

Letter to the Editor

## Gerrymandering – How Elections are Rigged

This has been an election like no other in recent history and the country is still in the throes of accusations of Alternative Facts, Leaks and Fake News. Distractions abound as we look forward to 2018 when the whole House and one-third of the Senate will be up for election. But, just as pressing, our own primary elections just weeks away. This is where the voters in each of the two major parties choose their nominees and it important to choose carefully.

There are several close-to-home problems that require immediate attention. You will want to ask local candidates how they stand on such things as redistricting, the Electoral College and Voter ID. Each of these laws affect our elections in very special ways. The League of Women Voters' immediate concern is the upcoming census and the drawing of sensible districts in 2020.

Gerrymandering is often mentioned but not always well understood. It is a deliberate action taken by a number of states, including Pennsylvania, to draw voting districts to “guarantee” seats for one party or the other. The politicians who devise these gerrymandered districts are often quite open that they are making a deliberate effort to “choose their voters,” not let the voters choose the candidates.

The 2020 census, which coincides with the next presidential race, will mandate the redistricting of all states based on the new census figures. It is important to pass laws that make gerrymandering illegal before the new lines are drawn. The League is joining Fair Districts Pa., the ACLU and Common Cause in their efforts to take the redistricting in all states out of the hands of the politicians. This is a complicated issue and will take time, effort and money to accomplish. The time to start is now to advocate for the changes needed before the census takes place. Your vote for a candidate who opposes gerrymandering is a step in the right direction.

Gerrymandering, which is seldom touched by the courts, has affected the outcome of elections just as surely as any meddling by outside players. As we seek to find ways to keep outside forces from playing a key role in our internal affairs we must seek to clean up our own act by passing suitable legislation to remove our gerrymandered districts.

It is not fraud by the voting public that has, over the years, changed how our elections have been impacted, but the meddling with the census figures and the gerrymandering that has been fraudulent.

There are currently two bill being considered by the state legislature seeking a constitutional amendment for a bipartisan commission of 11 people to draw the new districts. The current conformation of District 7 has been referred to as Donald Duck kicking Goofy. Let your state representative and senator know you support a nonpartisan committee to outline our districts in the future. You can help remedy this travesty by getting involved with the League of Women Voters, Fair Districts PA, Common Cause or the ACLU and supporting this much-needed legislation.