



November 30, 2021

Making Democracy Work in SC: Redistricting Update

Public hearings on redistricting are, as far as we know, over for this cycle. We are in the final stages of redrawing South Carolina's legislative districts for the next decade.

The Congressional Plan

We assume that the only Congressional plan made public to date, the Senate plan, may be adopted by the House, although other scenarios are possible.

The Senate Redistricting Subcommittee met yesterday to hear testimony on their Congressional plan. Their map is posted under Plan Proposals at <https://redistricting.scsenate.gov> and (by LWVSC) at <https://davesredistricting.org/maps#viewmap::5fed38de-3f6f-4a01-bca4-0354dfd1f509>. League testimony on the plan is posted at www.lwvsc.org.

Testimony was given on the plan from a nonpartisan perspective by Lynn Teague and John Ruoff for the League of Women Voters and from a partisan perspective by Joe Cunningham, along with several individual citizen participants. The consensus was not positive. The Congressional plan as now drawn is, in non-technical terms, very bad.

The most important problem with the Senate Congressional map is that the coastal area around Charleston has been very heavily gerrymandered to produce a strongly majority party district. In the same area, adherence to criteria that are voter focused – minority protection, major communities of interest and political subdivisions, and so forth – produces a district that is competitive with a slight Republican lean. The LWVSC map proposal shows this, keeping Charleston County whole and including most of the satellite cities and suburbs around Charleston (also available at www.lwvsc.org). The Congressional map proposed by the Senate therefore takes the one naturally competitive district in the state and hands it to the majority party in every November election for the next ten years.

To achieve this, political subdivisions across the greater Charleston area were fragmented to produce a very White CD 1. CD 1, generally regarded as the coastal Charleston district, is drawn with a BVAP of 16.7%, the lowest percentage of Black voters in the state. This is absurd to anyone who knows South Carolina. The absurdities continue with the College of Charleston crammed into CD 6 with the University of South Carolina in Columbia. The upper Charleston

peninsula shares CD 6 with northern Richland County. Meanwhile, affluent predominantly White areas such as Charleston South of Broad are linked in CD 1 with other predominantly White residential areas at Kiawah and Seabrook.

There are other significant problems with this Congressional map proposal. For example, Black communities in the Midlands are cracked in Richland County (by the pointless intrusion of CD 2 from Lexington County) and around the City of Sumter. These areas also need correction.

What Next?

Senators repeatedly reminded everyone that the Congressional map is a first draft, and that even most senators had no input to this point. The Senate Redistricting Committee took no vote on the contentious proposal and will reconvene either this Thursday or Friday to again take up this map. The full Senate is scheduled to return to address redistricting next Monday, so time is short. We hope that the time will be well spent, completely revising this plan.

And Meanwhile, in the House . . .

The House is scheduled to return tomorrow, Dec 1, at 2:00 PM to take up redistricting and their SC House plan. We have been told that the bill will be read across the desk tomorrow and that debate will take place on Dec 2. They are then scheduled to return on Dec 6. The House plan as adopted by House Judiciary is an extreme gerrymander for incumbent and partisan protection. Whether there will be any strong opposition on the floor is uncertain.

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