**Gerrymandering**

**Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Directions:** Use the Gerrymandering power point on my website to complete the worksheet below.

1. Which of the following statements do you think most accurately describes the type of representative democracy the Framers intended to create? (circle one and explain why)

* A nation where the voters get to choose their representatives.
* A nation where the representatives get to choose their voters.

The framers expected the voters to pick who represents them, not the other way around. If reps pick their voters, they would only choose like-minded people who would vote for them.

2. How many congressional districts are either inside or bordering Travis County? \_\_7\_\_

3a. Go to House.gov and in the upper right corner, type your zip code into search bar. On the next page, enter your address.

What district do you live in? #\_\_\_\_\_ Who is your representative? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

b. According to the U.S. Census Bureau for 2010, this area should only have between 2 and 3 congressional Districts. Why do you think the area has 7? (what is going on?)

Cracking and Packing. The liberal population in Travis county is being cracked up between 6 Republican districts, and packed into 1 Democratic district.

4. How does gerrymandering distort the political process? Explain this in terms of the political make up of Austin and central Texas.

The political voice of a large number of Travis county residents is not being heard. It is intentionally diluted among the republican voters.

5a. What is the current ratio of districts in Texas? Republican \_25\_\_ Democratic \_11\_\_

b. What would be the ratio if drawn in proportion to party membership? Republican \_20\_\_ Democratic \_\_16\_

6a. Look up the term political polarization and explain what it is in easily understood terms.

The vast and growing gap between liberals and conservatives. Between democrats and republicans.

b. Explain how gerrymandering increases political polarization.

It makes the districts more heavily populated with one party, so they shift more to the right or left. There is less incentive to work with members of the other party.

c. Explain why a republican representative might have a disincentive to “reach across the aisle” and work with a democrat to reach a compromise on an issue?

If a Republican compromises with a Democrat, a Republican challenger may accuse that rep of not being conservative enough and they may lose a primary challenge. So the rep instead needs to pander to the republican base and not work with the other party.

7a. Explain the non-partisan alternative for drawing congressional districts.

Allow a non-partisan group of republicans, democrats, and independents work together to draw districts that reflect the political make up of the state.

b. What is the current ratio of seats in the U.S. Congress? Republican \_\_241\_\_ Democrat\_194\_\_

c. What would be the effect on the ratio if drawn by non-partisan committee? Republican \_226\_ Democrat\_209

8a. Explain the alternative that would take human political biases out of the redistricting process.

Allow computer algorithms to draw the districts based on U.S. Census population info.

b. How would this limit the tactics used by politicians to currently gerrymander districts? (What difference do you notice between the two maps?)

The districts would be much more compact. It would be much more difficult for parties to draw crazy shapes in cracking and packing to dilute voter strength.

9. Explain TWO reasons why it is difficult to change the current gerrymandering process.

- Politicians and parties who benefit from the practice want to keep it.

- It protects incumbents and enables them to keep their jobs.

10. If you had a say in redistricting, would you favor keeping the current gerrymandering system? Explain why or why not. If your answer is no, explain how you think it should be done.

**Redistricting Activity-** Each diagram below represents a mythical state. Each individual block represents a county of equal population that is either dominated by the Republican Party (R) or the Democratic Party (D). The state must be divided into 5 districts according to the rules set out by national law, and counties must remain whole.

Diagram (with thick outlines, and maybe shading) the maximum number of districts that each party could control if they had a majority in the State Legislature, and chose to engage in gerrymandering.

Republican Control Democratic Control

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| R | D | D | R | R |
| R | R | D | R | D |
| R | R | D | R | D |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| R | D | D | R | R |
| R | R | D | R | D |
| R | R | D | R | D |

# of Republican \_\_4\_\_\_\_ # of Republican \_\_\_\_2\_\_

# of Democratic \_\_\_1\_\_\_ # of Democratic \_\_\_3\_\_\_