

Welcome to
*Judaism &
Current
Events*

Gerrymandering
**The importance of fair
maps in an election**

August 4, 2020

► Moderated by Marcy Hotz

Agenda

1. Prayer for Peace in Times of Trouble
2. Guidelines
3. CEEW Statement
4. Upcoming Discussions
5. URJ Statement on Census & Redistricting
6. The US Census & Apportionment (Redistricting)
7. What's the Connection?
8. Who Gets Counted?
9. What is Gerrymandering?
10. What Are the Effects of Gerrymandering
11. Examples
12. In Wisconsin?
13. What Is Being Done?/NDRC
14. What Can We Do As Citizens?
15. Possible Future Topics
16. References & Further Reading

A Prayer for Peace in Times of Trouble

Lord, give us peace that we may shine brightly in a dark world. Grant us the courage to live faithfully to our highest values even in the midst of hard times. Let our faith in each other be the beginning of wisdom and compassion rather than allowing fear to drive our actions.

Help us to live strongly in the midst of a world that needs to know peace. We pray for our brothers and sisters of the world, for we are of one family.

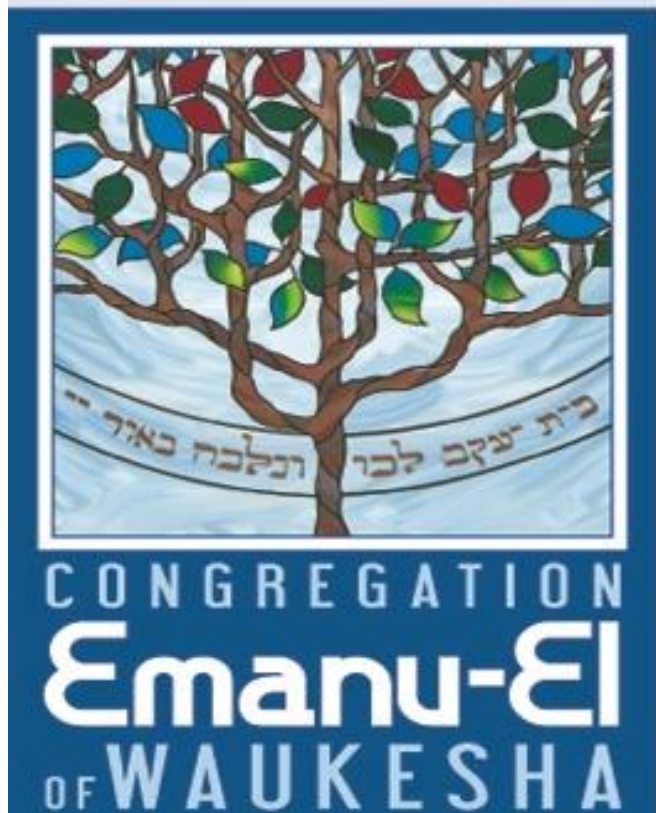
Show us mercy and heal those who are suffering in times of trouble and plague. Most of all, inspire us to restore the world and make all things new.

Amen.

Guidelines

- ▶ **This is a discussion, not a debate.** The purpose is *not* to win an argument, but to hear many points of view and explore many options and solutions.
- ▶ **Everyone is encouraged to participate.** But you may just listen.
- ▶ **No one or two individuals should dominate a discussion.** If you have already voiced your thoughts, let others have an opportunity.
- ▶ **Raise your hand to signify your wish to speak.** The Moderator will call on you. Ideally, one person speaks at a time. Keep interjections to a minimum. If you think you will forget an idea that comes to mind, write it down.
- ▶ **Please fact-check your sources.** We don't want to give oxygen to unverifiable information.
- ▶ **Listen to and respect other points of view.**
- ▶ **Do your best to understand the pros and cons of every opinion, not just those you agree with.** Be as objective and open-minded as you can be.
- ▶ **Seek first to understand, not to be understood.** Ask questions to seek clarification. Be thoughtful. Be kind.

CEEW Wishes You to Note:



- ▶ By consensus, the board recognizes that a group of members decided to hold their own forum on Judaism & Current Events.
- ▶ Views expressed during conversations may not necessarily be those of CEEW.

Upcoming Discussions

- ▶ **8/11** Social Action in Action - (CEEW's Social Action Leaders Mark Levy & Sandy Villa lead discussion)
- ▶ **8/18** Every Voice, Every Vote - Civic Engagement (Presented by guest speaker Julie Webb, Religious Action Center-Illinois)
- ▶ **8/25** Safe Learning - opening schools safely during pandemic (Pati & Marcy)
- ▶ **9/1** Bridging Divides - How to talk with people who don't agree with you (Pati Allen Brickman)

URJ Statements on Census & Redistricting

<https://urj.org/what-we-believe/resolutions/resolution-redistricting>

- ▶ Even in biblical times, leaders understood the importance of a census. The *Torah* tells us that in the wilderness of Sinai God commanded Moses to take a head count of the males over the age of twenty for military purposes (Numbers 1:2). This is one of several explicit and implied censuses in the *Torah*, beginning with the description of Jacob and his descendants as they leave for Egypt (Genesis 46:8-27) and ending with the census conducted for the purpose of settling the Promised Land (Numbers 26:2 *et seq.*).
- ▶ As we stated in our 2001 Resolution on Election Reform, “Our tradition teaches us that the process of choosing leaders is not a privilege but a collective responsibility ... It is our duty to ensure that all eligible citizens are afforded the opportunity to vote and have their votes counted.”

- ▶ ...there are challenges that could threaten the integrity of the decennial Census, on which so many key national decisions rest....
- ▶ ...Gerrymandering - long a feature of the American political system - has increased, resulting in more electoral districts that are intentionally designed to achieve an outcome that favors the party in power. Such drawing of electoral district lines to achieve a political advantage has taken on a hyper-partisan character that now seriously undermines our democratic processes. As the Campaign Legal Center has written, “When politicians manipulate state maps to hold on to power, they’ve essentially chosen their voters, and they no longer need to listen to the concerns of all their constituents.”
- ▶ The process of crafting electoral districts is itself reliant on the integrity of the decennial Census, mandated by the U.S. Constitution. The census provides a national accounting of the American population and is a key tool used to apportion members of the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as helping to determine the allocation of federal dollars and other policy decisions. An accurate Census is vital to understanding essential characteristics of the American people, such as population distribution, age, race, employment status, income and more.

► THEREFORE, THE UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM RESOLVES TO:

1. Affirm its long-standing commitment to the ongoing vitality of the right to vote as essential to the functioning of a healthy democracy and advocate for legislation that restores the Voting Rights Act's original intent of addressing racially discriminatory voting laws, ensuring that all eligible citizens have the ability to cast their votes and have their votes counted;
2. Work locally to ensure access to the polls for people or groups who have been subjected to voter suppression. Support legislation that ensures that fair electoral boundaries are drawn for federal, state and local legislative districts in the United States in order to reflect the populations of those districts, rather than to distort or suppress the vote;

3. To ensure the integrity of the 2020 Census and the resulting redistricting, urge congregations to

a) Work locally to support the implementation of the Census including encouraging their congregants and others to participate in the Census;

b) Educate themselves about the manner in which their state government has determined that such districts will be constructed in their states, to evaluate whether such system is designed and implemented to assure that such system will value equally the vote of each citizen; and

c) Join with other groups in their community to do such an evaluation and, where necessary and appropriate, to advocate in their state legislatures for legislation that may better achieve the equality that is so fundamental to our democracy, including particularly assuring that racial inequities are not perpetuated; and

1. Advocate for a full and fair Census, including:
 - a) The allocation of adequate federal resources;
 - b) Amelioration of the problem of undercounting of minority populations; and
 - c) Individual participation in the Census.

The US Census and Apportionment (Redistricting)

Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution mandates that an apportionment of representatives among the states must be carried out every 10 years. Therefore, apportionment is the original legal purpose of the decennial census, as intended by our Nation's Founders.

Apportionment is the process of dividing the 435 memberships, or seats, in the U.S. House of Representatives among the 50 states, based on the state population counts that result from each decennial census. The apportionment results will be the first data published from the 2020 Census, and those results will determine the amount of political representation each state will have in Congress for the next 10 years.

States benefit from accurate census data in four primary ways: It guides the disbursement of more than \$800 billion federal dollars to the states; the decennial census lies at the core of congressional apportionment; states use census data for redistricting at all levels of government; and lawmakers, businesses and nonprofits use census figures to make decisions.

The US Census and Redistricting: What's the Connection?



In the United States:

Redistricting takes place in each state about every ten years, **following the decennial census.**

This defines geographical boundaries, with each district within a state being geographically contiguous and having about the same number of state voters.

The resulting map affects the elections of the state's members of the **United States House of Representatives** and the **state legislative bodies.**

Redistricting has always been regarded as a political exercise, which in most states is controlled by state legislators and governor.

The Census takes place in years ending in 0, i.e., 2010, 2020, etc.

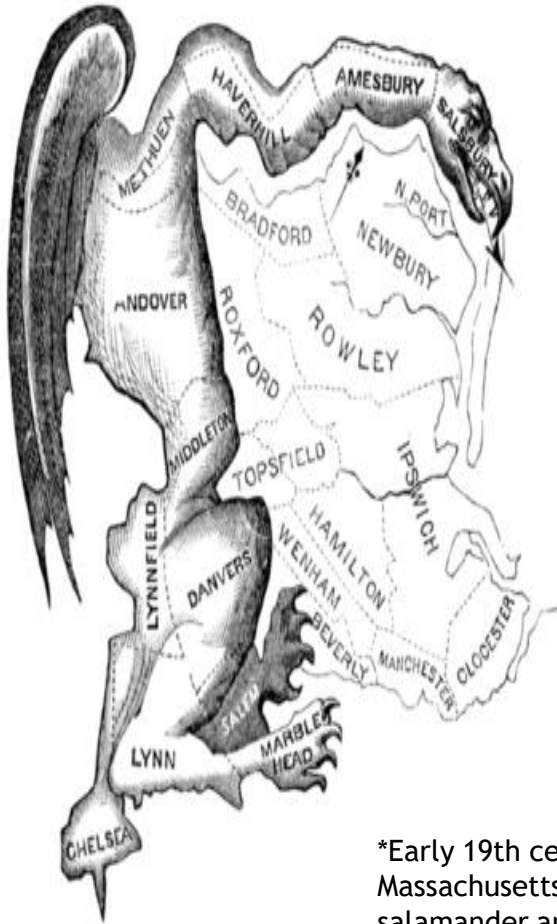
Who Gets Counted?



The U.S. Constitution empowers the Congress to carry out the census in "such manner as they shall by Law direct" (Article I, Section 2). The Founders of our fledgling nation had a bold and ambitious plan to empower the people over their new government. The plan was to count **every person** living in the newly created United States of America, and to use that count to determine representation in the Congress.

The answer to who the decennial census counts is relatively simple— by law, it counts everyone! It's not so simple, though, to answer: *How* does the census count everyone? The "who" includes every person who resides in the country. The "how" deals with what questions are asked and by which methods.

What is Gerrymandering*?



Gerrymandering is the practice of setting boundaries of electoral districts to favor specific political interests within legislative bodies, often resulting in districts with convoluted, winding boundaries rather than compact areas.

Its intent is to establish an unfair political advantage for a particular party or group by manipulating those boundaries.

Two principal tactics are used in gerrymandering: "cracking" (i.e. diluting the voting power of the opposing party's supporters across many districts) and "packing" (concentrating the opposing party's voting power in one district to reduce their voting power in other districts).

*Early 19th century: from the name of Governor Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts + salamander, from the supposed similarity between a salamander and the shape of a new voting district on a map drawn when he was in office (1812), the creation of which was felt to favor his party; the map (with claws, wings, and fangs added) was published in the *Boston Weekly Messenger*, with the title *The Gerry-Mander* .

What Are the Effects of Gerrymandering?

When one party controls the state's legislative bodies and governor's office, it is in a strong position to gerrymander district boundaries to advantage their side and disadvantage their political opponents. **Since 2010, detailed maps and high-speed computing have facilitated gerrymandering** by political parties in the redistricting process, in order to gain control of state legislation and Congressional representation, and to potentially maintain that control over several decades even against shifting political changes in a state's population.

Gerrymandering can be used to protect incumbents. The incumbent in a gerrymandered, one-sided district does not have to worry about re-election. They only have to worry about getting primaried. No one of the other party will run against them; they are a shoe-in.

Gerrymandering may be used to help or hinder a particular demographic, such as a political, ethnic, racial, or religious group.

Weirdly drawn maps to achieve partisan result, e.g.,

- New Hampshire: The Dragon
- Virginia: Contiguous only when James River at high tide
- Pennsylvania: Donald Duck kicking Goofy

Gerrymandering Excludes Voters

Gerrymandering establishes a political advantage for a particular party by manipulating state electoral district boundaries.

Only 24 of 435 congressional districts (5 percent) were considered competitive in 2016. If you voted in one of the 411 non-competitive districts, the outcome was predetermined. Your vote didn't matter.

Impact of Gerrymandering on Congressional Results in 2016

	Democratic	Republican	
Actual (With Gerrymandering)	194	241	+47
Expected (Expected average voting before Gerrymandering)	216	219	+3

Source: Princeton University Gerrymandering Project for the Associated Press

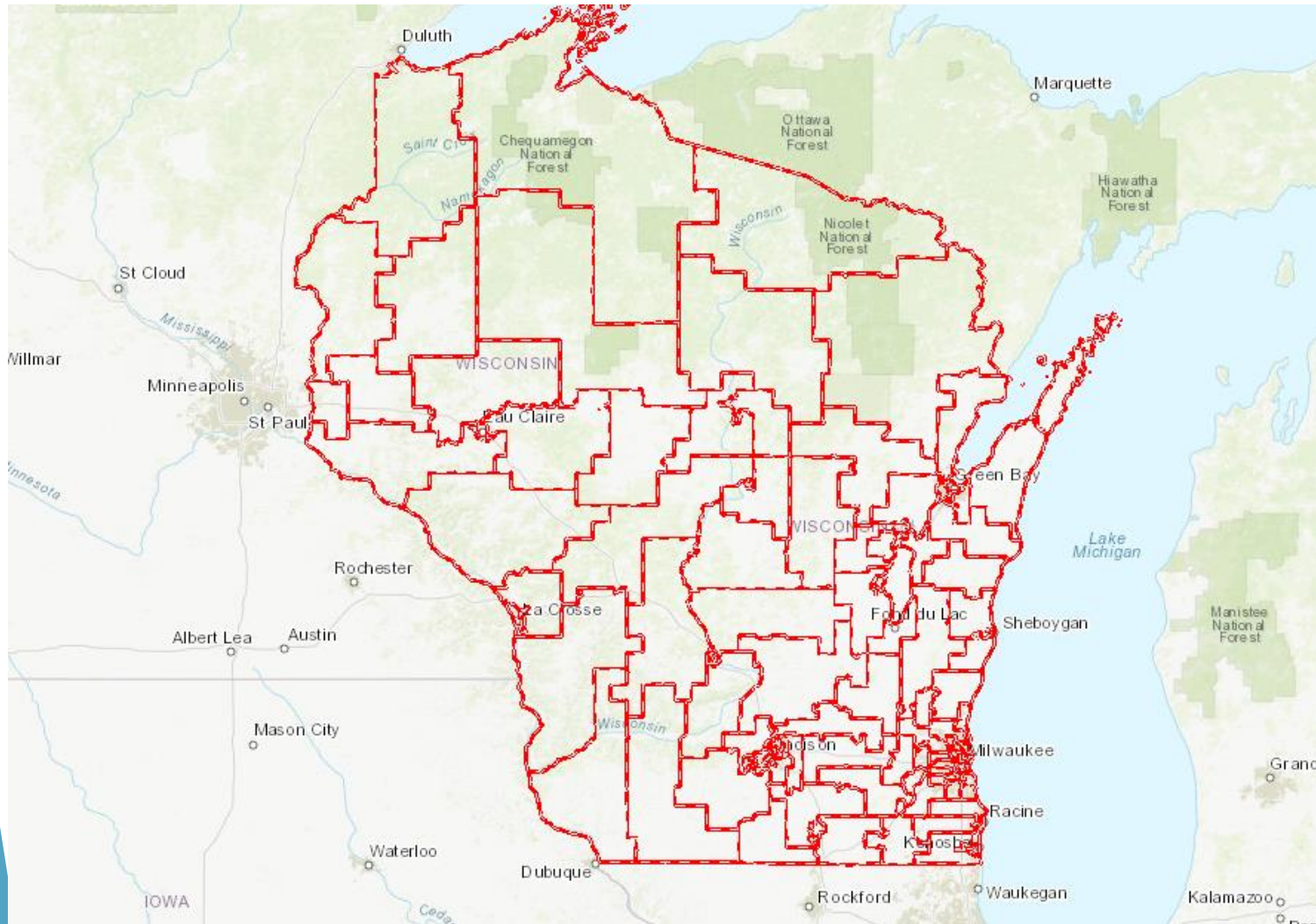
Gerrymandering Excludes Voters

The bias is so extreme that one or another of the major parties didn't bother fielding a candidate in 43 percent of the state legislative elections in 2014.

For example, in the upcoming August 11th election, in my (Marcy's) State Assembly and State Senate districts, only the incumbents were on the ballot. There were no candidates in the opposing party to challenge them. It has been this way in most of the elections in my districts since moving to this area (25 years ago).

In Wisconsin, Democrats make up more than 50% of the constituency, yet both the state legislature and the Congressional representation is 67% Republican.

Gerrymandering in Wisconsin?



**Wisconsin Prepares
For Another
Gerrymandering
Trial**

<https://www.wuwm.com/post/wisconsin-prepares-another-gerrymandering-trial#stream/0>

Judges Dismiss Wisconsin Redistricting Case

By [ASSOCIATED PRESS](#) & [LATOYA DENNIS](#)

Updated on July 3 at 10:48 a.m. CT

A three-judge panel has dismissed a federal lawsuit challenging Republican-drawn legislative boundaries in the wake of a key U.S. Supreme Court ruling. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled June 27 that federal courts have no place in policing political district boundaries.

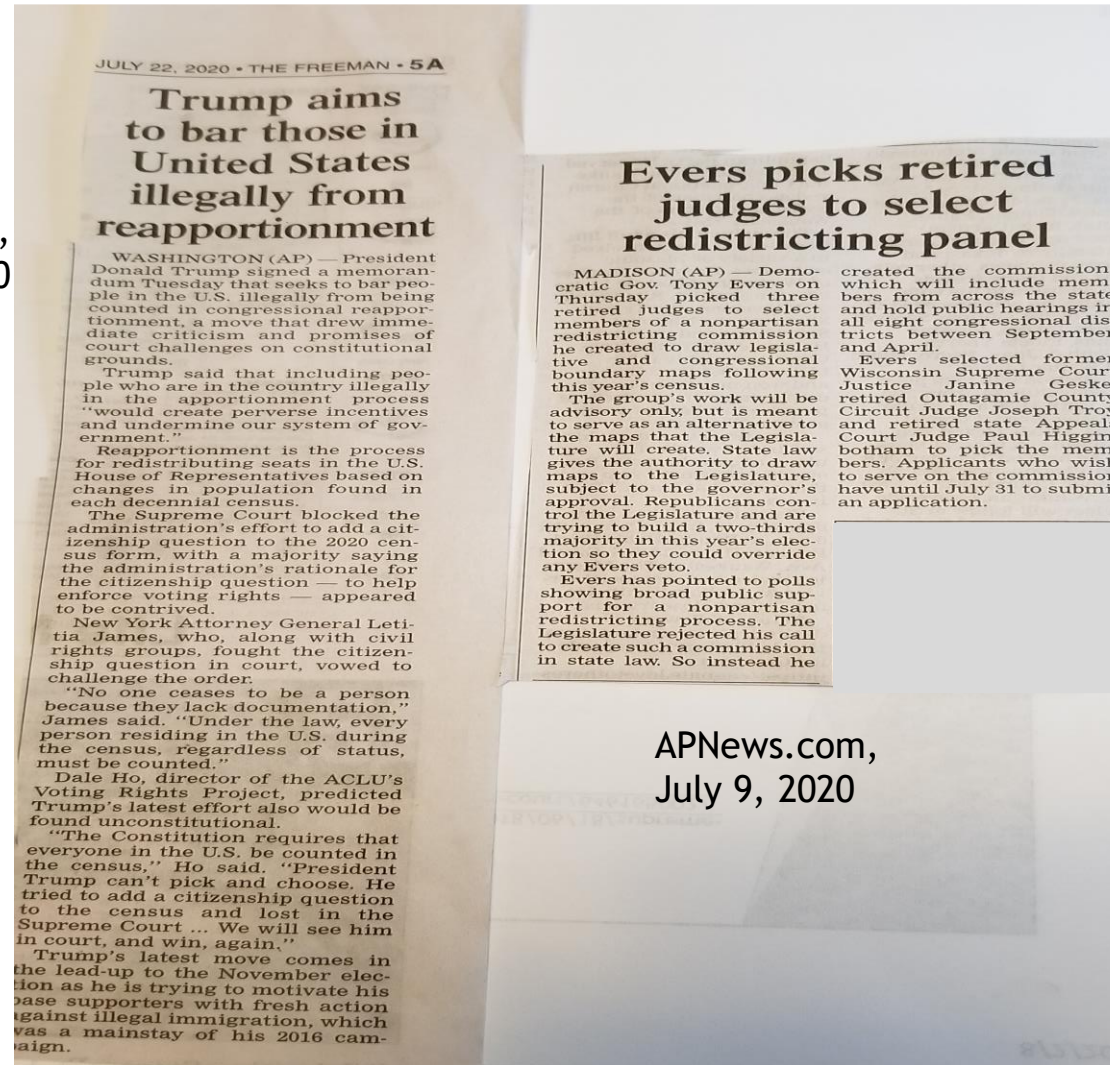
Barry Burden, who teaches political science at UW-Madison, says the Supreme Court "really closed the door, saying it doesn't intend to be involved in any of these cases ever again."

Burden says according to the majority opinion, justices believe partisan gerrymandering is being resolved on a state-by-state basis, but in Wisconsin that is not happening.

"They even noted that in some states voters had put issues on the ballot and had voted to create a commission or some other process for drawing maps and they thought that was a better remedy than federal courts getting involved," Burden says.

News clips

Waukesha Freeman,
July 22, 2020



APNews.com,
July 9, 2020

Robert Reich Statement

- ▶ The fundamental principle of an authentic democracy is that there should be one person, one vote; that every vote is equal; and that people select their representatives, instead of politicians selecting their voters. But here in Wisconsin, politicians have carved our state into districts that maximize their power and snub the will of people.
- ▶ The move to ban partisan gerrymandering in Wisconsin continues to gather momentum. Currently, 48 county boards have passed resolutions in favor of nonpartisan redistricting, and 8 counties have passed referendums, all by lopsided margins.
- ▶ A recent Marquette Law School poll showed that 72 percent of Wisconsinites want to ban gerrymandering in Wisconsin. And that includes 63 percent of Republicans, and 76 percent of Independents.
- ▶ Clearly, this issue crosses party lines. People are sick and tired of the way gerrymandering rigs politics in our state.
- ▶ The citizens of Wisconsin are saying, loudly and clearly, that they want to **end gerrymandering NOW!**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=155&v=eijQuEe7Ec0&feature=emb_title

What Is Being Done Nationally?



4:20-10:12

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_KVhrHNcc

Former US AG Eric Holder has formed an organization, the National Democratic Redistricting Committee to work toward fair (non-partisan) maps.

4 Prongs of NDRC: What Do They Do?

- ▶ Support candidates who want fair maps
- ▶ Litigate - Federal Court, State Supreme Courts, SCOTUS
- ▶ Support reform: Non-partisan commissions in states to draw the lines (already done in CA & AZ)
- ▶ Advocate - raise awareness, educate. Grassroots groups (such as J Street)

What Can We Do As Citizens?

- ▶ Vote for candidates who support fair redistricting methods
- ▶ Let your state legislators know you want fair maps
- ▶ Advocate: raise consciousness and awareness about the US Census, apportionment/redistricting, and the importance of fair maps

Possible Future Topics

- ▶ White Privilege
- ▶ Criminal Justice & Prison Reform
- ▶ Voter Suppression
- ▶ Erasing History (removal/renaming of statues, monuments & flags)
- ▶ Armed Militias, National Guard, Police
- ▶ Antisemitism
- ▶ Human Trafficking (Sandy V)

References & Further Reading

- ▶ "The ReDistricting Game". www.redistrictinggame.org. USCAnnenbergCenter. Retrieved 10 February 2017.
- ▶ Dawkins, Wayne (9 October 2014). "In America, voters don't pick their politicians. Politicians pick their voters | Wayne Dawkins". *The Guardian*.
- ▶ <https://changetherules.org/few-votes-matter/>
- ▶ <https://www.ncsl.org/>
- ▶ <https://www.wuwm.com/post/high-court-ruling-likely-ends-wisconsin-redistricting-case>
- ▶ ["https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2018/06/18/supreme-court-sends-wisconsin-redistricting-case-back-lower-court/646165002/](https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2018/06/18/supreme-court-sends-wisconsin-redistricting-case-back-lower-court/646165002/)
- ▶ **Robert Bernard Reich** is an American economist, professor, author, and political commentator. He served in the administrations of Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Bill Clinton. He was Secretary of Labor from 1993 to 1997.