

The 21st century has been characterized by the unprecedented and rapid expansion of political party influence. In order to vote in the United States, one must declare yourself as either being identified and registered as a Republican or a Democrat. These political groups have gone to extreme lengths in order to persuade individuals to vote along their party lines. In many instances, people vote for elected officials solely on the grounds of which political party they are registered and aligned. Unfortunately for many, aside from the Republican or Democrat label, they have no knowledge of the person whom they are voting for on the ballot. Historically, both parties have engaged in the practice of gerrymandering in an attempt to sway election results in their favor. On the surface gerrymandering can be perceived to be an assault on our democracy by gaming district boundaries for the benefit of a particular party or candidate.

In addition, millions of dollars are spent on political campaigning and advertising every election. Campaign spending seems to reach new heights with each election. Elected officials are not afraid to invest millions of dollars to “secure” the polls. With this being said, every vote truly does count, and it is the duty of every citizen to get out and vote. By gaining control of the White House, House of Representatives, and/or Senate, political parties can drive and implement their own agenda. Historically, the party with the majority elected officials can essentially dictate all policies across the United States.

Every ten years, after the United State Census is completed, all states are required to redraw all 435 congressional and legislative districts. They must be completed before the next election cycle. Districts are supposed to be representative of the population. According to the Washington Post, gerrymandering is defined as “drawing political boundaries to give your party a numeric advantage over an opposing party”. In some cases, this means protecting incumbents to ensure they can successfully remain in office. In more extreme instances, this refers to political parties colluding and artfully crafting district sizes that guarantee seats in the House and Senate for the next decade. Obviously, this process is very hurtful and intrusive to our democratic system by attempting to solidify and predetermine the winners of our elections.

A diagram depicting how gerrymandering can be utilized to produce different results is attached below.

With the future of the country at stake, campaign leaders are eager to secure and succeed in gaining votes at the polls. Often when on the losing end of the results, the opposing party has casted questions regarding the legitimacy of the election outcome. Examples in the recent past include individuals potentially colluding with foreign nations, purposely miscounting votes, breaking laws, and not looking out for the best interests of the citizens of our democracy. The polarization of policies within the political parties have contributed to the deterioration of bipartisanship within our elected leadership. As an example, during President Trump’s term in office, a Democrat led House of Representatives became gridlocked against a Republican led Senate majority. President Trump was forced to utilize executive orders as ratifications of bills through the House was unlikely. As a consequence, we have witnessed recent instances of nonpartisan tensions constraining our Congressional leaders from actually legislating on behalf of the people they are chartered to represent.

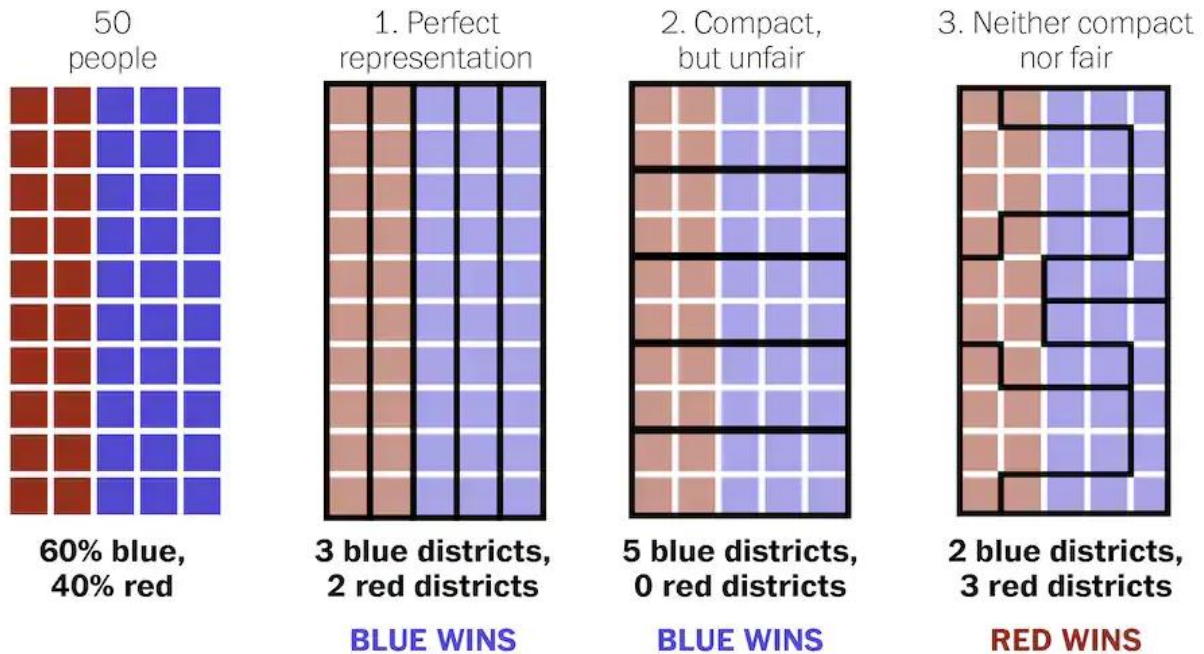
As a severe pandemic struck the United States, Congress was too focused on debating tax policies and the government budget without any real sense of urgency providing protection to citizens. A bipartisanship government could have come together to correctly address a stimulus package and COVID-19 regulations efficiently the first time around. Instead, months went by all summer long as citizens of the United States suffered while the pandemic raged on in the community. Businesses were forced to close as a consequence of implemented restrictions on operations. Subsequently, many people began earning less money from their jobs or had their jobs lost forever. The constant pressure against lawmakers finally preempted the \$908 billion rescue package that was released in December 2020 after the elections were over. Upon reflection, I wonder if much of this impasse might be attributable in some fashion to gerrymandering programs that were implemented prior to elections.

In the 2012 Pennsylvania election, Democrats won 51 percent of the popular vote but only received five of the eighteen seats in the House. Republicans redrew the State's Congressional District with highly irregular districts favoring their candidates to win the race. Afterwards, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court overturned the Republican-drawn lines and issued that fairer districts were created. Likewise, Democrats won 66 percent of the popular vote in the House in New York but received twenty-one out of the twenty-seven available seats. Therefore, the gerrymandering policies have not be limited to any one political party. Both parties have manipulated boundaries in an attempt to tilt favor towards their goals.

I believe that this constant gamesmanship deployed by both parties has detracted from allowing the will of the people to be heard. The term "gerrymandering" will continue to be relevant as Republicans and Democrats clash over processes to remain in power. It seems that both parties have promoted the usage of such policies in order to advance their specific agendas and accomplish a certain outcome. I believe that this process needs to be examined further in order to create an equitable method for drawing political boundaries that is tightly aligned with facilitating the voice of the people to be better represented in our communities.

Gerrymandering, explained

Three different ways to divide 50 people into five districts



Sources:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/01/this-is-the-best-explanation-of-gerrymandering-you-will-ever-see/>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-gerrymandering-4057603>