

Summary of House Bill 2638: Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act

Framework for Reform

- Proposed Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act (LACRA) retains and builds upon Pennsylvania's existing redistricting systems: Legislative Reapportionment Commission (LRC) for legislative redistricting and passage of legislation for congressional redistricting.
- LACRA introduces greater transparency into both redistricting processes and expands opportunities for meaningful public engagement.
- It also introduces clear, measurable map-drawing criteria designed to prevent partisan gerrymandering and promote accountability to voters.

Greater Transparency and Meaningful Public Engagement

- Bipartisan Legislative Data Processing Committee (LDPC) would receive Census data and use that data to do preliminary work necessary for district mapping processes.
- LDPC would create a user-friendly website for dissemination of data, proposed maps and analyses, public comments and other information free of charge to the public.
- Multiple statewide public hearings would be required both before and after preliminary redistricting plans are approved. Hearings on congressional redistricting would be held by Senate and House State Government Committees and could be held jointly.
- All meetings would be subject to the Open Meetings Law and all hearings would be livestreamed, with accommodations for multiple languages and held at convenient times for the public.
- Any Pennsylvania resident could submit a redistricting map covering any or all districts or parts of districts. Submitted maps would be available on the public website and be given consideration equal to formal testimony presented at public hearings.
- A written report would be part of final plan submissions, explaining any divisions of political units and analyzing compliance with criteria and responsiveness to public comment.

Clear and Measurable Redistricting Criteria

- LACRA adds qualifications for Chair of the LRC (e.g., no lobbyists or party operatives or their spouses).
- Existing PA Constitution requirements for compactness, contiguity and prohibited division of political subdivisions "unless absolutely necessary" would apply to both legislative and congressional redistricting.
- LACRA would provide enforceable limits on splitting counties beyond what is required by population and a prohibition against dividing voting precincts.
- Racial and language minorities would be protected against discrimination in the mapping process.
- LACRA explicitly prohibits district plans designed to protect incumbents or to unfairly discriminate against political parties.
- To the extent possible without violating other criteria, redistricting plans must also:
 - ☐ Keep communities of interest intact;
 - ☐ Be responsive to voter preferences as measured by widely accepted tests; and
 - ☐ Conform district boundaries to natural boundaries, like rivers, mountains, etc.