

Advisory Independent Redistricting Commission for NH: HB 706

HB 706 IS A BIPARTISAN BILL that would create a fifteen-member advisory commission and establish redistricting criteria for congressional, state legislative, county, and executive council districts in New Hampshire.

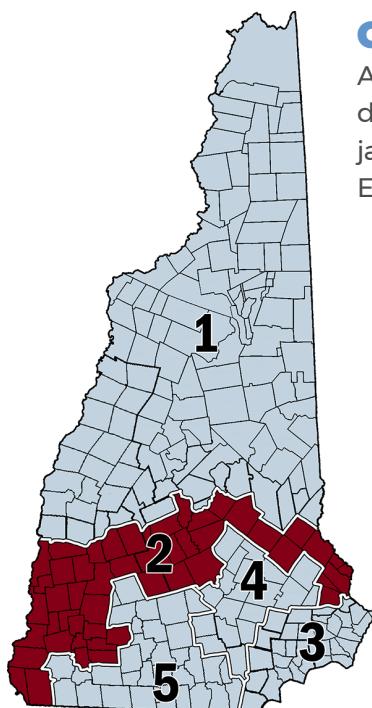
Why Does New Hampshire Need HB 706?

Every decade, after a new census occurs, our state gets new numbers about who and how many people live here and in turn, our legislative maps are redrawn to reflect these changes.

In New Hampshire the redistricting process has been behind closed doors, out of the public eye, where back room deals allow politicians to decide who their voters are. Unfortunately, if a voter resides in a gerrymandered district, they may be structurally disenfranchised for a decade or more.

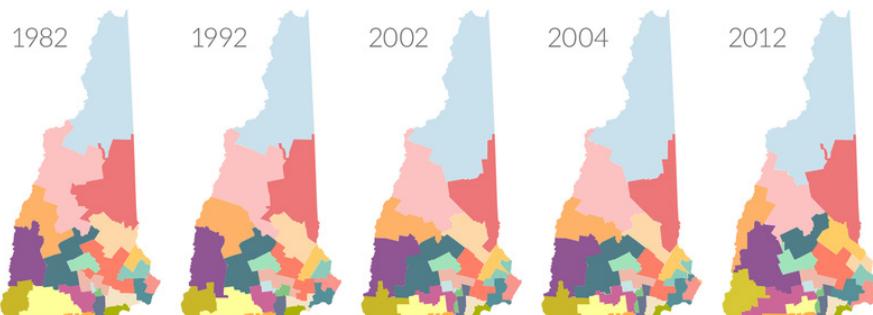
Advancements in technology now make it easier than ever to configure highly partisan maps that limit the possibility of competitive general elections. The result is a political system where most electoral battles are fought in primaries and elected officials more and more seem to cater to the partisan extremes that dominate those contests.

A strong, vibrant democracy depends on voters choosing their politicians. Not the other way around.



Clear Evidence of Gerrymandering in New Hampshire

Ahead of the 2012 election during redistricting, legislators drafted numerous different maps – and a new map was settled one which included one particularly jarring example a heavily gerrymandered district: the bizarre dragon-shaped area Executive Council District 2 that borders Maine, Vermont, and Massachusetts.



State Senate districts have undergone considerable shifts over time and consistently the party who drew the maps have enjoyed disproportionately favorable election outcomes.

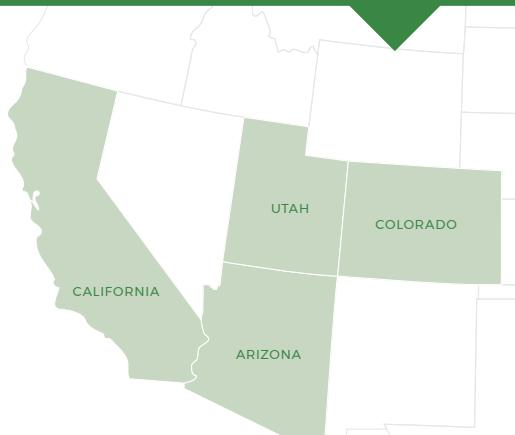
CREDIT: THESE MAPS WERE PART OF A 2016 STORY ON GERRYMANDERING REPORTED BY NHPR. SARA PLOURDE/NHPR

Transparency

Unlike the current process, HB 706 throws open the doors of redistricting to the public by requiring the commission to hold public hearings, provide forum for public comment, and disclose all data and communications used to reach a decision. It is imperative for the public's trust in new, fair maps that the process is as transparent as possible.

- All commission meetings are open to the public, and all commission communications and documents are public record.
- The commission must hold at least one public hearing in each county before and after proposing a new map.
- The commission must create a website to provide notice of public hearings, a forum for public comment and map submissions, as well as proposed maps and accompanying data.
- Along with a proposed map, the commission must release a report that measures the maps against external metrics, including the established redistricting criteria.

STATES WITH SIMILAR HB 706 INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSIONS



REDISTRICTING CRITERIA

The commission must consider the following criteria when considering redistricting:

- Ban on partisan gerrymandering
- Respecting local town lines and political subdivisions
- Comply with US and NH Constitution
- Ban on racial gerrymandering
- Preservation of communities with common interests
- Contiguity requirement



How a Map Gets Approved

A plan must receive support from at least nine out of the fifteen commissioners. The plan may then be voted on by the state legislature for approval.

Redistricting Commission Structure At-A-Glance



Type of Commission

Advisory



What Maps the Commission Will Draw

Congressional, state legislature, executive council, and county commission



Commission Size

Fifteen members
(5 Republican,
5 Democrat,
5 unaffiliated)

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO BE A COMMISSIONER?

- ▶ A registered New Hampshire voter, that voted in two of the past three statewide general elections.
- ▶ Applicants cannot currently hold office in the United States House of Representatives, New Hampshire senate, New Hampshire house of representatives, executive council, or a county commission.
- ▶ Applicants must disclose if they have been registered as a lobbyist in the preceding 10 years, what elective offices, if any, the applicant has held in New Hampshire in the preceding 10 years and if the applicant has voted in a state primary election or presidential primary election in New Hampshire in the preceding 6 years, which political party's ballots the applicant has taken.

HOW ARE COMMISSIONERS SELECTED?

The Secretary of State's office will receive applications from prospective commissioners and that information will then be passed along to leadership in each party.

- ▶ Democratic leadership will select 10 applicants and Republican leadership will select 10 applicants. Each party will then strike 5 applicants from the other party's selection pool.
- ▶ These 10 commissioners (5 Democrats and 5 Republicans) will then select 5 unaffiliated applicants.

HB 706 Legislative Track Record

- ▶ HB 706 was passed out of committee on a unanimous 20-0 bipartisan vote.
- ▶ HB 706 was passed out of the House with a bipartisan vote.
- ▶ HB 706 has co-sponsors from members of both parties.