



*Origin: Coffee Party position papers are developed by volunteers (lay people, not attorneys or policy writers) in the Strategic Implementation Work Group, who research, debate and then write the position paper. Our goal is to outline principles and propose a healthy system on the issue presented. The Board of Directors votes to amend or approve the position papers presented by the work group. This position paper was approved as amended August 2017.*

### **Position Paper on Redistricting**

GOAL: End gerrymandering to protect seats for party control.

Gerrymandered Congressional Districts effectively disenfranchise large numbers of voters in the United States. Following the national census every ten years, many states leave redistricting of congressional districts to state legislatures. Because most state constitutions do not preclude political bias in the redistricting process, the party in the majority is empowered to redraw congressional lines to create politically “safe” districts for their party and to pack minority party voters into the fewest districts possible. In its most aggressive form, gerrymandering can mean that voters lose much of the ability to fairly elect a congressional delegation representing their viewpoint or political beliefs, resulting in frustration and voter discord. In this way, gerrymandering greatly contributes to the rancor and polarization we see in United States politics today.

See the [spreadsheet](#) demonstrating relative disenfranchisement by state, post 2016 election cycle.

Following the 2010 Census and in anticipation of the 2020 Census, a number of states have adopted measures aimed at reducing these representational inequities.

- Florida added a clause to prohibit political bias in redistricting and requires that the State Supreme Court approve the resultant plan while leaving the process in the hands of the state legislature. Process will be in place for the 2021 redistricting effort.
- California enacted a proposition which created an independent redistricting commission with initial members selected by state auditors and final members selected by the initial members. This new process was in place following the 2010 Census. Disenfranchisement of Republican leaning voters actually increased in the subsequent election.
- New York allows the majority and minority leaders in the State House and State Senate to appoint an equal number of representatives to an independent redistricting commission. These appointees will then appoint 2



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additional representatives by consensus.

The Coffee Party believes that the fairest and most efficient methodology will draw elements from each of these efforts.

Where redistricting is required, the Coffee Party recommends that an independent bi-partisan/non-partisan redistricting commission be established. Where two houses of legislature exist, each appointer would appoint an equal number of commissioners as follows:

- Senate Majority Leader
- Senate Minority Leader
- House Majority Leader
- House Minority Leader
- additional members would be appointed by consensus of the other previously appointed members; party affiliation is not a requirement for additional members of the commission.

The commissions should use specific criteria to create and/or modify districts in the state based on:

- Equal population for each district
- Contiguous and compact geography that follows natural and civic boundaries where possible
- Prohibits bias along racial, ethnic, and political party affiliation lines

Redistricting should be subject to presentation and public review through town halls and other forums, should not be subject to veto by the state's governor, and must be approved by the State Supreme Court to comply with required criteria. Unicameral legislatures should follow a similar, adjusted appointment and approval process.

The redistricting commission for the state should be in place by January 1, of the year following each census. Census results are typically available by February 1, and the commission should target August 1, as the date for completion of their work including public review and State Supreme Court approval.

END