

Dear Senator Gray and Members of the Election Law and Municipal Affairs Committee,

I thank you for your willingness to serve as a public servant on behalf of New Hampshire residents. The service comes with a weighty responsibility to not only represent the voters in your districts but also to strengthen our American form of government – to strengthen democracy.

Foundational to democracy is each American's responsibility to be informed, to vote, to reach out and communicate with her legislators. The essence of our system is one person/one vote – knowing that our votes count. This is why it is so important to understand the reasoning behind the redistricting maps that have been presented by your committee and the house committee. These maps will have an impact on the future of our state for the next 10 years.

So, in looking at the maps, I am disappointed and concerned and worried about the future of our form of democracy.

First, the process failed in terms of a bipartisanship solution. That it failed and we ended up with Republican and Democratic maps speaks to both the increase of partisanship and the inability to compromise for the betterment of the whole state. It exacerbates our current national climate that is divisive and has a black and white thinking of "I'm right and you're wrong." Certainly this type of polarized thinking is not what we want our young New Hampshire citizens to adopt.

We want to have a healthy competition in our state elections. It results in candidates who have done the hard thinking about the challenges we face, are willing to articulate their views and who can balance individual and district needs with what serves the state best. Not all issues can be categorized along party lines. I have many views that might be termed Republican philosophically and others that could be defined as Democratic or Independent. Maps drawn by politicians (and not an independent panel of citizens) to protect a particular party or a particular incumbent do not foster true dialogue and exploration of viewpoints.

Second, the maps have been released with no supporting criteria offered to the public as to why the districts were drawn in a particular manner. Beyond the legal rules and court rulings that have to be taken into account, there are valuable guidelines that include: population deviation, compactness, and communities of interest. What guided you? Do you not want to educate us? Do you not want to persuade us? Without more information from the committee, I am left making my own judgments about partisanship, protecting incumbents, “cracking and packing”.

For example, the proposed Republican Senate map for District 9. Really? Just visually – this snake of a district – is suspect. You do know that it is 72 miles from its most western town to its most eastern one. You do know our road system means it will take over 2 ½ hours to drive from one end to another. And yet, even before we discuss the fact that it breaks up 9 different SAUs and combines communities that do not have common interests, you want to burden one senator with having to represent this district? How can she or he do that effectively?

And let’s look at the Republican version of the Executive Council map. It is the same map as its 2010 version. It seems to have the same fondness for serpentine districts – or what has been referred to as a Dragon. Governor Sununu is on public record for citing District 2 as a gerrymandered district. He is quoted as saying at a press conference *“That’s got to be fixed. It’s a weird one. It’s like a snake lying across the middle of the state. Very bizarre.”*

It is my fervent hope that these maps are opposed and that the committee is sent back to the drawing board. I know that if you were all my students, this assignment would not get a passing grade. I know that you can do better.

Sincerely,

Harriet DiCicco
Hancock
January 9, 2022

