

PEOPLE'S MAP

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Dear

There is an effort currently underway to “reform” the state’s redistricting process. In the past, you have shown your support for these so-called “reforms,” which in reality are a political ploy to hurt minorities and middle-class families throughout Illinois.

While proponents of these “reforms” talk about fairness, we believe the results of allowing an independent commission to draw the map will be anything but fair to minorities, and will prevent minorities from electing the candidates of their choice. This has been seen in other states with supposedly “fair” redistricting processes.

The National Conference of State Legislatures, a non-partisan independent organization that assists states with research on legislative initiatives, noted states often mistakenly assume independent commissions will be less partisan than legislatures when drawing legislative boundaries. For example, Arizona uses an “independent commission” to draw legislative boundaries, and the maps drawn by this commission have been the subject of much scrutiny. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Justice condemned the map claiming it “dilutes minority voting strength – possibly intentionally.” An Arizona court overturned the commission’s redistricting plan for numerous violations of the state constitution.

A recent report issued by the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund notes that so-called reform proposals must be viewed with a skeptical eye, stating “our nation’s unfortunate history of persistent and adaptive discrimination in the electoral process – including redistricting reform efforts that have suppressed minority voting rights, ultimately leading to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) – requires a careful examination of all redistricting reform proposals.”

Likewise, the “reform” proposal in Illinois does not guarantee minority representation. The minority community and communities of color would lose the strong voice we currently have to ensure minority protection in Illinois’ remapping process. Rather than maximizing the number of districts represented by persons of color, the proposal could dilute representation and limit opportunities for minorities to participate in the political process.

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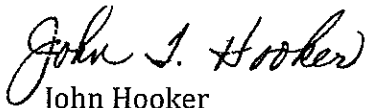
The reality is that Republicans in Illinois want redistricting “reform” because it will result in fewer Democratic districts. We find it extremely hypocritical that politicians who call for a “fair map” in Illinois – where Democrats have majorities in the State Legislature – are not also calling for similar “reforms” in states dominated by Republicans.

We know from the examples above and actions of other states that unfair redistricting changes will have a dramatic, negative impact on minorities. According to an October 2014 article in *The Washington Times*, the non-partisan Government Accountability Office reported that voter identification laws passed by Kansas and Tennessee – states controlled solely by Republicans – resulted in lower voter turnout than in similar states without such laws. The study also noted that voters most likely to be affected by such laws are young, minority and newly registered. We believe that taking away our voice in the redistricting process will put Illinois one step closer to enacting extreme policies that hurt minorities.

A Democratic Legislature is the only thing standing between Gov. Bruce Rauner and his extreme agenda aimed at weakening minorities, the poor and middle-class families, taking away their job protections and driving down their wages.

Over the next several months, we will be talking with individuals throughout the state about what unfair redistricting changes will truly mean for them, and we will take note of who assists in the destruction of the middle class and minority communities in our state.

Sincerely,



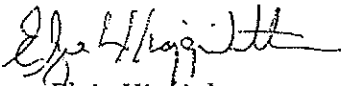
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