



FAIR AND SQUARE

Website advocates for impartial redistricting in Pennsylvania

Adults are always lecturing children on the importance of fair play. They admonish them to follow the rules, share with others, take turns and don't take more than your fair share.

Unfortunately, the adults in charge of crafting the most important rules — our laws — don't follow these basic tenets from childhood. Legislatures around the country are full of self-serving, ideological hacks who are not acting in the best interests of their constituents. Among this group of low-performing roadblocks to democracy, Pennsylvania's legislators are near the bottom of the barrel.



KEVIN O'NEILL

InSites

don't take my word for it. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court recently struck down the ridiculous, Republican-drawn congressional district map as “clearly, plainly, and palpably” violating the state constitution’s mandate that voters participate in “free and equal” elections.

The extreme partisan gerrymandering of legislative districts is a prime example of lawmakers acting in their own interests rather than those of the citizens. But

FairDistrictsPa.com is the website of a nonpartisan organization dedicated to making the process of drawing legislative districts impartial in Pennsylvania.

The organization is advocating for the passage of Senate Bill 22 and House Bill 722. Both of these bills would amend the state constitution to create an independent commission to determine districts. Currently, the lawmakers decide, so whoever is in power crafts them to their party's advantage.

The website is a good resource for learning how gerrymandering corrupts the electoral process. It covers the histo-

ry of the process, describing how partisanship, big money and technology have conspired to make it much more nefarious over time. A series of maps shows the evolution of the state's 7th District from a compact shape following municipal boundaries to a convoluted mess corraling desired voters.

The site clearly defines the problem and offers solutions on how to fix it. There's information on how to participate in the cause, how to contact your representatives and there's a petition you can sign to pressure them.

Fairdistrictspa.com is nicely designed and easy to navigate. It

uses maps, photos, illustrations and videos to help make its case. The writing makes complex issues clear.

Both parties are guilty of gerrymandering districts, but the Republicans mastered the dark art for the 2010 census. They drew maps that insured party dominance even in states where they don't have a majority. It's time to make the process serve the people, not career politicians and special interests. It's time to make it fair.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a staff artist for The Times-Tribune. Share your favorite websites and apps with him at koneill@timeshamrock.com.