

RS 102 Gerrymandering

Authority

1. WHEREAS Exodus 23:6 mandates that *“you shall not pervert the justice due to your poor.”*
2. WHEREAS **The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2012**, Social Principles: ¶68 V. The Political Community specifies:¹ *“While our allegiance to God takes precedence over our allegiance to any state, we acknowledge the vital function of government as a principal vehicle for the ordering of society. Because we know ourselves to be responsible to God for social and political life, we declare the following relative to governments:”*
 - A. **Basic Freedoms and Human Rights** *“We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections ... The form and the leaders of all governments should be determined by exercise of the right to vote guaranteed to all adult citizens.*
 - B. **Political Responsibility** *“The strength of a political system depends upon the full and willing participation of its citizens. The church should continually exert a strong ethical influence upon the state, supporting policies and programs deemed to be just and opposing policies and programs that are unjust.”*

Independent Citizens’ Commission

3. WHEREAS The United States Constitution requires a national census every 10 years.² Each state must then re-draw the borders of their state legislative and Federal Congressional district boundaries.
4. WHEREAS “Gerrymandering” occurs when politicians draw political districts to guarantee their re-election.³
5. WHEREAS gerrymandering defeats the “one voter-one vote” rule.⁴ It creates “a conspicuous conflict of interest that gives an undue advantage to incumbent legislators or political parties.”⁵
6. WHEREAS in 2011 the Pennsylvania General Assembly –not the Legislative Redistricting Commission– drew the following Federal Congressional Districting map as the Act of December 22, 2011, P.L. 598, No. 131. There were no public hearings on this statute.

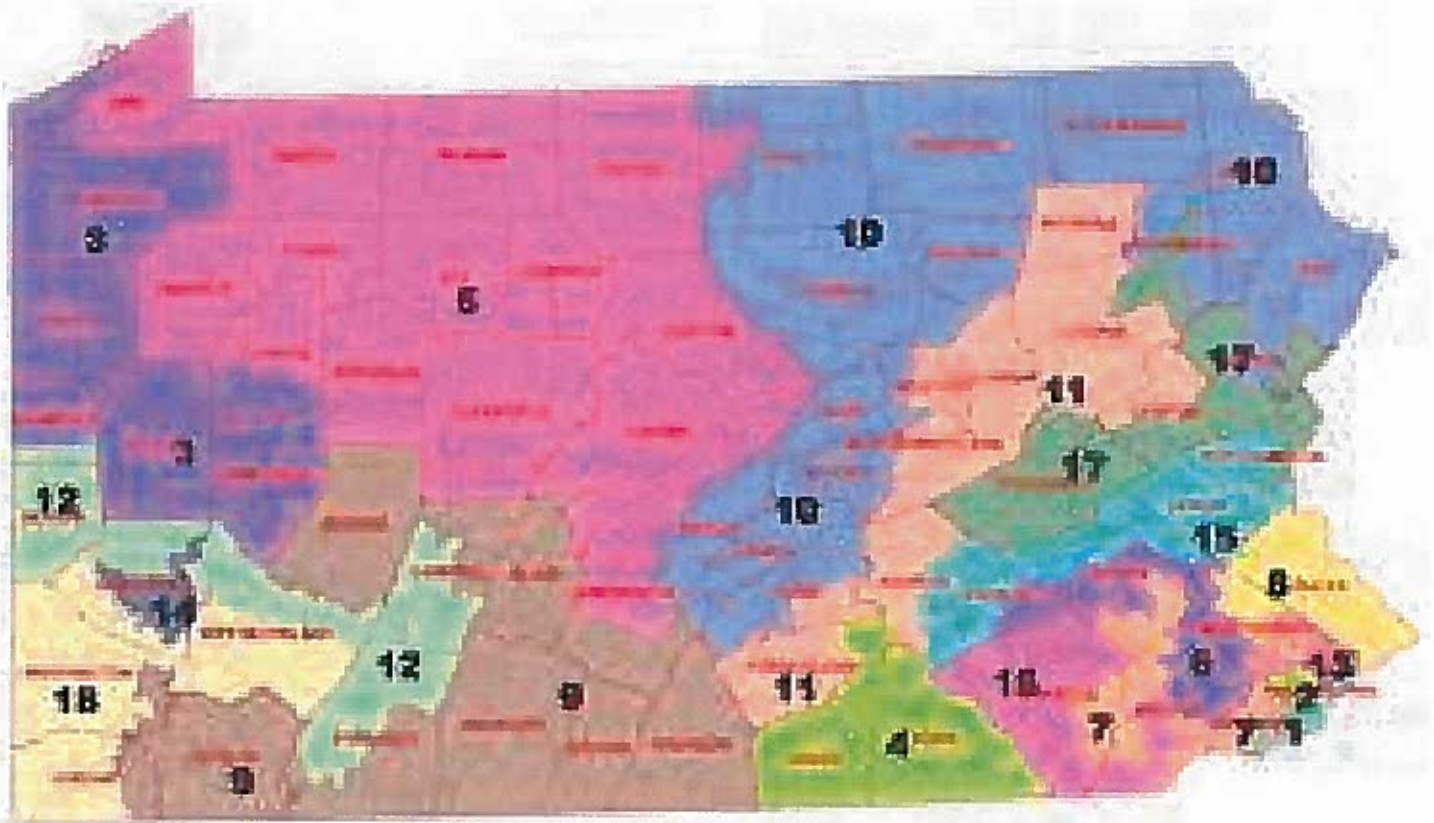
¹ <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/political-community>

² US Constitution, Article I, Section 2, Provision 3.

³ <https://rantt.com/the-top-10-most-gerrymandered-states-in-america-bd962843ba1f> ; <https://www.azavea.com/blog/2017/07/19/gerrymandered-states-ranked-efficiency-gap-seat-advantage/> ; <http://geekpsychologist.com/which-states-have-the-worst-congressional-gerrymandering-in-the-country/>

⁴ *Reynolds v. Sims* 377 U.S. 533 (1964)

⁵ https://www.academia.edu/34634102/2017-09-21_Gerrymandering_Pennsylvania



7. WHEREAS The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania filed *League v. Pennsylvania* ⁶ to determine whether this December 22, 2011 districting plan violated the Pennsylvania Constitution's Free Expression and Association Clauses,⁷ Equal Protection Guarantees,⁸ and Free and Equal Clause.⁹
8. WHEREAS An alternative districting plan was developed in the course of litigation.¹⁰ These districts were drawn with computer assistance. They have population equality, and are compact, contiguous and respectful of county and municipal boundaries. They were deliberately drawn without regard for partisan data.

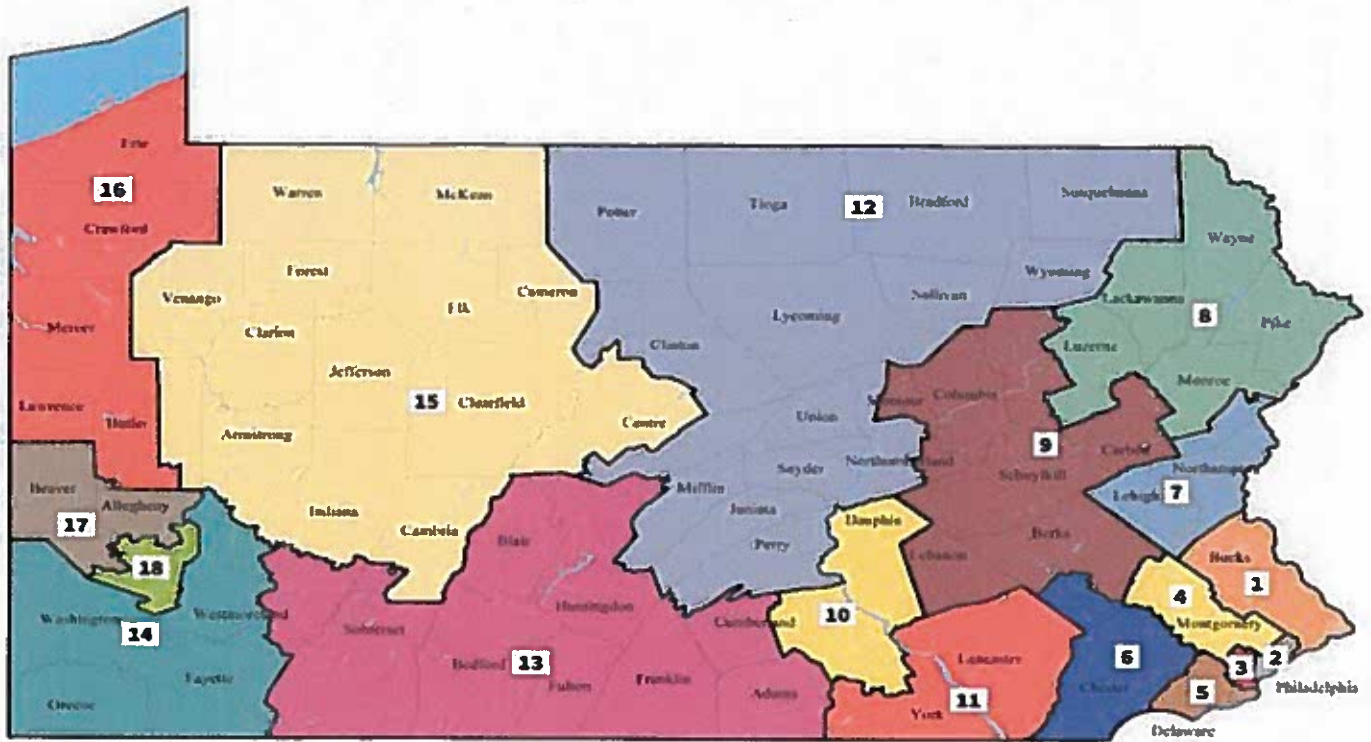
⁶ Filed 6/15/2017, Commonwealth Court 261 MD 2017

⁷ Art. I, §§ 7, 20

⁸ Art I, §§ 1, 26

⁹ Art I, §5

¹⁰ In Commonwealth Court, <https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legal-work/17.12.29%20Recommended%20Findings%20of%20Fact%20and%20Conclusions%20of%20Law.pdf>; In Pennsylvania Supreme Court, https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/legal-work/LWV_v_PA_Majority-Opinion.pdf



9. WHEREAS more than seven states already use independent commissions.¹¹ Private citizens draw the district boundaries. All politicians -and most felons- are deliberately excluded from these commissions. The US Supreme Court has sustained these independent commissions.¹²
10. WHEREAS Districts designed by independent commissions tend to be more representative and more competitive.¹³ These districts have population equality, and are compact, contiguous and respectful of county and municipal boundaries. They cannot consider partisan data when drawing the boundaries.
11. WHEREAS some nine Bills have been introduced into Pennsylvania's 2017-2018 General Assembly calling for Independent Citizens' Commissions.¹⁴
12. WHEREAS all three of Pennsylvania's United Methodist Conferences have passed resolutions calling for redistricting reform before the 2020 Federal Census.¹⁵

Implementation

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the clergy and laity of the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church call upon the Pennsylvania General Assembly to immediately enact legislation that would create an independent citizens' commission –free of politicians and felons- to design political districts that would represent our voting population. These districts should have population equality, be compact, contiguous and respectful of county and municipal boundaries. The district boundaries should be free of political considerations.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redistricting_commission Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Jersey & Washington. Others states, like Alaska & Missouri, have modified forms.

¹² Arizona State Legislature v. Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission , 576 US ____ (2015)

¹³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/02/upshot/independently-drawn-districts-have-proved-to-be-more-competitive.html> California changed from 5% to 19% competitive districts, the efficiency gap dropped by 30% statewide.

¹⁴ [Gerrymandering Pennsylvania: A Crisis in This Legislative Session, https://www.academia.edu/34634102/2017-09-21_Gerrymandering_Pennsylvania](https://www.academia.edu/34634102/2017-09-21_Gerrymandering_Pennsylvania)

¹⁵ <http://www.wpaumc.org/files/resource/journal/2016/07+legislation2016draft.pdf> , <https://www.epaumc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2017RESOLUTIONS.pdf> , http://susumc.org/files/annual_conf/2017/2017_Annual_Conference_Workbook_FINAL.pdf

