



# The Right of the Governed

The Fourth of July commemorates the abiding right of the governed to alter or abolish any form of government that ignores the people's voice. That right was enshrined in the Pennsylvania Constitution, which declares that "all power is inherent in the people" who have "at all times an inalienable and indefeasible right to alter, reform or abolish their government in such manner as they may think proper."

What we've learned in the four years since the start of Fair Districts PA is that there is The Declaration of Independence lists repeated injuries and usurpations that deprived the colonists of a voice in the establishment of laws, concluding: "In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injuries."

Supporters of redistricting reform consider those words this year with sadness. Some of us have spent thirty years asking for redress of an unfair redistricting process and an increasingly intransigent legislature. More recently, we have attempted every lawful avenue of request, petitioning our legislators in every way we know, with meetings, calls, emails, letters, postcards, op-eds, billboards, radio ads, petitions, resolutions of support. All have been met with silence, or with empty statements of support by those who could schedule a vote or easily move this reform forward.

Many legislators from both sides of the aisle applaud and affirm our efforts. They know that the current system puts far too much power in the hands of just a few leaders, allowing men elected by a tiny fraction of PA voters to draw district lines, set legislative agenda and lock out any voice of dissent.

Those who hold the levers of power have ignored or blocked our continued petitions.

In the past month we have sent sign-on letters, signed by hundreds of constituents, to Senate leaders Joe Scarnati, Jake Corman, and Senate State Government Committee Chair John DiSanto. No response.

We have asked Majority Leader, now Speaker Bryan Cutler, and House State Government Committee Chair Garth Everett for a vote on bills but received no assistance and no acknowledgement of the pressing deadline, now passed, for enacting this reform.

Thousands of Fair Districts PA supporters have now seen how arbitrary and unresponsive our state legislature has become.

Dozens have asked legislators for meetings and had no acknowledgment of the request.

Dozens have contacted legislators only to be told "I'll let you know if I have questions. I see no reason to meet."

Dozens have met with legislators who say "this is a Democrat bill" or "you're a Democrat group" (both untrue!) as if that negates the request or absolves them of the need to consider its merits.

- MOST of us have been told the following don't matter:
  - Number of cosponsors (the most of any bills in this or the last session)
- Number of resolutions in support (representing over 70% of the population of PA)
- Number of petition signers (over 100,000)
- Evidence of support from statewide polls or surveys (more than 2/3 of PA voters in every recent survey express support for a citizens redistricting commission; even more say the current system needs to change)

We've watched with sadness as bills introduced with one or two sponsors speed through both chambers without public comment, expert testimony or any evidence of public support.

We've listened with sadness as friendly legislators explain that "the bills that move are the ones leaders choose. It has nothing to do with what voters want."

We grieve as fellow supporters turn away in disgust, with the sad refrain, "Why bother."

Our government is in a dangerous place: unaccountable, unresponsive, deeply divided, less and less able to hear the voices of those it promises to serve.

Unless our legislators return this summer, it is now too late to amend the PA constitution and institute an independent commission for legislative redistricting in time for 2021. But there are other possible remedies: strong guardrails on the current redistricting processes, immediate attention to legislative rules that put far too much power in the hands of too few leaders.

But what we want most: a change of heart, a course correction in the halls of Harrisburg. Voters' voices should matter to every PA legislator. ALL PA voters, not just the party faithful in a handful of leaders' home districts.

Until this changes, nothing changes.

### **The Fair Districts PA leadership team:**

Carol Kuniholm, Exton  
Amy Ruffo, Lancaster  
Patrick Beaty, Huntingdon Valley  
Ruth Yeiser, Schwenksville  
Keith Forsyth, Philadelphia  
Mark Pavlovich, West Chester  
Rich Rafferty, Lafayette Hill  
Susan Fudurich, Monaca  
Lisa Hyatt Cooper, Bryn Athyn  
Jennifer Wood, Aliquippa  
Don Goldstein, Meadville  
Doug Webster, Monroeville  
Sally Trump, Womelsdorf  
Tony Crocamo, West Hempfield Twp.  
Andrew C. Marshall, Philadelphia  
Denise A. Seilhamer, Butler  
Carla Colangelo, Allentown  
Denise Williams, Shavertown  
Lex O. McMillan III, Gettysburg  
Lori Davis Mitzel, Harrisburg  
Jean Handley, Harrisburg  
Rachel Sorokin Goff, Elkins Park  
Jeff Greenwald, Allentown  
Mary C. Erdman, Orefield  
Susan Best, Philadelphia

Chris Bronder, Hanover  
Anthony Roache, Reading  
Sidney Hess, Glen Mills  
Kitsy McNulty, Pittsburgh  
Lauren Hopkins, Clearfield  
Luanne Y. Salaga, Sharpsville  
Charles Day, Philadelphia  
Shawndra Holmberg, Butler  
Chris Eng, Sayre  
Karin Welles Tatum, Philadelphia  
Bill Gross, Merion  
Debbie Trudeau, State College  
Tobin Short, State College  
Connie Hester, Shaler  
Willem H. van den Berg, Howard  
Janet M. Lorenz, Philadelphia  
Alina Keebler, Pittsburgh  
Laura Richlin, Philadelphia  
Juliet Christopher, Downingtown  
Agatha Andrews, Philadelphia  
Maureen Grosheider, Wexford  
Liza Jane Beranrd, Berwyn  
Katherine Dale, Avondale  
Sara Stroman, Philadelphia  
Ardith Talbott, Solebury

Suzanne Broughton, Town of McCandless  
John W. Bryner Chambersburg  
Kathryn Anne Holmberg, Butler  
Katherine E. Fagan, Philadelphia  
Fritz Walker, Allentown  
Stanley Chepaitis, Indiana  
Steve Elfelt, Altoona  
Doug Gordon, Philadelphia  
Michele Cann, Bethlehem  
Paul Carpenedo, Erie  
Ilya Knizhnik, Philadelphia  
Michael Buchanan, Carlisle  
Diana G Dakey, Dalton  
Barbara Neumuller, Port Matilda  
John Magee, Chambersburg  
Joseph F McLaughlin Pittsburgh  
Susan O Wood, Mount Gretna  
Ron Williams, Pennsylvania Furnace  
Patricia Rooney, Honey Brook  
Lawrence Husick, Tredyffrin Twp  
Greg Kamprath, Philadelphia  
Denice Rodaniche, Altoona  
Norman Cook, Chambersburg  
Ronni Cook, Chamber