

PUT MINNESOTANS FIRST

Summary of the goals contained in Redistricting Principles for a more Perfect Union:

- Elimination of prison gerrymandering;
- Protection of racial minorities;
- Strong consideration of communities of interest;
- Open and accessible meetings of decision-makers;
- Outreach to communities and access to redistricting tools to allow meaningful participation; and
- Access to information about any non-public discussions of redistricting between decision-makers.

HF2594 meets each of these goals the best. It best ensures fair district maps for all Minnesotans regardless of partisan affiliations, zip codes or socio-economic backgrounds while minimizing wiggle room for partisan agendas to seep through.

Common Cause MN is a nonpartisan grassroots organization with almost 21,000 multipartisan members, allies, and supporters statewide. For the past 5yrs. we have advocated for - and mobilized around - grassroots bipartisan voter-focused redistricting reforms that put the redistricting process in the hands of a bipartisan citizen redistricting committee.

We are proud that the bulk of HF2594 remains the only bill that is reflective of direct broad statewide grassroots input. It is the culmination of 3years of meetings and recommendations from both sides of the aisle and chambers. Without the input and feedback, supporting the work or challenging us with other ideas, from members such as Rep. Nue Brindley, Nash, Zerwas, Bernardy, Sen. Benson and Koran - to name a few, it would not have been possible. Rep. Klevorn's leadership on HF2594 is exemplary.

Since 2017, we've partnered with grassroots organizations and groups across the state to educate Minnesotans on what is redistricting, why it's important and how it impacts them. We met with dozens of grassroots groups, local chambers, rotary clubs, mayors, city managers and talked with Minnesotans at county fairs across the state, farmers markets, local special events, and door knocking

A resounding theme bubbled up - "put us first" in the redistricting process and when drawing maps, 2) also maximize opportunity for transparency and political accountability to constituents.

Redistricting is an important democracy tool that impacts how Minnesotans' issues are represented and their voices heard. We encourage this committee to hold a transparent, highly engaging accessible process that allows Minnesotans to provide input on proposed maps before they are finalized, not after the fact. Also, access to information about any non-public discussions of redistricting between decision-maker should be available to the public.

Minnesotans we engaged wanted you to consider the following in drafting principles:

- **Preserving Core Districts should be low on the list of priorities.** Keep principles that in effect protect incumbent seats lowest in the list of priorities if not outright leave it out of

consideration. These formal geocriteria have been justified, in large part, because it is claimed to act as a proxy for continuity of representation, transportation costs, communication costs, and campaign costs or used to “help voters” know who represents them. Advances in communication technology have greatly weakened the connection between geographic distance and communication costs and constituents’ knowledge of who candidates are. These advances, along with the widespread availability of detailed “micro-targeting” databases of information on voters—have enabled campaigns to target persuadable voters much more effectively and economically within districts rather than relying on district-wide campaign communication. Compromising voter’s interests to protect incumbent’s interests is not needed.

- **Don’t Unpairing Incumbents.** Candidates and local election offices should bear the weight of informing constituents of their candidacy and where to vote. By unpairing incumbents behind closed doors, Minnesotans are deprived the right to vote for the candidate of their choosing. What they get is the candidate politicians drawing the maps want representing their district. Voters should pick who represents them, not politicians behind closed doors.
- **Elimination of prison gerrymandering;** This is a civil rights issue, and we are depriving individuals of their right to have their interests represented. In MN, we have an overrepresentation of Black Americans in the justice system. Black Minnesotans constitute about 13% of the male population, but about 35% of those incarcerated ([2017 data](#)). It is time to end prison gerrymandering, a policy that benefits no Minnesotans.

Count incarcerated Minnesotans at their last known address – End Prison Gerrymandering.

Last decade, Maryland and New York were the only two states to end prison gerrymandering by counting incarcerated people at their last known address, instead of the location of the prison. Today, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington State, AND yesterday, Common Cause Pennsylvania led efforts to join New York and Maryland in their commitment to end prison gerrymandering.

Each of these states will take the following steps to implement an equitable solution to prison gerrymandering:

1. Getting state prison data from the state’s correctional agency
2. Geocoding individual address data from incarcerated populations
3. Subtracting the relevant prison populations from census blocks where prisons are located
4. Use the adjusted data for redistricting

Common Cause has partnered with Prison Policy Initiative to create a resource that walks through the technical steps involved with reallocating incarcerated people back to their home communities. Here is the Step by Step guide that details how to reallocate people in prison: <https://www.commoncause.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Step-by-Step-Guide-Geocoding-and-Reallocation.pdf>

Here is the blog on prison gerrymandering: <https://www.commoncause.org/democracy-wire/an-equitable-solution-to-ending-prison-gerrymandering/>



- **Protection of racial, ethnic minorities;** (keep this language similar to US constitution). MN court has drawn the map since 1960; while the population has changed considerably. The 2020 census data shows that racial and ethnic minorities make up close to a quarter of the MN; the last boundaries no longer reflect that demographic reality.
- **American Indian consideration as a political subdivision and communities of interest..** There are 11 federally recognized Indian tribal governments in Minnesota. Each tribe is a separate sovereign nation with its own government and has an independent relationship with the United States and the State of Minnesota. In crafting the principles and drawing the maps, this fact should be considered and allow those federally recognized tribes status as political subdivisions and communities of interest.
- **Consideration of communities of interest is essential to successful redistricting.** Maintaining communities of interest intact in redistricting maps should be second only to compliance with the United States Constitution and the federal Voting Rights Act as a consideration in redistricting. Communities of interests should be widely defined. There will be a natural tension among some principles and consideration of communities of interest and we ask that you give priority to communities of interest.
- **Compliance with the letter and spirit of the federal Voting Rights Act and its prohibition of vote dilution and of retrogression must remain a primary consideration in redistricting.** While the elimination of racial discrimination in voting is a critical goal, that goal and the protection of civil rights are undermined by decision-makers who deny, without sufficient evidentiary proof, the continued existence of factors, including racially polarized voting, that support the creation of remedial districts under the Voting Rights Act

HF2594 meets each of these goals the best. It best ensures fair district maps for all Minnesotans regardless of partisan affiliations, zip codes or socio-economic backgrounds while minimizing wiggle room for partisan agendas to seep through. Please apply the principles, process and transparency outlined in HF2594.

Respectfully Submitted,

Annastacia Belladonna-Carrera,
Executive Director

