

From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
To: [Senate Redistricting](#)
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input
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Date: 2021-09-23
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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: ALL

Message:

My name is Dr. Eliz Markowitz, a native and current resident of Fort Bend County, and current educator at both The Princeton Review and the UH. I am here today on behalf of myself and as a member of TAG, a bipartisan non-profit organization that advocates for fair maps.

I would like to thank you for ensuring that, during these most difficult of times, you provided a means for the public to provide testimony on the upcoming redistricting process. It's that very sense of commitment to our democratic values that I hope will inspire you all to ensure that Texas, as part of this great experiment we call American democracy, participates in a fair, open, and transparent redistricting process upon provision of census data.

In order to fulfill the promise of the concept that one's vote truly matters, we must embrace a transparent redistricting process that includes virtual committee hearings throughout the legislative session, at least 14 days to review proposed maps, and provides an analysis of maps on communities of color. Doing so will not only allow the maps to be drawn in alignment with the Voting Rights Act, which prohibits racial gerrymandering, a historic problem in Texas, but also removes the heavy hand of partisanship from the map-making process.

By establishing an open and transparent redistricting process, the state can ensure that the votes cast by Texan citizens actually lead to equitable representation. Consider Fort Bend County, the sixth fastest growing county in Texas, home to over

811,000 Texans and represented by four state house representatives. Despite the fact that 54.57% of FBC voted to have Democratic representation in the last federal election, only one of the four state representatives in FBC is a Democrat, and he represents only 19.7% of the county's population. How could this possibly happen, you ask? Through racial and partisan gerrymandering intended to minimize the power of our most sacred American institution—the vote.

Redistricting is a uniquely non-partisan issue and a united push for representative maps among all committee members would do much to end the partisan gridlock we've experienced over the past decade. As noted by the lower courts, in 2011 Republican lawmakers engaged in racial gerrymandering by redrawing districts to bolster the voting power of white Texans, and, as noted by the Supreme Court in 2015, continued partisan and racial gerrymandering is inconsistent with democratic principles. Such gerrymandering only leads to the dilution of the power of a person's vote and leads to extreme partisanship. Over the past year we have witnessed a number of highly, and unnecessarily, politicized events such as the insurrection at the capitol, the failure of the Texas power grid, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed over 680,000 Americans and left over 42.5 million others with chronic health conditions. When the voices of Americans are silenced and the power of the vote shown to be meaningless by an unrepresentative government, we fail to fulfill our duty and obligations to the people, partisan gridlock ensues, and progress is stalled. To further the biased redistricting process that occurred in 2011 will only lead to more extremism, on both sides, due to the lack of adherence to the idea of fair and equal representation.

I implore you all, as public servants in the greatest state in the union, to embrace the ideal of equitable representation and support the establishment and utilization of virtual hearings throughout the redistricting process in order to ensure all Texans are heard. Please do the job you were elected to do, and a job that your predecessors have been unable to do since the passage of the Voting Rights Act, and ensure that all Texans are equitably represented.

All the best,

Dr. Eliz Markowitz

