

# FAIR RULES, FAIR MAPS

— PUTTING VOTERS FIRST IN CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING. —

## The Case for Congressional Action

Problem Solvers Caucus Hill Staffers Briefing  
September 2026

ELECTION  
REFORMERS  
NETWORK



# Preview

- 1) **Overview:** America's worsening problem of partisan gerrymandering
- 2) **The Math:** How bad is it? **Bad.**
- 3) **Solutions:** Change is possible. Congressional action is key.
- 4) **Who wants change?:** Practically everyone. Presidents. Former Speakers, and House members. And voters. **Especially voters.**



# Problem Overview

- Gerrymandering is not new.
- Its level of damage is.
- US is the only nation to do it this way.



# Redistricting v. Gerrymandering

District lines determine who we get to vote for and how much our vote matters.

## REDISTRICTING

*Drawing* district maps to reflect a changing population.

- For Congress, once a decade, in conjunction with the constitutionally mandated U.S. Census.
- Intended to ensure “one person, one vote”

## PARTISAN GERRYMANDERING

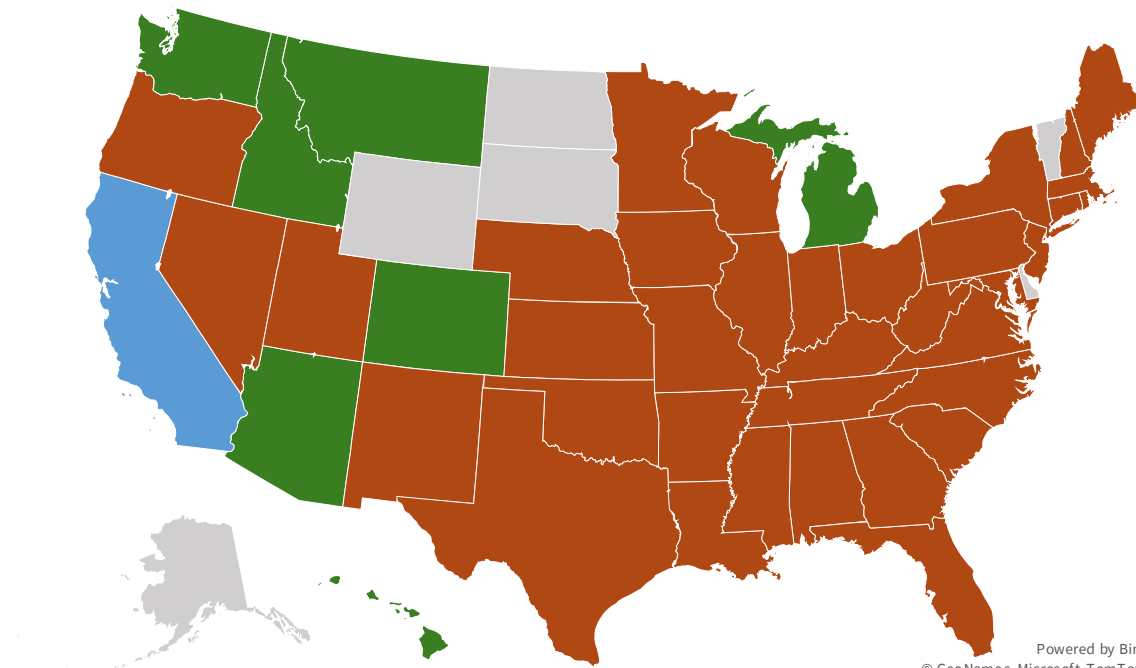
*Manipulating* districts for political gain.

- Creates “safe seats” even when the seat doesn’t reflect the political makeup of the voters.
- Rigs the vote for one party.
- Undermines voter faith in governance.



## WHO CONTROLS REDISTRICTING

# Most states allow politicians to draw their own districts.



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Source: ERN

STATE LAWMAKERS

36 states

REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

7 states

IRC BACKPEDDLER

1 state

NO CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING

6 states



## PARTISAN REDISTRICTING

# Gerrymandering underlies many problems confronting American democracy.



### Deprives voters of choice

Election outcomes are often locked in before a single vote is cast.



### Empowers political extremes

In safe districts, the only real challengers come from the extremes of each party.



### Shields insiders from accountability

Lack of competition makes it difficult to hold officeholders accountable.



### Blocks popular policies

Officials are able to block popular policies with little recourse at the ballot box.



### Locks in one-party control

Political minorities are underrepresented compared to their share of the population.



### Increases voter cynicism

Lack of competition and accountability increases disillusionment with politics.



## INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

# No other democracy lets politicians control redistricting.

Independent redistricting in countries with substantial use of single-member districts:

- Australia
- Belize
- Bhutan
- Bolivia
- Botswana
- Canada
- Ghana
- India
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Lithuania
- Mexico
- Nepal
- New Zealand
- United Kingdom



# Worrisome Math

- Voters are systematically disempowered.
- It's getting worse.
- Congress itself also deeply affected and increasingly dysfunctional



## DEFINITIONS

# How do we illustrate the problem?

### VOTE SHARE

% of congressional votes won by a party statewide

### SEAT SHARE

% of congressional seats won by a party statewide

### REPRESENTATION GAP

Difference between a party's vote share and seat share

### VOTER-EQUIVALENT REPRESENTATION GAP

Representation Gap measured as a number of voters statewide



## CASE STUDY

# Tennessee illustrates the problem.

### WHAT HAPPENED IN 2024

#### VOTE SHARE

% of congressional votes won by **Democrats** statewide

33%

#### SEAT SHARE

% of congressional seats won by **Democrats** statewide

11%

#### REPRESENTATION GAP

Difference between the party's vote share and seat share

22%

### WHAT'S LIKELY IN 2026 (AFTER MID-DECADE LINE CHANGES)

#### EXPECTED VOTE SHARE

Estimated % of congressional votes won by **Democrats** statewide

33%

#### EXPECTED SEAT SHARE

Estimated % of congressional seats won by **Democrats** statewide

0%

#### EXPECTED REPRESENTATION GAP

Difference between the party's vote share and seat share

33%

#### VOTER-EQUIVALENT REPRESENTATION GAP

Estimated number of voters affected by gerrymandering

≈ 1 MILLION



## MID-DECADE GERRYMANDERING WARS

# Different parties. Same result.

In both states, the minority party's statewide **vote** share translates into a far lower **seat** share.

### REPUBLICAN-LED REDISTRICTING

## FLORIDA

#### VOTE SHARE

% of congressional votes won by **Democrats** statewide in 2024

42%

#### 2024 SEAT SHARE

% of congressional seats won by **Democrats** statewide in 2024

29%

#### EXPECTED 2026 SEAT SHARE

Estimated % of congressional seats won by **Democrats** statewide in 2026

14%

#### REPRESENTATION GAP

Difference between the party's vote share and seat share

28%

≈ 3.05 MILLION

voter-equivalent representation gap\*

### DEMOCRATIC-LED REDISTRICTING

## CALIFORNIA

#### VOTE SHARE

% of congressional votes won by **Republicans** statewide in 2024

39%

#### 2024 SEAT SHARE

% of congressional seats won by **Republicans** statewide in 2024

17%

#### EXPECTED 2026 SEAT SHARE

Estimated % of congressional seats won by **Republicans** statewide in 2026

8%

#### REPRESENTATION GAP

Difference between the party's vote share and seat share

31%

≈ 4.92 MILLION

voter-equivalent representation gap\*

\*Illustrative voter-equivalent: representation gap × 2024 statewide turnout; not a count of disenfranchised voters.



# The widening gap between votes and representation

|    | STATE          | 2024 MINORITY PARTY VOTE SHARE | 2026 EXPECTED SEAT SHARE | REPRESENTATION GAP |
|----|----------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| AL | Alabama        | 25%                            | 14%                      | 11 pts             |
| LA | Louisiana      | 34%                            | 17%                      | 17 pts             |
| MO | Missouri       | 39%                            | 13%                      | 26 pts             |
| NC | North Carolina | 43%                            | 21%                      | 22 pts             |
| OH | Ohio           | 43%                            | 27%                      | 16 pts             |
| TN | Tennessee      | 33%                            | 0%                       | 33 pts             |
| TX | Texas          | 40%                            | 24%                      | 16 pts             |
| FL | Florida        | 42%                            | 14%                      | 28 pts             |
| CA | California     | 39%                            | 8%                       | 31 pts             |

OTHER DEMOCRATIC-LED  
MID-DECADE EFFORTS

VA VIRGINIA  
Voters approved;  
struck down by court

MD MARYLAND  
Ballot amendment.

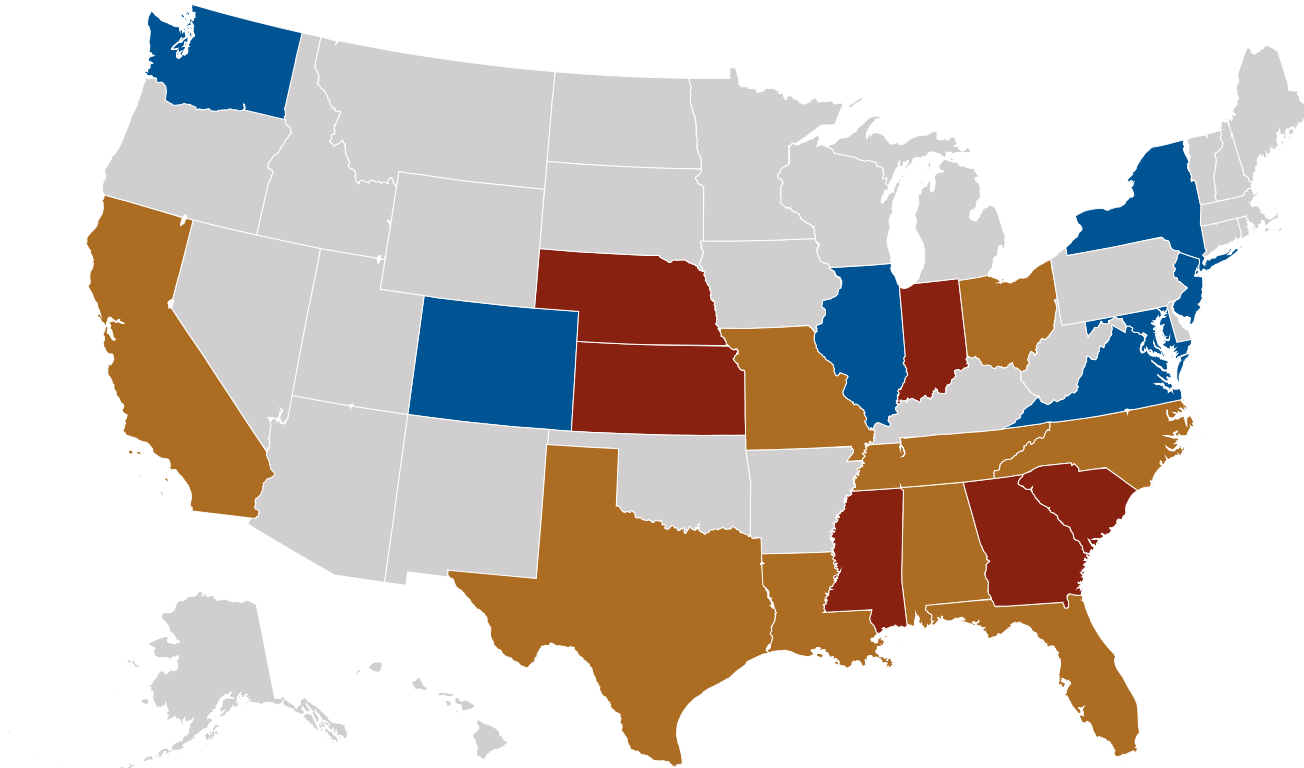
NY NEW YORK  
Constitutional amendment;  
first legislative passage

Each are in different stages. None of  
these maps governs the 2026 election.



# How many states are in play?

***Mid-decade redistricting may continue into 2028 and 2030***



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**MID-DECADE GERRYMANDERS**  
(2025 and 2026)

**9 states**

**POTENTIAL MID-DECADE GERRYMANDERS**  
(2027–2029)

**7 blue states**

**6 red states**

**UNLIKELY MID-DECADE GERRYMANDER**

**28 states**



Partisan gerrymandering  
does not just affect  
voters.

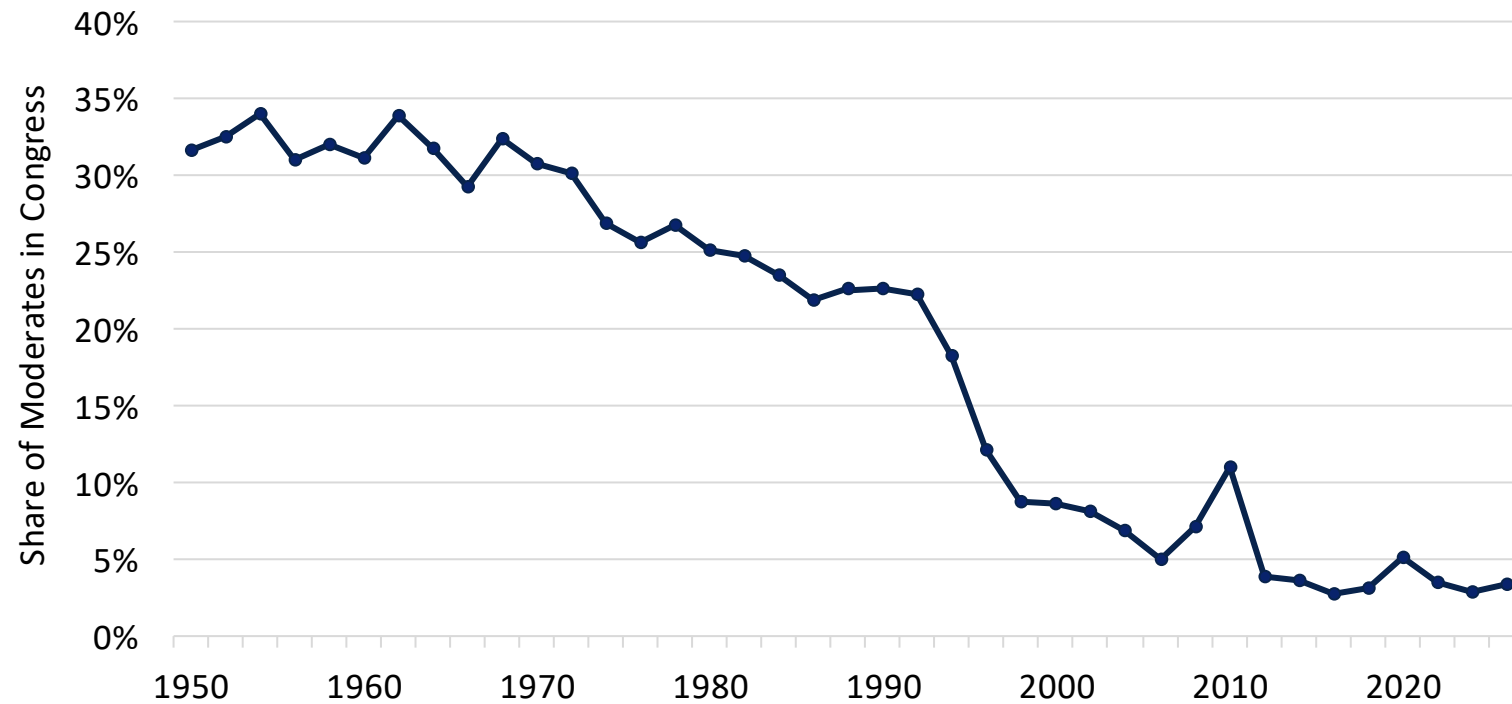
**It damages  
Congress itself.**



## GERRYMANDERING HURTS THE INSTITUTION OF CONGRESS

# Forces out bridge-builders. Protects Hatfields and McCoys.

The decline of moderates in the House



Source: Lee Drutman, *Breaking the Two-Party Doom-Loop*

### MODERATES

**IN 1980s:**  
20-25% of Congress

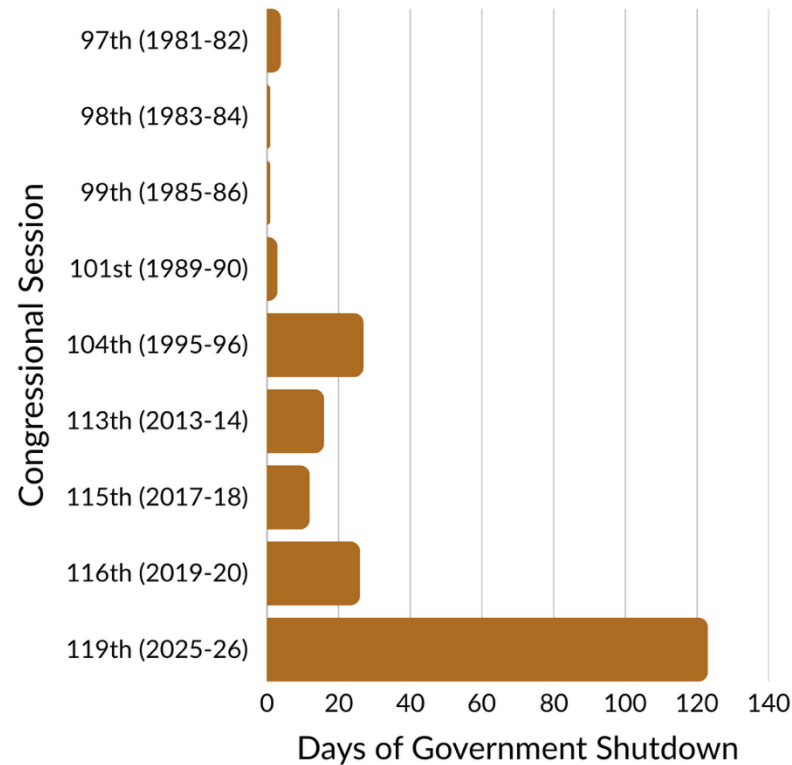
**IN 2026:**  
3% of Congress



## GERRYMANDERING ACCELERATES CONGRESSIONAL DYSFUNCTION

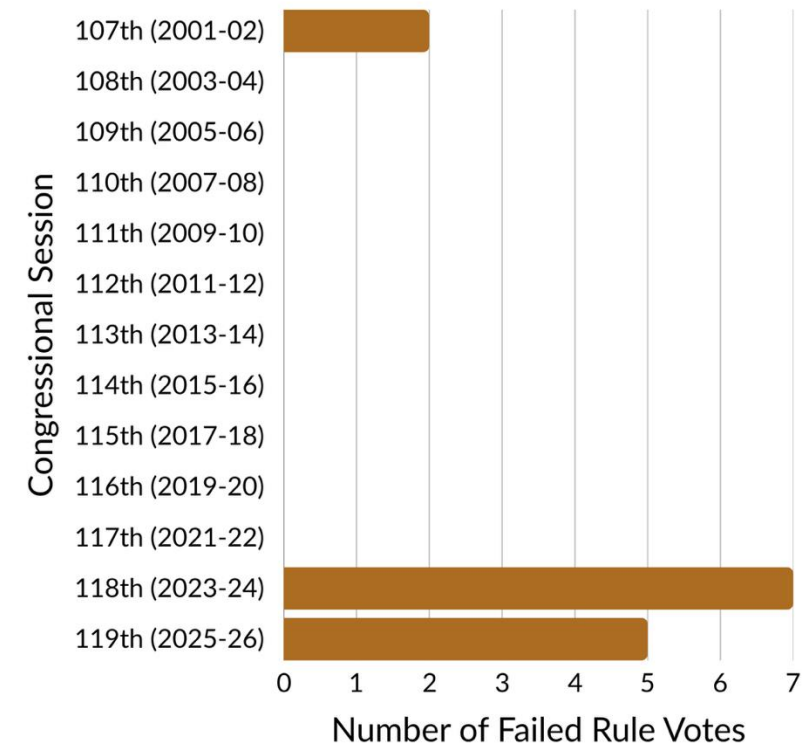
# Congress increasingly fails to perform basic tasks.

Government shutdowns are longer and more frequent



Source: U.S. House of Representatives

Once almost unthinkable, failed House rule votes have become routine



Source: *Boston Globe*



# Problems we can solve

- How often we redistrict
- How we define fairness
- Who does it: Politicians taking a step back
- Roles of the courts in settling disputes
- Congressional leadership



## PROBLEM #1: FEW FEDERAL STANDARDS

# U.S. has few shared rules for what is a “fair map.”

The states set different rules. The courts provide only partial remedies. Congress has authority to establish basic common standards.

1

### FAILED 50-STATE PATCHWORK

Each state uses different redistricting processes & standards.

#### LIMITED FEDERAL RULES

- Equal population
- Single member districts
- Prohibition of intentional racial dilution

2

### COURTS LESS OF A BACKSTOP TODAY

Rulings point to the need for new laws.

#### 2013: SHELBY COUNTY.

Preclearance formula disabled

**2019: RUCHO.** Partisan claims beyond federal courts; Congress can act

**2026: CALLAIS,** §2 racial vote-dilution protection narrowed

3

### THE CONSTITUTIONAL ANSWER

Congress is the one to set national rules

“Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations.”

U.S. Constitution • Article I, §4

“The Framers gave Congress the power to do something about partisan gerrymandering in the Elections Clause.”

Chief Justice John Roberts, *Rucho v Common Cause*

*Rucho* expressly recognizes congressional authority to address partisan gerrymandering. *Callais* is a distinct limitation on §2 and does not itself invite a legislative reversal.



## PROBLEM #2: STATE-BY-STATE REFORM IS BREAKING DOWN

# States were making redistricting fairer. No longer.

Without common national standards, states face growing pressure to gerrymander when other states do.

### 1 STATES STARTED FIXING IT

With little federal action, states adopted independent commissions and other protections.

**VOTERS AGREED:** Take map-drawing out of politicians' hands.

### 2 REFORM HIT A CEILING

State reform became harder when lawmakers feared playing by fairer rules while other states could still gerrymander.

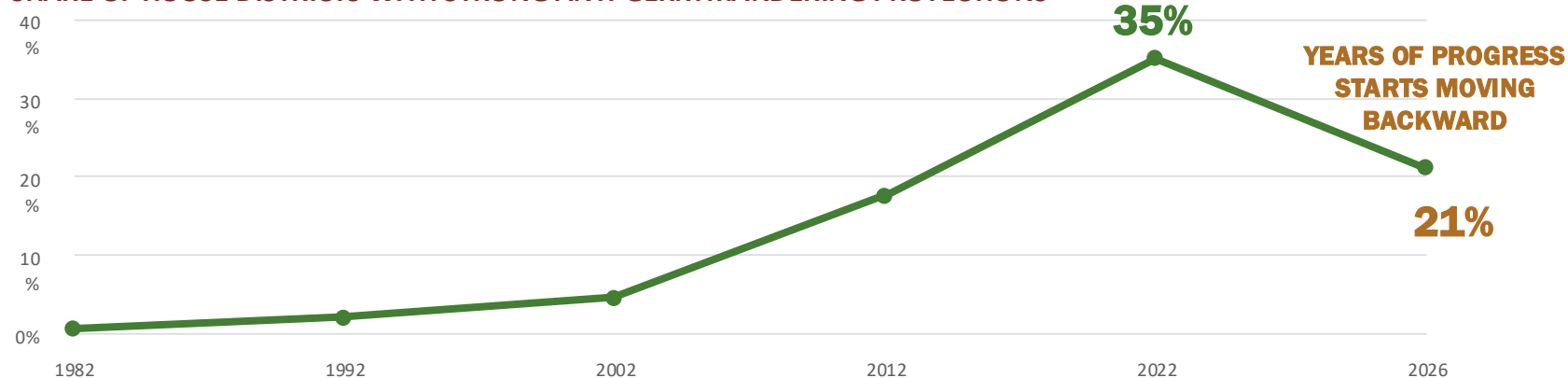
**THE DILEMMA:**  
“Why should we disarm if they don’t?”

### 3 THE ARMS RACE REVERSED PROGRESS

California temporarily bypassed its commission. Virginia and Colorado attempted temporary bypasses (but were struck down by courts).

**IMPLICATIONS:**  
Points back toward national action.

#### SHARE OF HOUSE DISTRICTS WITH STRONG ANTI-GERRYMANDERING PROTECTIONS



#### THE WAY FORWARD

## Congress levels the playing field.

Common national standards let every state play by the same basic rules.

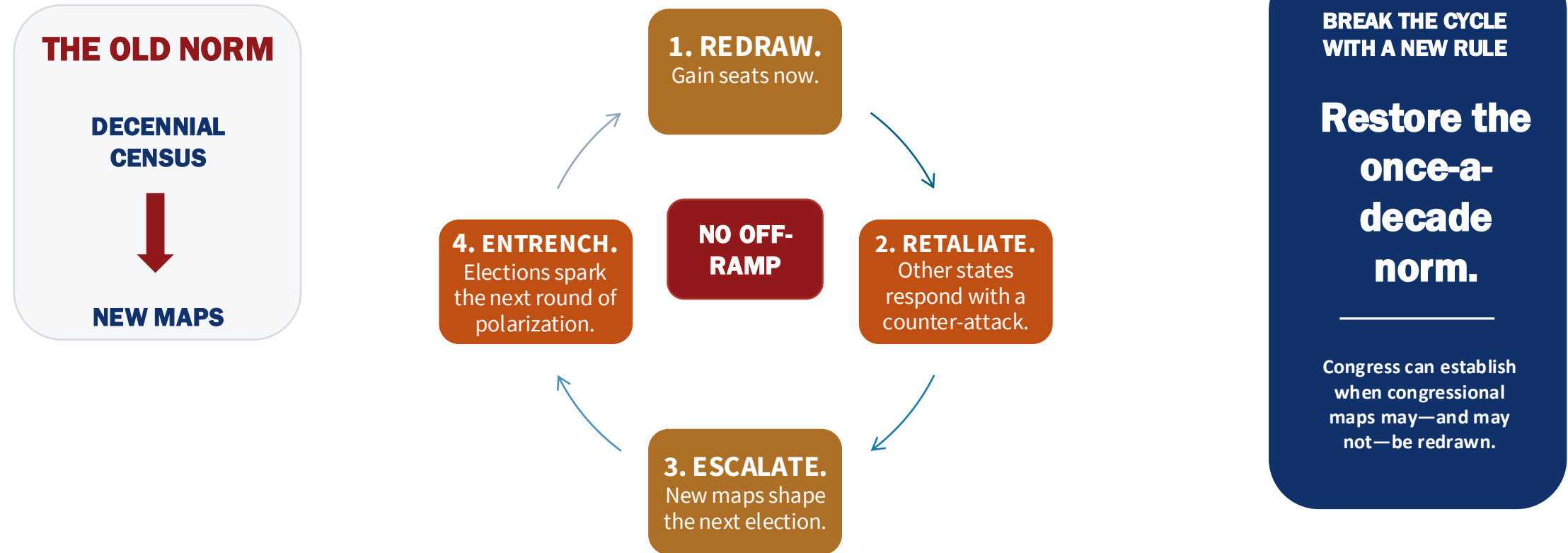


## PROBLEM #3: MID-DECADE GERRYMANDERING

# Every election can trigger the next round.

The danger of mid-decade redistricting is not one map. It is a self-reinforcing cycle of action and retaliation.

### THE NEW DYNAMIC



# Who Wants Change?

**PRACTICALLY EVERYONE...**

- U.S. Presidents
- Former Speakers
- Many current members of Congress
- Voters (Rs, Ds, Is, more...)



## PRESIDENTS ACROSS GENERATIONS HAVE AGREED

# It's time for fair rules.



**GERALD FORD (R)**

"The only fair way to redraw voting districts is to take the job away from those who stand to benefit."

"There is no worse conflict of interest than the incumbents drawing their own election districts."



**RONALD REAGAN (R)**

"Both parties ... have been guilty of this when each party was in power."

"That's all we're asking for: an end to the antidemocratic and un-American practice of gerrymandering congressional districts."



**GEORGE W. BUSH (R)**

"Our government would be more productive—and our politics more civilized—if congressional districts were drawn by panels of nonpartisan elders instead of partisan state legislatures."



**JIMMY CARTER (D)**

"Another polarizing factor is the increasing tendency by state legislatures to gerrymander congressional districts to create safe seats for members who...support the most extreme partisan positions."



**BARACK OBAMA (D)**

"We've got to end the practice of drawing our congressional districts so that politicians can pick their voters, and not the other way around."



**JOE BIDEN (D)**

"Create fairer district maps, and end partisan political gerrymandering."

"It will rein in the outrageous gerrymandering that distorts our democracy."



## CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS ACROSS PARTIES AGREE

# Gerrymandering leads to “bad government”



**NEWT GINGRICH (R)**

*Former Speaker of the House*

“We’ve been drawing lines for political reasons all the way back to 1812. But I think it’s wrong. I think it leads to bad government.”



**KEVIN McCARTHY (R)**

*Former Speaker of the House*

“I don’t like the idea of gerrymandering. I like competition.”

“Voters...want to be able to select who represents them instead of the politicians picking that.”



**NANCY PELOSI (D)**

*Former Speaker of the House*

“Congress can put an end to partisan gerrymandering”

by requiring states to establish

“independent, multi-party citizen redistricting commissions.”



**DICK GEPHARDT (D)**

*Former House Majority & Minority Leader*

“Both sides have done gerrymandering. They’ve both tried to get districts that are bulletproof, where...the general election is meaningless.”

### A BIPARTISAN BLUEPRINT



**TOM DASCHLE (D) + TRENT LOTT (R)**

*Former Senate Majority Leaders • Commission Co-Chairs*

### Governing in a Polarized America: A Bipartisan Blueprint to Strengthen our Democracy

*Bipartisan Policy Center • Commission on Political Reform • 2014*

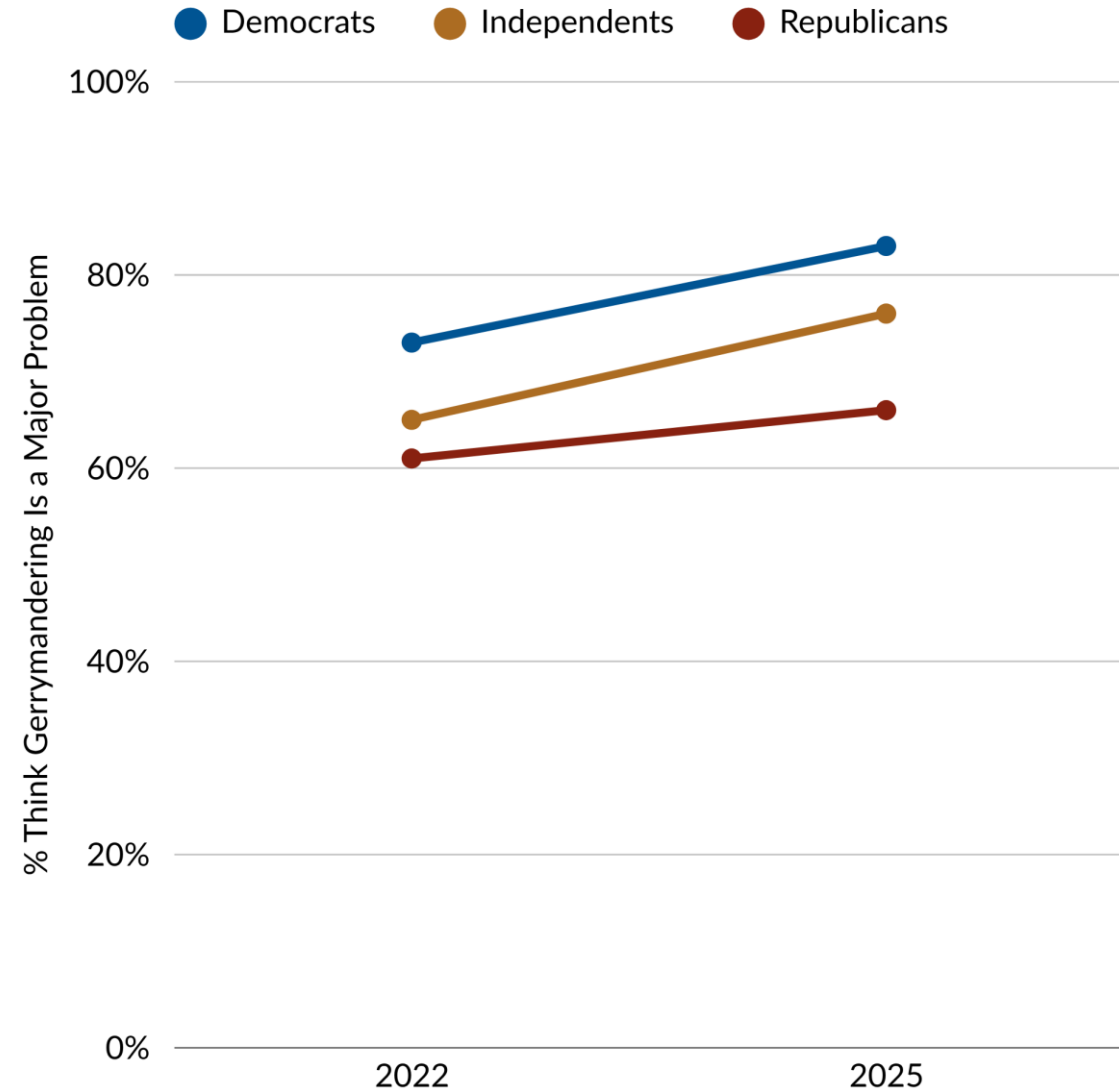
#### RECOMMENDATION 1.1

**“States should adopt redistricting commissions that have the bipartisan support of the legislature and the electorate.”**



**VOTERS ACROSS PARTIES AGREE**

# Majorities think gerrymandering is a major problem.



Source: [YouGov \(2025\)](#)



## CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORTERS

# Endorsement list is growing.

More than **75% of Problem Solvers Caucus**, including all members of the Gerrymandering Working Group:



Co-Chair Fitzpatrick  
(R-PA)



Rep. Hurd  
(R-CO)



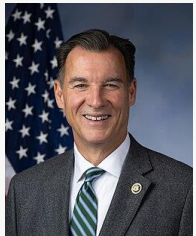
Rep. Lawler  
(R-NY)



Rep. Mackenzie  
(R-PA)



Rep. Edwards  
(R-NC)



Co-Chair Suozzi  
(D-NY)



Rep. Case  
(D-HI)



Rep. Carbajal  
(D-CA)



Rep. Dingell  
(D-MI)



Rep. Soto  
(D-FL)





# Learn more

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