Cartographic Malpractice

Chad Selweski

The several profound U.S. Supreme Court decisions delivered over the past two weeks revolutionized marriage and preserved health care reforms for the uninsured. But the broad opening provided for states to prevent rigged elections by overhauling the redistricting process should emerge in time as the most momentous of all. Yes, if you consider that the fundamentally corrupt system of gerrymandering serves as a political protection racket, creating campaign district maps that advance the party in power, squelch competition in elections, and exacerbate the partisan battles in Lansing and Washington.

Key Michigan Democrats reacted immediately to the Supreme Court ruling, jumping on the opportunity to end the squiggly district lines drawn by crass legislators who are poisoning our politics.

The Dems who took the lead called for establishing a nonpartisan process of shaping objective borders for districts that largely determine the outcome of elections for Congress and the Legislature.

But the Democrats are making a colossal mistake.

Cynical voters will reject any plan that carries the tint of one political party perceptibly trying to gain a permanent advantage over the other. If an election reform plan will have any chance of working its way onto the ballot through a petition drive and winning a majority of the Michigan electorate, it must bear the credibility of an earnest, good government effort at changing our politics for the better.

The Supreme Court declared that independent commissions can replace the该略 slazy practice of having state legislators from the majority party carve edict of 2015.

In Arizona, more than 100 residents applied for a seat on the state’s five-member redistricting commission after its 2014 decision. Arizona’s redrawn districts improved the chances of nonpartisan, noncircumstantial elections for Congress and the state legislature.

Michigan, with its jagged, zig-zagging district lines that granted Democrats a clear advantage for many years when they were the ruling party, has a similar problem. Michigan “squares” its districts—redistricting districts in Arizona, the LWV, together with Common Cause, a well-established election reform group, jointly expressed interest in leading the charge in Michigan—but even Common Cause is associated with the Democrats to the extent that their authenticity would face a challenge.

If true reform is the mission, the leadership of a forthcoming campaign must be willing to state unequivocally that, over the past several decades, both parties have played the gerrymandering game.

After each decennial U.S. Census, the apportionment process redraws legislative districts to reflect population shifts and the party in charge in Lansing at the time manipulates the process.

Republican politicians who stitched together the Michigan hodge-podge quilt of districts since 1991 will surely try their best to unravel the entire reform project if it is led by Democrats.

And Michigan Democratic Party Chairman Lou Johnson inadvertently provided the first round of ammunition for reform opponents when he said immediately after the court ruling that the Dems will work for a “fairer” apportionment process. Johnson’s predecessor, Mark Brewer, has quietly conducted numerous workshops on redistricting reform for various Democratic groups over the past several months.

Of course, the Dems have reason to be agitated. Too often in recent years their election successes have been twisted into losses.

The egregious unfairness at the heart of Michigan’s brand of democracy was on full display in the 2014 general election.

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The combined votes cast statewide last November gave an overall majority of support to the Democratic candidates for Congress, State House and State Senate. But, due to the gerrymandered districts, the GOP emerged with a 9 to 11 super-majority in the state Senate.

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