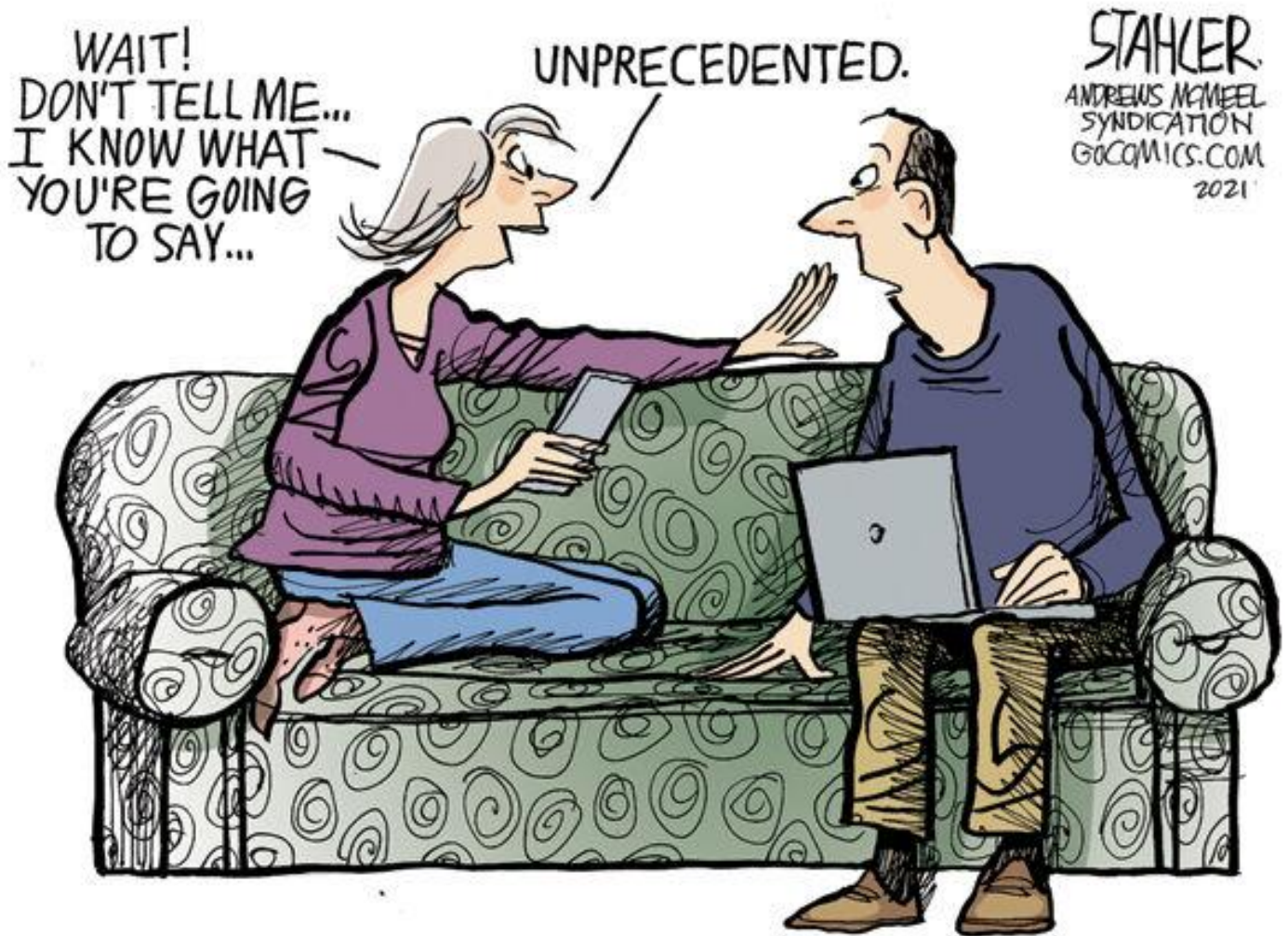


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Letter to the Editor: Just say no to judicial gerrymandering

Jan 15, 2021



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To the Times:

In November 2016, I was a high school government teacher. For years, I had been teaching students about the dangers and anti-democratic nature of gerrymandering. After that election, I decided to do something about gerrymandering and I became a speaker for Fair Districts PA. I knew that we could not reach the full potential of our democracy unless we allowed the voters to choose the politicians, rather than the politicians choosing their voters.

I gave presentations all over southeastern Pennsylvania in 2017/2018 and educated people about the dangers of gerrymandering, a mechanism that not only disenfranchises voters, but makes politicians more attuned to their political party than to the needs of their state. I asked people to lobby their representatives to enact a non-partisan redistricting commission proposed by Fair Districts PA.

Even though the Fair Districts bill had hundreds of sponsors, it could not even get a hearing in Harrisburg. House Republican leaders refused to even consider advancing this bill.

Fast forward to 2022. The Republican leadership in the House not only continues to ignore the widespread support (70% of voters are for reform) for non-partisan committees, they just passed legislation to gerrymander our court system.

House Bill 38 passed the House Judiciary Committee on Jan. 13. It is headed for the House floor where it almost certainly will pass. Then it will appear on the May primary ballot to be voted on in an off-year primary election with (normally) extremely low turnout. No hearings have been held. No convincing arguments have been made.

Why are Republicans doing exactly the opposite of what most Pennsylvanians want? Because they are angry that the Pennsylvania courts did not rule in their favor when it came to mail-in voting lawsuits and congressional gerrymandering. They claim that regional judicial districts will provide "geographical diversity" but every good government group in the state has disputed this argument.

We are at a crossroads in Pennsylvania. Do we want a state government that is more democratic or less democratic. Do we need more gerrymandering or less gerrymandering? No other state has drawn judicial districts in this manner.



Don't watch what they say...watch what they do. For four years, Republican leadership in Harrisburg ignored the bi-partisan public support for non-partisan commissions. Now, the very first thing they do in Harrisburg is put forth exactly the opposite of what Pennsylvanians want.

Call your state representative and the House leadership and demand that they vote "no" on judicial gerrymandering. Our democracy depends on it.

Deb Ciamacca, Media

