunities to do so and reach out to your own representatives and senators to tell them what you wish to see in the final maps.

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