

Concern 1: I request that you do not divide, split or fragment Montgomery County. Montgomery County has a population that is very similar to the target population of a Congressional District -- about 715,000 people.

We need a representative Congress that represents our views and values and also represents us as a political entity. If we, as a county, need help from the federal government or dollars for expressways or light rail, or national parks, we can turn to a single Congress person who will really represent us, instead of our trying to get the attention of multiple members of Congress who only represent a fraction or small piece of our county.

Concern 2: There are many reasons why partisan redistricting or gerrymandering is damaging to democracy.

Partisan redistricting, or gerrymandering, eliminates swing districts and polarizes any legislature where gerrymandering is permitted. The practice of gerrymandering creates only red or blue districts with very few competitive districts so you eliminate members of Congress with more moderate views who seek to bridge the gap between Democrats and Republicans.

Partisan gerrymandering actively tries to predetermine the outcome of "democratic" elections. Voters have the correct viewpoint that their vote doesn't matter. Their vote has been diluted. As a result, they become demoralized and withdraw from participating in the system, which hurts democracy.

Partisan gerrymandering in favor of incumbent members of Congress is corrupt and leads to disrespect of the law and the legitimacy of a democratic electoral system. Predetermined elections cause potential candidates, and other people who want to get involved in politics, to stay on the sidelines because they're disgusted. Gerrymandering turns elections into an insider game of "who you know" and, when incumbents are handed districts that are designed for them, it deters credible challengers from running.

Gerrymandering results in contorted districts that make it hard for people to identify and get to know their member of Congress. It damages communication between the elected official and their constituents. It damages communication between a candidate and the voters. Conversely, when districts are compact and counties and townships are kept whole, residents know their Congressperson. For example, when you live in a county represented by one member of Congress, you know who represents you; it's easier to get through to the member's office, to have them listen and understand you and to hold them accountable. All the members of that county know who and where their representative is, and they know who to turn to to have a voice in their government. The same applies to state representatives and senators. If a legislator represents an entire Township everyone knows who to turn to for help and representation. When counties and townships and political subdivisions are fragmented, the connection between an elected representative and the people is lost.

Finally, split or fragmented districts created by gerrymandering hurt democracy by making it difficult or impossible for candidates to run for office. A door-to-door campaign is nearly impossible. Campaigns are more expensive for challengers. It makes it difficult for candidates to communicate with voters. When districts are elongated, simple visits with potential constituents, to an Elks Lodge or a town center, become unreasonably time-consuming, burdensome and expensive. Personal visits are ineffective

because the constituents in a fragmented district will be represented by incumbents from all the surrounding congressional districts. It's particularly difficult to walk a district if the district boundaries change every other block or the map is hard to follow.

In sum, gerrymandering polarizes legislatures and hurts democracy itself. It breeds contempt for a corrupt system that is more suited to the politburo in China or a dictatorship like Russia, or a historically disreputable city like Philadelphia. Gerrymandering is conduct unbecoming of any legislator who has sworn an oath to support and defend the U.S. Constitution and the Pennsylvania Constitution.