

I'm Kathleen O'Connell, I have lived near State College, in Centre County for over 50 years. I live in PA House District 171, Senate District 34, and Congressional District 12. I care about redistricting in Pennsylvania because it's the basis of our democracy. Fair, non-partisan redistricting allows for the true representation of all our citizens in Harrisburg. According to PA.gov, Centre County has slightly more registered Democrats (43,976) than Republicans (42,174), but you wouldn't know that in Harrisburg, because my county is diced into four districts, which were drawn so we are misrepresented by 3 Republicans and one Democrat, all in safe districts. My current three representatives have ignored my emails, phone calls and requests for meetings, which doesn't cost them anything, as they will get re-elected in their safely partisan drawn districts. You in Harrisburg have been entrusted with this most sacred duty to draw districts that fairly represent Pennsylvania. The type of slicing that happened in 2010 makes voters, including myself, feel hopeless. The consequence of distorting districts makes citizens not trust legislator-based redistricting. I can't see any reason for Centre County being sliced into four state House and two Congressional Districts, except partisan politics. One of my current reps explained that they had to change district lines when a representative moved so they could keep their district. I thought to myself, what does that have to do with a fair, representative democracy? Maybe a good way to think about redistricting is my mom's rule for sharing chocolate cake: you cut, your brother picks which piece he wants. You can bet I made sure those slices were fair! I taught social studies to public school sixth graders for 30 years. Teaching about how my country works as a democracy was one of my pleasures. But after the 2016 congressional election in PA, I was at a loss to explain to my students how Republicans won 13 out of 18 seats with less than half the votes cast for their candidates. That was a quick lesson on gerrymandering. If representatives gerrymander again, people in Pennsylvania will distrust government even more. I've collected hundreds of signatures against gerrymandering for Fair Districts at every election since 2017; the most common response after I explained that process was, "Is that even legal?" People care about this issue. Please don't partisan gerrymander this time. Include citizens in the redistricting process like you are now. Invite so much public input your aides have to work overtime to assess it all. Explain when district divisions must be made (otherwise, citizens assume you are doing it to stay in power). Staying in power is not your job. Representing citizens is your job. Thank you for my opportunity to be represented in Harrisburg