

Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Talking Points: Gerrymandering and Redistricting Reform

Virginia's General Assembly convenes once a decade to redraw the lines of their electoral districts. While intended to balance out population shifts in the Commonwealth, the process has always been highly partisan. In 2011, a new round of redistricting will occur.

1. Partisan gerrymandering puts political considerations ahead of community interests.
2. Bipartisan redistricting increases governmental legitimacy in the eyes of the public.
3. Partisan gerrymandering results in legislative gridlock.
4. Bipartisan redistricting results in a more efficient government.

Partisan gerrymandering puts political considerations ahead of community interests.

- ³⁵₁₇ Gerrymandering allows politicians to choose their constituents rather than the other way around.
- ³⁵₁₇ Governments should encourage community cohesion, rather than division. Gerrymandering sometimes splits communities, which then lose one dedicated supporter for their issues and gain numerous representatives who can afford to ignore them politically. (Some notable examples are Joe Morrissey's 74th House district, Chris Jones' 76th House district, and Creigh Deed's 25th Senatorial district.)
- ³⁵₁₇ Gerrymandering creates "safe" districts which results in uncontested elections and reduced voter turnout.

Bipartisan redistricting increases governmental legitimacy.

- ³⁵₁₇ Placing the power to draw district lines in an independent commission eliminates or reduces problems such as deadlock in drawing district lines that then requires Court intervention.
- ³⁵₁₇ Politicians have a conflict of interest between creating fair districts and increasing their party's political power and their own political safety.
- ³⁵₁₇ Partisan redistricting allows a small majority to dominant one or both chambers of the General Assembly, marginalizing a significant bloc of voters statewide.

Partisan gerrymandering results in legislative gridlock.

- ³⁵₁₇ Creation of gerrymandered "safe" districts usually results in the election of candidates who are at the extreme edges of their party and unwilling to compromise to enact legislation that is controversial in any way or not favored by political party leaders.
- ³⁵₁₇ Due to the increase in "safe" seats, legislators have less of a need to compromise. By lowering the number of "safe" seats, bipartisan redistricting lessens both the likelihood of gridlock and partisan bias in decision-making.

A redistricting commission results in a more efficient government.

- ³⁵₁₇ Statistically, maps crafted by bipartisan commissions result in less litigation, freeing up court dockets and saving taxpayers' money in court operation.
- ³⁵₁₇ By shifting redistricting responsibility to a commission, legislators have more time to tend to the people's business, like passing a state budget or reaching a solution on transportation funding, during the normal session.

³⁵₁₇ Legislators elected from competitive, non-gerrymandered districts are more likely to enact legislation based on its merits and the good of the Commonwealth rather than on party-line directives.