

August 3, 2026 Hearing of the Maryland General Assembly 2026 Special Session

Testimony of Kurt Gallagher, CAE a private citizen and resident of Clinton, Maryland

My name is Kurt Gallagher. I am a lifelong Democrat and a longtime resident of Clinton, Maryland, in Prince George's County. Today I speak only as a private citizen in opposition to HB2100 and SB2100 because their purpose is to undermine the fundamental principles of representative government.

I am appalled by the way Texas and other states changed their congressional maps to rig election results to send more Republicans to Congress. But if we condemn partisan gerrymandering in those states, we should not embrace it here in Maryland. As my father often reminded me, "Two wrongs don't make a right."

The purpose of elections is simple: to learn the will of the people and elect officeholders who reflect their will.

In 2024, more than one million Marylanders—35% of voters—supported a Republican candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives, yet only one Republican was elected to Congress from Maryland. These bills would empower the legislature to reduce that representation to zero.

If Maryland redraws its congressional districts as envisioned, what would be the purpose of holding a general election for U.S. House seats?

In this moment, Maryland should double down on democratic principles, not undermine them. Attached to this testimony is an outline of evolutionary ideas on how to create a more perfect union and more inclusive, diverse legislative bodies. I am forming a new national nonprofit to advance those ideas and would welcome the opportunity to partner with the committees and the public.

The words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. aptly fit this moment, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that."

My fellow Marylanders, let us be the light.

Thank you.

About Kurt Gallagher, CAE

Kurt Gallagher is a longtime resident of Clinton, Maryland. Kurt is a certified association executive (CAE) who has dedicated his career to serving nonprofit organizations, including several associations as executive director since 2014. He is testifying in opposition to HB2100/SB2100 as a private citizen.

Kurt is in the process of forming a new national nonprofit organization devoted to advocating for changes to election processes to make results more representative. Write to hello@democracy-america.org to learn more or to get involved.

Evolutionary Ideas to Make U.S. Elections More Representative

Improving Elections for Executives

For election of governors, mayors and similar officials, as well as U.S. senators

- **Ensuring majority support** - executive offices and U.S. senators should be elected by a majority of voters.
- **Runoff elections** - when no candidate receives a majority of votes* on election day, a runoff election should be held between the two candidates who received the highest vote totals.
- **Alternative approach** - ranked choice voting may be used to determine majority support in lieu of holding a runoff.

Improving Elections for U.S. President

- **National runoff** - when no candidate receives a majority of votes cast* on election day, a national runoff should be held between the two candidates who received the most votes nationwide.
- **Electors to the winner of the popular vote** - as long as the Electoral College remains in place, electors should be awarded to the candidate who receives a majority of votes cast nationwide.
- **No ranked choice voting in presidential elections.**
- **Repeal of the Electoral College combined with a national runoff.**

Limits on Ranked Choice Voting

- **Ranked choice voting obscures voter will** – it generally siphons votes from third parties to award votes to the two main political parties as a backup choice.
- **Proportional representation reflects more diverse voter segments** – more voters can elect their party of choice rather than settling on a backup choice.

Improving Elections for Legislative Bodies

- **More Americans identify as a political independent than as a Democrat or Republican** - that's 45% of Americans; the percentage who identify as a Democrat or Republican is tied at 27% according to the most recent nationwide Gallup polling.
- **Many Americans are unrepresented** – no member of the U.S. House is from a major third party, leaving many voters without representation. The breakdown by party in state legislatures is similar.
- **A new way of thinking about elections is needed** - every election reveals the will of the people and provides an opportunity to distribute the shares of political power based on the votes cast. It is time for elected representatives to reflect the broader will.
- **Proportional election of legislative offices** – more voter segments would be represented by a proportional allocation of seats compared to election on a pure district-by-district basis. The current process allows distortion of the will of the people and disenfranchisement and through gerrymandering.
- **A combination of geographic and at-large districts provides the model** – significant segments of voters who are geographically disparate can be represented by officials elected to at-large seats.
- **Limiting ranked choice voting** – proportional representation for legislative bodies would provide representation to more voter segments, whereas ranked choice voting tends to reallocate votes for third party candidates to the two major parties.

* A majority is calculated as 50% of all votes cast for a particular office plus one additional vote.