

To: Members of the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee
From: Michael W. Davis
Date: December 6, 2021
Subject: **HB 0001 – Congressional Districting Plan**
Position: **UNFAVORABLE**

HB0001 – CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTING PLAN

My name is Michael Davis, and I live at 5 Park Place, Annapolis, Maryland, which is currently in Congressional District 3 and Legislative District 30.

I come before this Committee today as an “unaffiliated” voter. There are many reasons for my being unaffiliated today, but they all boil down to this one problem: neither of the two main parties, and none of the lesser parties, comes close to representing my interests. Why is this relevant today?

Right now, the number of disaffected persons in Maryland is growing at what should be an alarming rate, and some of that disaffection is represented in the party affiliations they have.

Here are some numbers for you to consider as our parties’ leaders:¹

Year	Democrats	Republicans	Unaffiliated
2012	1,964,655 (61.82%)	935,122 (29.42%)	254,538 (8.0%)
2020	2,262,797 (55.06%)	1,015,812 (24.72%)	766,788 (18.66%)

These numbers clearly show a trend away from the established parties.

I have no doubt you, as our parties’ leaders, are familiar with these trends and have tried to rationalize them. But, both parties reflect significant erosion in their numbers while the unaffiliated percentages have more than doubled.

Why is this erosion occurring? People are angry today. The left is fighting the right, there are intra-party disputes threatening to break down our current electoral process, and it seems that no one needs to respect another’s opinion. It’s a mess. But, there is one common agreement – they mostly agree that government no longer seems to represent “them” any more.

¹ The numbers were taken from the Maryland Board of Election at https://elections.maryland.gov/voter_registration/stats.html. The percentages were calculated by the author.

Our founders believed that government was created to serve the people; that there is a voluntary compact between the people and the government that they created; and, the government exists only with the consent of the people. This is a political compact that is as old as our country; indeed, it is the bedrock of our democracy. And when the government is seen as serving its own purposes, such as benefitting one candidate or another or gerrymandering districts to ensure that one party has a disproportionate priority over the other, people sense that the system just isn't fair anymore; that the government no longer exists to represent the people.

Our Congressional District lines that were drawn in 2010 have been universally discredited. They are Exhibit #1 in any national discussion about gerrymandering. Indeed, our current gerrymandered districts probably would make even Governor Elbridge Gerry blush!

Something needed to be done. The Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission was formed to gather input from the people and to use that input to redraw both Congressional and Legislative District lines. This Commission was made up of three Democrats, three Republicans, and three Unaffiliated Persons. They held 35 public meetings and gathered input and feedback from 4100 Maryland citizens. With this input, they provided a redistricting for Maryland of both the Congressional and Legislative Districts that are compact with relatively equal numbers; that respected contiguity and existing political lines; and, that preserved common interests. In other words, the members of this Commission did their job and they did it very well.

The Legislative Redistricting Commission, on the other hand, has failed to meet the basic guidelines of any coherent districting effort. And, if there is any doubt about this assertion, that doubt can be assuaged by the fact that Princeton University's Gerrymandering Project gave all four of the Legislative Redistricting proposals a grade of "F," while the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission's proposal received a grade of "A."²

In conclusion, it is clear that our major parties are both failing to meet their mission, that is to provide a meaningful way for people to participate in the political process. They should do whatever is necessary to ensure the "one person – one vote" construct of our democracy. The four proposed maps were designed to dampen the voice of one party to benefit the other party. Maybe that's seen as good politics. But it can also be seen as bad governance. I urge you to reject the four proposals from the Legislative Redistricting Commission, and either find a better way to draw our Congressional Districts or adopt what the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission has already drafted for you, based on the input of 4100 Marylanders!

² <https://gerrymander.princeton.edu/reforms/MD>