



# Gerrymandering: Taking Away Our Voice

AAUW-PA Annual Convention  
April 15, 2018

**WHAT IS GERRYMANDERING AND WHY CARE**



## Original Gerrymander

- In 1812, Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry backed a redistricting plan favoring his party, with one district so convoluted that it looked like a salamander.
- We've been calling the practice of manipulating electoral maps for political advantage gerrymandering ever since.
- And, both major political parties are equal offenders.



## Redistricting Is. . . . .

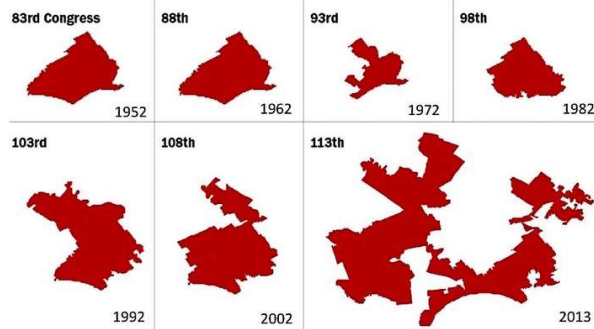
The process of redrawing voting district lines to reflect population changes after every U.S. Census

- **Congressional districts**, define who represents you in the U.S. House of Representatives
  - Currently 18 Congressional districts in Pennsylvania
- **State legislative districts**, define who represents you in the PA Senate and PA House. Based on where you live, you're assigned to two state legislative districts: a PA Senate district and a PA House district.
  - Currently 50 PA Senate districts and 203 PA House districts



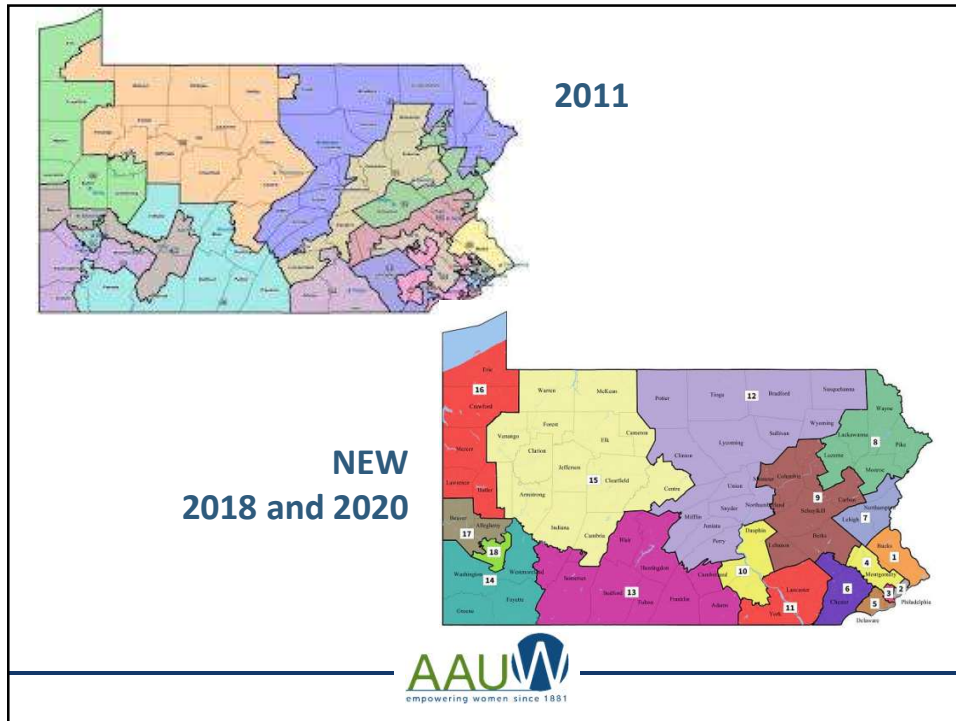
### Congressional -- U.S. House of Representatives Redistricting Process

- There is no federally mandated process
  - Except population requirement –all districts must be roughly same population
- Pennsylvania has no laws or regulations defining a process
  - Nor what criteria should be applied to ensure new district boundaries are fair
- Done through the regular PA legislative process
  - A bill defining the district boundaries is passed by both the PA House and Senate and signed by the governor
- Result -- the majority party can draw maps any way it pleases
  - Depending who's in the governor's office, can end up with exclusive control over the result



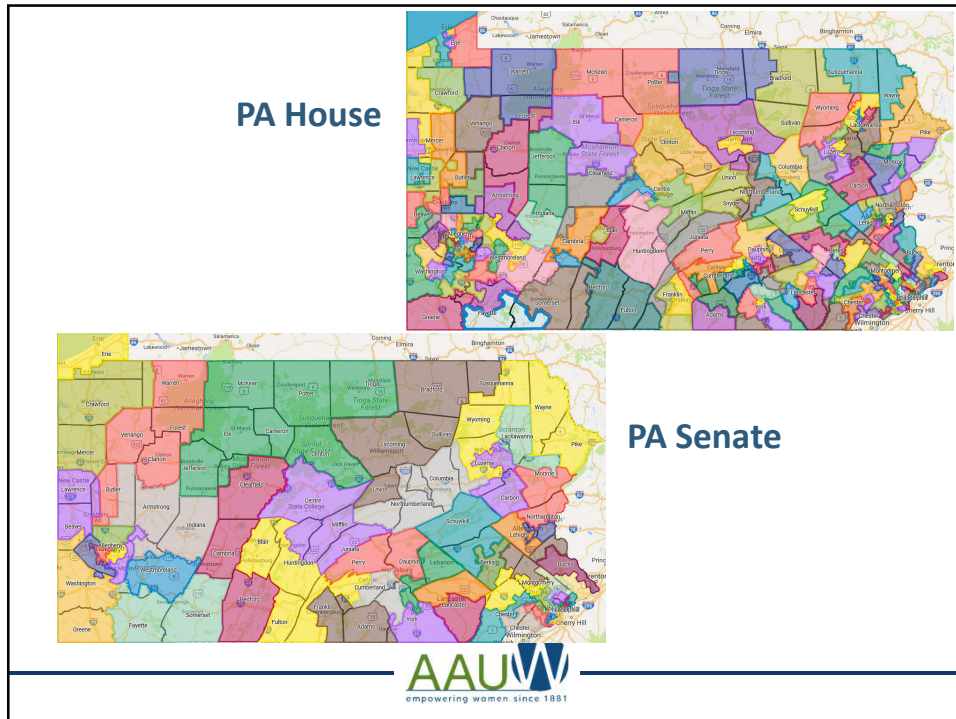
**7<sup>th</sup> Congressional had a shape so incongruous,  
it was known as  
“Goofy Kicking Donald Duck”**





## Pennsylvania Legislative Redistricting Process

- Article II, Section 17 of Pennsylvania Constitution
  - Drawn by a five-member commission
    - Four of these are the majority and minority leaders of the PA House and Senate
    - These four then select a fifth member to serve as the commission chair.
    - If the four cannot agree, then the PA Supreme Court appoints a chair
- Article II, Section 16 of Pennsylvania Constitution
  - Requires these districts “be composed of compact and contiguous territory as nearly equal in population as practicable” and to avoid dividing a “county, city, incorporated town, borough, township or ward” unless absolutely necessary.
  - Legislature does not vote on the commission’s plans, and the governor has no power to sign or veto the
    - Only a citizen can file a appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court
    - This gives party leaders enormous power over rank-and-file members of their respective caucuses: if a member proves to be too independent, they may be punished, usually by drawing them out of a “safe” district into one dominated by the other party.
    - It also lets incumbent legislators draw their own districts—a clear conflict of interest from the start.



**Democracy means voters choose their politicians.  
Current Pennsylvania law lets politicians choose  
their voters.**

- Legislators work behind the scenes with no oversight or standards for fairness.
- They use mapping technology and big data to profile voters, and use that information to pick exactly who they want in or out of a voting district.
- They accept money from parties, super PACs, and outside interests, which all target PA because we are a populous swing state with lax campaign finance laws.
- They can and do draw whatever boundaries will maximize their influence, minimize their accountability, and keep their seats in office secure.

**GERRYMANDERING**



**Gerrymandered districts give voters less voice and less choice, and we get polarization instead of problem-solving in Harrisburg and Washington.**

- **Your vote counts less.** Gerrymandering means politicians listen to party leaders and pressure from outside interests, rather than the people. Gerrymandering uses techniques like “packing” and “cracking” to target voters from a particular group, such as voters from the opposite party or minority or low-income voters, to reduce their influence.
- **We get fewer options at the ballot box.** Competitive elections keep politicians accountable. But in the 2016 general election, incumbents ran unopposed in almost half of PA House and Senate races. Many voters feel understandably frustrated, so they disengage—which adds to the vicious cycle of unaccountability.
- **Politicians lose civility and can’t solve problems.** When districts are designed to protect incumbents, new faces and new voices are kept out of office or discouraged from running at all, and those in office feel no need to play nice. There are lots of important problems we simply can’t fix if we don’t have a functional democracy.



**WHAT WE CAN DO**



## Fair Districts PA



- Advocates amending the PA Constitution to establish an independent citizens commission
- Awareness, interest, and structure increasing exponentially
  - Local groups in 50 counties
  - Over 25,000 petition signatures
  - 200 municipalities passed resolutions
  - 32 endorsing organizations

**AAUW-PA became endorsing organization in October 2016**



## Constitutional Amendment Process (Article 11)

- Identical bill must pass both Chambers in two consecutive legislative sessions
  - 2017-2018 legislative session before **June 30, 2018**
  - 2019-2020 legislative session
- Public Notifications required after each passage in both Chambers
  - Three months before next general election
    - Required notification no later than August 6, 2018
    - Required notification no later than August 3, 2020
- Ballot November 3, 2020



## Legislation Supported by Fair Districts PA

- **PA Senate Bill 22**
  - Bipartisan proposal introduced by Senators Lisa Boscola, a Democrat, and Mario Scavello, a Republican, in February 2017
  - 21 Co-sponsors (13 Democrats; 8 Republicans)
  - Senate Government Committee Hearing on March 27, 2018
- **PA House Bill 722**
  - Bipartisan proposal introduced by Representative Eric Roe, a Republican, and Representative Steve Samuelson, a Democrat, in April 2017
  - 110 Co-sponsors (72 Democrats; 38 Republicans)
  - Pushing for House Government Committee Hearing



## Independent Citizens Commission

- 11 members, selected at random by the Pennsylvania Secretary of State from three pools of qualified candidates:
  - 4 members who are registered with one of the largest two political parties
  - 4 members who are registered with the other of the largest two political parties
  - 3 members who are unaffiliated or registered with a minority party
- The commission would be:
  - **Independent:** No current or recent elected officials, candidates, political party officials, or their aides or spouses would be eligible. Legislative leaders from both houses and parties would be able to strike a designated number of candidates from each pool.
  - **Transparent:** The commission would establish transparent procedures, follow a strict timetable, and provide meaningful opportunity for public input prior to drawing plans and again before adopting final plans. All information would be available on a publicly accessible website.
  - **Impartial and ethically bound:** When developing new district boundaries, the commission would not be allowed to consider prior election results, the party affiliations of registered voters, or the addresses of incumbents or any other individuals.
- This commission would be responsible for developing **all** district maps. Approval of a final plan would then require:
  - At least seven votes
  - At least one vote from each of the three groups
- Once approved by the commission, the new district maps would not be subject to approval by the PA House and Senate or the governor, but any citizen could appeal the maps directly to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.





## TAKE ACTION



## FairDistrictsPA.com

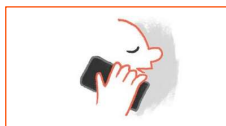


Gather signatures at polling places on May 15<sup>th</sup>

<https://actionnetwork.org/forms/volunteer-for-democracy-on-may-15>

**FDPA website has many ideas for getting involved. Promote to your branch**

**SIGN THE PETITION NOW**



**Contact your legislators**  
Find your representatives, get insight into their positions, and download talking points.

Asking state legislators to support redistricting bills SB 22 and HB 722

- Don't let "I've never done that before" silence your voice
- You will find everything you need to conquer your fears



**FairDistrictsPA.com**



**Volunteer with us**  
We need help with everything from public speaking to event planning to administrative support. Sign up now.

**Join a local group**  
Find a Fair Districts PA group in your community, and join them for events like letter-writing nights and working groups.

**Write an op-ed**  
Learn how to get a letter or editorial published in your local newspaper.

**Donate**  
We're a volunteer-led organization. Donate now to support our education or our advocacy work.

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**Work with FDPA for an Event or Branch meeting**

- They are the subject experts
  - Request a speaker on their website
  - Develop relationship with local FDPA organization
- Ten branches can offer advice
  - 2016-2017
    - Erie
    - Johnstown
    - Valley Forge
  - 2017-2018
    - Beaver Valley
    - Carlisle
    - Harrisburg
    - Lansdale
    - Lower Bucks/Makefield Area/NEMCO
- Advocacy in a Box page for ideas
  - <https://aauw-pa.aauw.net/redistricting-reform-advocacy/>

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## Draw the Lines



### A Statewide Public Mapping Competition to Engage Citizens in Fixing the Bug in the Operating System of Democracy

- A multiyear, nonpartisan civic education and engagement project managed by The Committee of Seventy
  - Based in Philadelphia, Seventy is a 113-year old nonpartisan, nonprofit advocate for better government in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania.
- Using a free, open-source platform called District Builder
  - Put the same digital tools that political pros use to gerrymander districts into the hands of citizens of all ages across the Commonwealth
- Contests held twice a year -- school-age, college, and adult divisions
- Launch Fall 2018 with Congressional contest



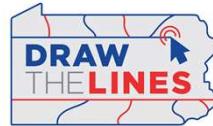
## Hold a Community Event



- AAUW-PA signed on as an endorsing organization
- This is a terrific vehicle for you to hold a community event
  - Introduce AAUW to a broad audience in your community
  - Work in coalition with FDPA or other organizations
- Can start planning for Fall 2018 – Congressional contest
- State Senate contest will be sometime in 2019
- DTL is standing up local coordinators
  - Schedule events in their region
  - Be the subject matter experts



## Program Options



- DTL created three turnkey programs
  - All resources will be on their website in the community toolkit
  - Event leaders can download/print materials to run an event
- **Gerrymandering 101 and Carnival (or Bar Games) for Democracy**
  - Introduce concept and participants are encouraged to log into the mapping program at home and enter the contest.
- **Draw the Lines Map-athon**
  - Primer in how to create a map using the District Builder platform
  - Participants would do a Values Proposition exercise
  - Begin, as teams or individuals, to work on maps
    - Maps can be finished at the event and/or submitted on own after event
  - DTL representatives available to provide advice and support

