



Summary of Fair Districts PA Endorsed Redistricting Reform Legislation

Fair Districts PA strongly supports Senate Bill 22 and House Bill 722, two almost identical bills introduced early in the 2017-2018 session.

The bills would amend the state constitution to create an 11-member independent, impartial citizens redistricting commission responsible for drawing Pennsylvania Congressional, Senate and House districts.

Using criteria to be detailed in enabling legislation passed by the state legislature, the Secretary of State would oversee creation of three pools of qualified candidates, with one pool representing each of the major parties (as determined by voter registration) and a third composed of third-party or unaffiliated voters. No elected officials, candidates, political party officials, their aides or spouses would be eligible to serve, nor would anyone who has recently served in such a capacity.

Legislative leaders from both houses and parties would be able to strike a designated number of candidates from each pool.

Redistricting commissioners would be chosen through a randomized process (using a digital randomized-selection algorithm to be described in detail in that same enabling legislation) from the three pools of eligible candidates, with four from each major party and three from the unaffiliated or third-party voters. The selection process would need to ensure that the commissioners reasonably reflect the state's racial, gender and geographical diversity.

The commission would establish transparent procedures and adhere to a strict timetable for its work, providing meaningful opportunity for public input prior to drawing plans and again before adopting final maps.

All information used in creating plans would be available on a publicly accessible website. Data disclosing the party affiliations of voting blocs and the locations of any individuals would not be considered.

Approval of a final plan would require votes from at least one member from each group, with a required super-majority of seven. Once approved by the commission, the new district maps would not be subject to approval by the General Assembly or the governor.

Citizens aggrieved by a final plan could appeal it directly to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

No other nation allows the conflict of interest created by politicians drawing lines that directly govern their own elections. The proposed amendment provides multiple safeguards for a more fair, less partisan process and would reduce the ability of either party to manipulate district lines to its own advantage.

Senate Bill 22 was introduced in January 2017 by Senators Lisa Boscola (D-18, Lehigh/Northampton) and Mario Scavello (R-40, Monroe/Northampton) with co-sponsors from both parties.

House Bill 722 was introduced in early May 2017 by Representatives Steve Samuelson (D-135, Northampton County) and Eric Roe (R-158, Chester County) with 87 initial co-sponsors.