

Every ten years, following the completion of the United States Census, New Mexico's state and federal political districts are re-drawn. Currently this process is done by the New Mexico State legislature. This means that legislators have the ability to draw their own district boundaries, opening up the possibility that they could divide neighborhoods or groups of people in ways that benefit their own electoral needs.

Common Cause New Mexico supports HJR4 to create an independent commission to conduct redistricting, establish written criteria for re-drawing districts, and require a fair and transparent process for conducting redistricting.

The drawing of electoral districts is rarely transparent. All too often, there is no public participation. The resulting districts can often serve the political interests of the people who draw them, not the interests of the people being represented.

Districts drawn along purely partisan, political lines inhibit the kind of vigorous, competitive elections that voters want and deserve. When voters feel that their input doesn't matter, they stop participating. Seeing incumbents win time and again because districts are rigged to stifle competition creates a sense of incumbent inevitability and a disconnect between citizens and their elected officials.

What's more, politicians who benefit from political redistricting grow complacent. They often see no need to defend their public records, debate challengers or engage with the electorate at large. They become unaccountable to their voters.

This combination of poor representation, disenfranchisement and low voter participation is toxic to our democracy. It permits big money campaign donors and special interests to dominate our government. In addition, unfair districting has historically had a disproportionately negative impact on minorities.