

This is an overview of the collective work centered around the seat of political power - grassroots-led redistricting reforms.

Did you know - the foundation of our voting rights and political power is based redistricting, our voting district maps. Redistricting is the process electeds use to draw our district maps. Some parties or politicians exploit their power through redistricting to unfairly lift some voter's interests, while silencing others to give themselves an advantage in election outcomes. This is called gerrymandering.

Overview:

Here are some hyperlinks walking you through our historic litigation to ensure BIPOC voices, stories and interest were equitably included as equal stakeholders in the state's redistricting process. We've been organizing/mobilizing Minnesotans across the state, across socio-economic, geographic, and political spectrums who believe people should come before party in our redistricting process. Never been done before to this coordinated and strategic scale. Together we moved the needle in a fairer set of maps for MN in 2021.

Common Cause and its co-plaintiffs, known in court as the Corrie Plaintiffs, filed a [statement of unresolved issues](#) asking to prioritize communities of interest over strict population equality, [proposed redistricting principles](#), and the maps below. See [our presentation to the court on community generated maps](#), [our presentation." responding to other parties' maps](#), and [our short concluding rebuttal](#).

Our press release: [Media Briefing: Coalition of Voting Rights and Community Organizations File Lawsuit to Include Minnesota's Black, Indigenous and Communities of Color in State's Redistricting Process - Common Cause Minnesota](#)

Our work stems directly from frontline grassroots engagement; impacted communities drew their community of interest maps, they worked to educate and mobilize others in their neighborhoods - no gatekeepers, no pre-packaged bills, or narratives - we wanted engaged communities to understand how to navigate spaces of power, how to come up with bill language/ideas and drive their agenda. For us it was about partnerships that helped communities lean into their own power. We provided the tools they needed to drive the campaign. Thousands of written statements, hundreds of calls, and dozens of direct in-person and zoom testimonies (some in languages other than English like Hmong and Spanish) - we took their maps to court.

Who we are - Minnesota is home to over 18,000 Common Cause MN multipartisan members across the state and despite belonging to various MN party affiliations, or not being affiliated, the one thing they've come together to do is support our work ensuring our state's democracy is safeguarded, our elections continue to reflect the will of Minnesotans and everyone's vote/voice counts.

How we do our work - **We don't start with prepackaged ideas to get communities to rally around.**

We don't move policy packages coming from candidates, political parties, or special interest. We

democracy is OUR common cause

don't position our work/space from an allyship of gatekeepers of ideas or reforms. We start with listening to community concerns first and walking with them through identifying what solutions work for them, how to powermap stakeholders or obstacles, and working with their electeds to move their prodemocracy policy ideas. We don't tell them what to say but rather how to find their voice within spaces of power.

MN's foundation for political and voting power; Redistricting - Last year, Minnesota re-drew the boundaries of our congressional, state legislative, and local government voting districts. Except that instead of our legislator's putting us first and coming up with bipartisan district maps - some refused and kicked the can to the Court knowing they'd move status-quo maps.

Why should you care? Because the voting district maps drawn through this process is how we pick our candidates for local, state, and federal government. WHO gets elected decides WHICH policies are given priority at all levels of government and HOW much money is invested in our communities. THEY define opportunities for building wealth and WHO has access to those opportunities. We can have 1,000 prodemocracy voting rights moved BUT if they are caged within district lines that are drawn in a manner that doesn't see our communities - our individual and collective political power is dependent on "partisan and/or political benevolence".

Our leadership with grassroots-led redistricting reforms - Redistricting is supposed to reflect population and demographic shifts/changes ensuring everyone is fairly represented within proposed voting district drawn. For ex. MN's growth in economic centers and population is driven by communities of color. BIPOC Minnesotans are driving MN's economy thru the labor market AND sprouting small businesses across the state along economic corridors - reviving once dying rural areas. It's been their growth that allowed us to keep our 8th congressional district. The State Demographer's report and Census data paints a clear picture.

Question - has past redistricting resulted in greater parity in political power for our MN thriving communities?

Because we know BIPOC communities don't experience democracy in the same way as majority communities, we organized people power across the state to ensure that the public played an active role in shaping fairer representative maps for MN. Not all prodemocracy reforms impact Minnesotans in the same way. We must be intentional about asking how do disenfranchised communities specifically benefit? Is there parity?

In 2016, we started working with impacted communities across the state and began the arduous process of crafting and organizing a grassroots-led bipartisan bill, HF1605, that emerged in 2019 after 3 years of community mobilizing and grassroots power building.

- In 2016 we had a legislature controlled by Republicans, and we still mobilized and stopped bad redistricting bills meant to skew our redistricting toward party interest over people.
- In 2018 with a legislature split in power between the House DFL and Senate Republicans, we finished the work of crafting bipartisan grassroots-led redistricting reforms putting people ahead of party and centering a process and principles designed to prioritize community. We built support in both chambers.

- In 2019 we introduced, HF1605, the community bipartisan grassroots-led redistricting reforms bill, and
- In 2020 we worked diligently to move out of both chambers – the pandemic shut down killed all bills and we regrouped to revisit what grassroots redistricting reforms could look like with greater constituent input.
- In 2020-21 We made sure BIPOC voices, and other disenfranchised Minnesotans, were centered in our state's redistricting process. We led a historic litigation strategy that for the first time secured BIPOC communities a place at the table as equal stakeholders making sure a more reflective story and voices were centered in the state's redistricting process where our voting district maps were being drawn.

Making sure the community controlled the narrative around the need for people-centered redistricting reforms was not easy. Our stories are often centered as menu-items by folks outside of impacted communities as a way of hijacking their lived-narrative. As I'm confident you've seen a common strategy by some to clone a bill only to water down provisions and/or massage them into provisions that are friendlier to the needs of a party/politician over the people, or even communities.

We are unique in MN's democracy space because unlike other nonprofits with a C4 entity, in our 54yr history we've never endorsed a candidate or party. That means we don't phonebank, doorknock, fundraise or canvas for any given party of candidate. It also means we are objectively able to hold power accountable without compromising the interest of constituents and impacted communities.

We moved the needle in a powerful way, but the system is still broken. Our work with statewide impacted communities to move the grassroots-led people-centered redistricting reform bill communities came together to support from 2016-2020, continues. HF4593/SF4894 is not focused on what parties are comfortable moving, but rather what community demands from an accountable and transparent government that works for *all* Minnesotans.

Through our collective grassroots work and litigation, we moved the needle towards greater political power and parity for BIPOC Minnesotans BUT the work is not finished.