

Are Voting Rights Preserved by your state's voting districts?



As early as 1705 - when members of the Pennsylvania legislature drew district lines to reduce the importance of Philadelphia – politicians manipulated district lines for political gain. The United States Supreme Court recently noted that, “Patrick Henry attempted (unsuccessfully) to gerrymander James Madison out of the First Congress.”

The term gerrymander did not arise, however, until 1812, when Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry's party drew a redistricting map that benefited itself and featured one district shaped like a salamander. Political cartoonist Elkanah Tisdale's depiction of the map added some dragonlike fangs, claws, and wings to the odd district, and Tisdale dubbed the creation a “Gerry-mander.”¹

After the next U. S. census, the redistricting process will begin again. Describe the redistricting process used in your state.

Does it empower voters or safeguard incumbents?

Examine an electoral map (Congressional or state legislative) of your state. Does it appear to be gerrymandered?

Write a five paragraph persuasive essay either supporting or opposing the redistricting process used in your state.

¹ Overton, Spencer, [Stealing Democracy The New Politics of Voter Suppression](#). New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2006.

The Gerry-mander : a new species of monster, which appeared in Essex South District in Jan. 1812. [Salem, Mass. : s.n., 1812] [Library of Congress - Political Broadside Collection](#)

“The Gerry-mander and Money Myths” – FairVote web site <http://www.fairvote.org/?page=1906>

[The Slaying of the Gerry-mander](#). [The Atlantic Monthly. / Volume 69, Issue 415, May 1892]

Redistricting Commissions and Alternatives to the Legislature Conducting Redistricting [NCSL](http://www.ncsl.org/legislatures-elections/redist/redistricting-law-overview.aspx)
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