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To: Public Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] A method to avoid gerrymandering

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The current system of "redistricting" is broken. There is an opportunity for public comments, but on what basis are these comments made? The interests of certain groups in a given region? Eventually, maps need to be drawn; does anyone really believe that the input from the public will have any impact on that process?

Even if that process were conducted in a perfectly fair and non-partisan manner, what guidelines should be used? What makes a map more "fair" or "valid" than another map? What are the objectives?

One website I found gave a list of such guidelines.

- These seem to assume that people have the right to a representative that agrees with them on nearly all issues. This is not possible. Worse still, the existence of such guidelines can be used perversely to justify what is actually gerrymandering.
- Another underlying premise is that it is desirable to have "homogeneous" districts, i.e., many people having the same views, including their representative. But why should that give those views maximal power in the legislature? Indeed, effective willful gerrymandering often consists of creating (a small number of) **extremely** homogeneous districts to **diminish** the power of their views.

In actual practice, willful gerrymandering is the norm. The GOP has led the way recently (perhaps prompted by a desperate desire to retain power despite the shrinking size of their "base"), but recent events in NY show that Dems can stoop to this atrocity as well.

How to avoid gerrymandering? Use simple math rules to redraw the map (per census):

1. Each district should have about the same number of people in it. Possible rule: the population of each district should be no more than (say) 5% lower than the average and no more than 5% higher.
2. The actual boundaries should be natural (like waterways or city/county limits) where possible, but (to avoid gerrymandering) the total length of the boundaries should be no more than (say) 10% higher than the minimum possible. (This limit could be used to DEFINE gerrymandering.)

Notes:

- Software would compute the total boundary length for a given map and the minimum possible for total boundary length.
- The values of 5% and 10% seem reasonable, but experience might show that other values would be better. (Ratios would be less ambiguous than percentages. E.G., the ratio of 80,000 to 60,000 is 4:3 but what is the percentage difference? Most would say that 80,000 is 33% greater than 60,000 but 60,000 is 25% less than 80,000.)

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