

January 31, 2022

Dear Chairman Gray and Members of the Senate Election Law & Municipal Affairs Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about the proposed Congressional and House maps. Creating fair maps that represent all the voters in the state is a grave responsibility. I appreciate your work.

I am from Tamworth. Historically, Tamworth has had a mixed party affiliation, as evidenced in the vote count for the national election, where Tamworth voters cast an almost even number of ballots for Democrat and Republican candidates.

At our town meeting in May of 2021, The NH Resolution for Fair Redistricting was presented; it passed overwhelmingly. To me, this demonstrated that support for fair redistricting transcends party alliance.

Tamworth was not alone in passing this resolution. People in 74 towns and municipalities around the state, in both Republican and Democratic leaning districts, voted in favor of fair redistricting.

I believe that both Republican and Democratic voters in NH will be dismayed at the Congressional maps we are seeing today. This plan will destroy the competitive Congressional Districts in our state. The proposed map will not only transfer 75 towns to a new district, but will create two highly partisan, clearly gerrymandered districts.

These changes directly affect us in the town of Tamworth, as the new map splits Carroll County. Under this plan, Wolfboro, Tuftonboro and Moultonborough would remain in District 1. The rest of us would move to District 2.

Over the past 140 years Both District 1 and District 2 have historically swung between Republican representation and Democratic representation. This is a good thing, as candidates must appeal to voters with diverse ideas. Competitive districts also bring out the very best candidates and increase voter participation.

This last spring nonpartisan groups such as the League of Women Voters and Open Democracy gathered people from around the state to participate in the Map-A-Thon citizen mapping project. I was one of the citizens who participated in this project by filling out information about Tamworth. The data was then meticulously compiled, and maps drawn using both population numbers and communities of interest data. I have looked at these maps and believe they present fair, non-partisan and balanced solutions to redistricting. I urge this committee to amend the Congressional map using the Map-a-Thon Map as a guide.

If you continue to support the clearly gerrymandered maps drawn by the House Special Redistricting Committee, you run the risk of losing all credibility with voters and increasing the divisions already existing between the parties in this state.

I have similar concerns for the House maps. I realize that the process for creating House maps is complex; but I would again suggest that this committee to go back and look at the proposed Map-a-Thon maps. This nonpartisan group was able to keep more competitive seats, keep school districts together, and give more qualifying towns their own representation.

I want to end my time by asking that the committee do everything possible to keep the process of redistricting transparent. To do this, it is imperative that the public have time to see and analyze all new amendments, and to comment on the amendments before a final vote is taken.

We will live with these maps for the next ten years. We need to get them right.

Ellen Farnum, Tamworth, NH