Features of the Democracy Act

Senate Resolution 52 & House Resolution 369

The Democracy Act is built around three required components: **transparency** for the redistricting process, **standards** for the districts and the maps, and **a citizens’ redistricting commission** to carry out the process using the standards.

**Transparency**: The legislation guarantees citizen input and knowledge of the process:

1. Meaningful opportunities for learning about the maps being drawn and for giving input into the design of those maps

2. Citizen lawsuits if these transparency features are not followed

3. An internet portal is to be established to share draft maps, commission communication, etc.

4. Draft maps have to be understandable to non-specialists.

5. Hearings have to be held in each congressional district with meaningful citizen input sought and followed

6. Publication of information about the hearings and the process in local newspapers for people without internet access

7. All meetings = public. No individual meetings between commissioners and legislators or other political leaders.

**Standards for the Districts:** what the districts have to be like and what design features are forbidden.

1. Must comply with US Constitution, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and laws of the US.

2. Can’t be drawn to limit the rights of any citizen of the US based on race, color, language-minority status.

3. Must be geographically contiguous

4. Must follow one-person one-vote legislation = each district type must have roughly the same population

5. Must conform to county lines as much as possible.

6. Can’t breach precinct boundaries.

7. Can’t favor any political party, incumbent, or other person/group

8. Can’t use existing maps *[Yes! A complete re-mapping every 10 years.]*

9. Can’t use (a) home addresses of incumbents, (b) political affiliation of voters, (c) past election results, (d) voting history data, (e) nothing demographic other than population head counts

**Citizens’ Redistricting Commission:** Basically, a commission of 14 citizens: 5 Republicans, 5 Democrats, 4 Independents. The legislation

1.Gives requirements for who can be a commissioner

2. How the commission is formed *[Selection starts with an application process open to all citizens]*

3. How it does its work

4. Timetable for its creation and its work

5. Lists kinds of people who cannot be members of the commission (for example, members of the GGA).

6. Requires commission to follow the transparency rules/processes and standards requirements of the legislation

7. Requires that the Georgia General Assembly fund the commission

**Approval Process**

1. Commission completes the maps/plan following the rules for transparency and standards for the maps.

2. Maps are “certified” to the Secretary of State.

3. The GA Supreme Court decides if the plan is valid (valid = followed the transparency rules and standards). If there’s something wrong about the process or the standards used in the process, the commission has to do the plan again and submit it again and get it right the 2nd time. If it’s still not correctly done, the GA Supreme Court submits a plan itself that does follow the rules.

**Note**: The Democracy Act limits the redistricting of Georgia to every 10 years…after the census. Currently, the GGA can (and does) redistrict annually if it wants to. SR 52 and a Reader’s Guide are available at fairdistrictsga.org in the section on Educational Materials.

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| Reapportionment in the Constitution of the State of Georgia  SECTION II. COMPOSITION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY  Paragraph I. Senate and House of Representatives. (a) The Senate shall consist of not more than 56 Senators, each of whom shall be elected from single-member districts. (b) The House of Representatives shall consist of not fewer than 180 Representatives apportioned among representative districts of the state.  Paragraph II. Apportionment of General Assembly. The General Assembly shall apportion the Senate and House districts. Such districts shall be composed of contiguous territory. The apportionment of the Senate and of the House of Representatives shall be changed by the General Assembly as necessary after each United States decennial census. |