

Gerrymandering

Background:

In Virginia, state legislators redraw district lines for the United States Congress, the House of Delegates and the Virginia Senate every ten years in the year following the federal census.

Virginia is ranked as one of the most gerrymandered states both on the Congressional and state levels based on lack of compactness and contiguity of its districts. Counties and cities in Virginia are divided between two or more districts to create heavily partisan districts. Forty-six localities are split on the Virginia Senate district map and 59 on the House of Delegates map.

Instead, Virginia district lines should be drawn through a process that is:

- 1) **Independent.** They should be drawn by an impartial body that is independent from the General Assembly.
- 2) **Objective.** Lines should be drawn using non-partisan criteria.
- 3) **Transparent.** The redistricting process should be open to public scrutiny and input.

While independent commissions have been tried in the past, their findings have been advisory to the General Assembly, who proceeded to ignore the recommendations and drew their own maps in secret negotiations. One way to prevent a repetition of the past process is to adopt a Constitutional Amendment to empower an independent commission to draw legally binding maps without requiring additional action by the General Assembly.

Therefore, be it resolved that, the 2018 Eighth District Democratic Convention affirms that:

1. Gerrymandering of districts must end and voters should be allowed to select their political representatives instead of officeholders selecting their voters.
2. Any solution should be independent, objective and transparent.
3. A Constitutional Amendment may be necessary to assure the independence of the redistricting process. The General Assembly should act in the 2018 session so that the amendment can take effect before the 2021 redistricting.