



November 17, 2021

Making Democracy Work in SC: House Judiciary Plan and Still no Congressional Maps

Congressional Maps

We are concerned that neither house has released a Congressional plan for public comment. This is especially disturbing because the House has now scheduled a return of the full body for floor debate on redistricting on December 1, 2, and 6. There is little time left.

House Maps

As always, our testimony and other information on redistricting is posted at www.lwvsc.org. Since our last update, the House Redistricting Ad Hoc Committee met again and forwarded their plan to full House Judiciary, which met the same day. The plan was “tweaked” with a series of amendments. The House has not announced any opportunity for public comment on the amended proposal, but we can summarize the League’s evaluation here.

Among other changes, splitting in the City of Orangeburg was reduced through an amendment that also made changes in HD 90 and 91. HD 90 has been a very competitive district in which voters have a choice in November but the House working draft would have ended that. As amended most recently, this would still come to an end. Previously at about 45% minority and with razor thin partisan margins in elections, HD 90 was raised to 62.54% minority and a 30% expected winning margin in the initial House plan. The change in Judiciary brought this to 59.74% minority – still far more than needed for minorities to elect a candidate of

choice and enough to make the district overwhelmingly non-competitive. This also allowed a minor increase in minority population in HD 91.

The very strong focus by the House on incumbent and partisan protection over other criteria such as political subdivisions and communities is apparent in high frequencies of split precincts and broken communities. The House map continues to fragment important communities of interest, such as James Island and the City of Orangeburg.

There were repeated claims during the meeting that the House map protects the voting rights of minorities better than LWVSC or NAACP LDF maps. However, the independent assessment of Dave’s Redistricting App (DRA) is that the LWVSC map rates 86 on minority representation.^[1] DRA rates the NAACP LDF submission at 92 on minority representation.^[2] The House proposal (even after amendment in Judiciary) receives a lower score of 83.^[3] This is not an overall critique of minority representation in the House proposal, but simply points out that the claim that the House map is superior to these others is incorrect. Protecting the right of minorities to elect candidates of their choice is not simple, either legally or technically, and cannot be reduced to a simple count of districts with a 50+1% minority population.

The following tables present basic data on House Judiciary Committee maps approved on the 16th that will be considered on the House floor in December:

Splits

	Current Districts	LWVSC Districts	House Staff Draft	House Judiciary Plan
County Splits	34 counties split 131 times	34 counties split 131 times	32 counties split 137 times	33 counties split 144 times
Precinct Splits	123 split	82 split	371 split	370

District Partisan Lean and Majority Minority Districts

	Districts w/ Republican Lean	Districts w/ Democratic Lean	Competitive (±5%)	Majority Minority Districts
Current Map	79	29	16	30
LWVSC Map	77	28	19	30
NAACP LDF Map	76	29	19	32
House Working Proposal	82	30	12	30
House Judiciary Plan	84	31	9	32

The extremely low number of competitive districts – even at a generous $\pm 5\%$ standard – points toward making voters nearly obsolete in general elections for the SC House of Representatives.

At present, lacking information on official opportunities for comment, we can only advise those who are concerned about the House proposal to reach out to their own representatives. Also, write LTEs and use social media to spread the word.

We will continue to monitor closely for information on the availability of Congressional plans and other meetings, with the expectation that the House and perhaps the Senate will convene during the first week in December to vote on final maps to submit for the Governor's signature.

Lynn Shuler Teague

VP for Issues and Action, LWVSC

803 556-9802

TeagueLynn@gmail.com

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[1] <https://davesredistricting.org/maps#ratings::19fbd020-f085-44ac-821c-98d129065d9d>

[2] <https://davesredistricting.org/maps#ratings::65fd2dd2-d489-4969-8d92-53e6a998582d>

[3] <https://davesredistricting.org/maps#ratings::8c22042c-1d33-4121-a907-13b013b80e2c>