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First Name: Mark

Last Name: Doerr

Title: N/A

Organization: Self

Address: [REDACTED]

City: Frisco

State: TEXAS

Zipcode: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Congressional

Message:

To the Members of the Texas Senate:

I write to you today as a deeply concerned citizen of the State of Texas to express my unequivocal opposition to the ongoing practice of gerrymandering in our state's redistricting process. I strongly urge this body to take meaningful action to end partisan and racial gerrymandering in Texas and to adopt fair, transparent, and community-based redistricting reforms that truly represent the will of the people.

The Undermining of Representative Democracy

At its core, gerrymandering erodes the foundational principles of representative democracy. District lines drawn to favor one party or to dilute the voting power of specific communities fundamentally distort electoral outcomes. Rather than allowing voters to choose their representatives, gerrymandering allows representatives to choose their voters. This practice fosters political entrenchment, shields incumbents from accountability, and leads to legislative bodies that do not reflect the diversity or political will of the public.

In Texas, the impact of gerrymandering has been particularly egregious. Although the state has grown increasingly diverse—particularly among Latino, Black, and Asian communities—our legislative and congressional maps do not reflect that demographic reality. The 2021 redistricting cycle, following the 2020 Census, offers a prime example. Despite nearly 95% of the state's population growth being

driven by communities of color, those communities received little to no proportional increase in political representation. In fact, many of these communities saw their voting power weakened through techniques like “cracking” (splitting communities across districts to dilute their influence) and “packing” (concentrating voters into a single district to minimize their impact elsewhere).

Partisan Gerrymandering: A Threat to Accountability and Bipartisanship

Partisan gerrymandering in Texas has created a highly polarized and uncompetitive political environment. In many districts, the outcome of general elections is a foregone conclusion, and real political competition is shifted to primary elections, where a small fraction of the electorate participates. This dynamic incentivizes candidates to appeal to the ideological extremes of their party base rather than to the broader, more moderate constituency they are supposed to represent.

The result is a legislature that is increasingly unresponsive to the real needs of Texans. Issues with widespread bipartisan support—such as fixing the electric grid, expanding Medicaid, improving public education, and enacting meaningful ethics reform—are often stymied by a political system that rewards rigid partisanship over consensus-building.

Racial Gerrymandering: A Violation of Civil Rights

Texas has a long and troubling history of racial gerrymandering. Courts have repeatedly found that past redistricting efforts in the state intentionally discriminated against voters of color. While the Supreme Court’s 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* unfortunately weakened federal oversight under the Voting Rights Act, that does not absolve this legislature of its moral and constitutional responsibility to ensure that every voter—regardless of race, ethnicity, or language—has an equal voice in our democracy.

The 2021 redistricting cycle once again drew legal challenges and accusations of racial discrimination. Several maps were drawn in ways that fractured communities of color, making it more difficult for them to elect candidates of their choice. This not only violates the spirit of the Voting Rights Act, it also violates the basic principle of equal representation.

Suppression of Civic Engagement

Gerrymandered districts discourage civic

engagement and voter turnout. When voters believe their voices do not matter—because the outcome is predetermined by manipulated district lines—they are less likely to participate. This is particularly true for young voters, communities of color, and those living in gerrymandered “safe” districts. In a healthy democracy, every vote should count equally, and every citizen should feel empowered to participate. Gerrymandering sends the opposite message.

Economic and Policy Consequences

The negative effects of gerrymandering extend beyond politics. When legislative bodies are not truly representative of their constituents, policymaking suffers. Communities may be denied access to resources or see their concerns deprioritized. Urban areas may be underrepresented in favor of rural regions, or vice versa. Education funding, transportation policy, infrastructure development, disaster response, and healthcare access are all affected by who holds power and whose voices are heard.

In Texas, gerrymandering has contributed to a disconnect between the urgent needs of our population and the policy priorities of our legislature. Instead of addressing pressing challenges, too much time is spent on performative culture wars and partisan posturing—because too many lawmakers face no serious electoral consequences.

The Need for Reform

I strongly urge the Texas Senate to support reforms that ensure fair redistricting. Specifically, I call for the creation of an independent redistricting commission—composed of nonpartisan experts and ordinary citizens rather than elected officials or partisan operatives. Several states, including California and Michigan, have already adopted this model with promising results.

Additionally, I urge the legislature to:

- Conduct all redistricting processes with maximum transparency, including public hearings across the state and accessible digital tools for map review and submission.
- Require that maps reflect communities of interest and preserve municipal and geographic integrity where possible.
- Ensure that racial and language minorities have equal opportunities to elect candidates of their choice, consistent with the Voting Rights Act.
- Enact strong anti-gerrymandering criteria in state law, including prohibitions against favoring

or disfavoring a political party or incumbent.

Conclusion

Fair representation is not a partisan issue. It is a democratic issue. It is a moral issue. It is a Texan issue. Gerrymandering undermines the legitimacy of our government, distorts our policy priorities, and silences the voices of millions of our fellow citizens.

As a proud resident of Texas, I believe we are capable of better. I believe we can build a system where elections are truly fair, where every community has a seat at the table, and where our legislature works for all of us—not just for those in power.

I respectfully urge this committee to reject gerrymandered maps and to commit itself to redistricting reform that honors the dignity and equality of every Texan.

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