

FALL 2017



REDISTRICTING HOUSE PARTIES

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

DEBORAH ASBERRY/LWVIN ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

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REDISTRICTING HOUSE PARTIES

WHAT IS A HOUSE PARTY?

House Parties are an excellent way to build community and consensus about a topic or issue. They are an informal gathering of friends, neighbors, and community members who come together to explore a common issue.

We are suggesting that during the summer and early fall of 2017, local leagues across the state of Indiana hosts multiple **Redistricting House Parties** to help raise awareness and public support of redistricting reform for the 2017 General Assembly,

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR GOAL

The primary goal for hosting a house party is to increase awareness, expertise, support and advocacy for redistricting reform across the state; particularly in key districts or locales. The purpose of a house party is to build awareness about gerrymandering and redistricting reform, to create a sense of community concerning the importance of this issue, and to have a collective action in response to the topic. Each house party will help build a network of support across the state. Have fun and let's get going!

INVITATING YOUR GUESTS

1. Determine how many people you want to attend the event.
2. Invite 2 to 3 times the number of persons desired for attendance. Think beyond LWV members for attendees. Invite neighbors, friends, and others that you know from your various circles of connection. Be inclusive and bi-partisan in your reach. Include elected officials and civic leaders if possible.
3. Try to have at least 10-15 participants. If room allows, the more the merrier!
4. Use your living room or a convenient public gathering space that will accommodate the number of attendees, snacks and has the IT capacity for showing video clips.
5. **Contact each invitee personally, by phone or email. Be sure to include all relevant information: day and date, time, address, phone number, and manner in which to RSVP.** Make the event sound fun and inviting. **Follow up the initial invitation with another phone call.** If possible, send a reminder post card that you created. Be sure to give enough lead time to accommodate everyone's busy lives.
6. Let the attendees know that the evening will include conversation, informative and entertaining video clips on gerrymandering, refreshments, and concrete actions for making democracy work.

HOUSE PARTY DETAILS

1. Allow a brief time for people to gather. Provide name tags, and offer snacks and make everyone feel welcomed.
2. Begin the event 10-15 minutes after the original starting time, allowing time for everyone to arrive and get settled.
3. Ask if it is permissible to **take pictures of the House Party so you can post on Facebook or Twitter. If everyone agrees, be sure to get some good pics and post!** Encourage your guests to post comments on Twitter using a common hashtag.
4. Thank everyone for coming. Introduce yourself (if needed) and **share why this issue is so important to you.**
5. Invite each person to introduce themselves and to share how aware they are of the issue or why they said 'yes' to coming to this gathering.
6. Once everyone has introduced themselves, explain that although the issue can be complicated, there are wonderful resources available that make it easy to understand. **Our goal is not to become experts on redistricting reform, but to become aware of how important reform is and where it stands in Indiana.**
7. Explain that the group will view a short video clip(s) that will be followed by a conversation.
8. Set up the video. Check your IT equipment (projection capacity, sound, image, etc.) before the event and on-site if the location is not your home. If using Schwarzenegger's videos, give a 'heads up' that it is a little cheeky! Explain that he is an advocate for redistricting reform and is touring the country in support of these efforts. If you use the John Oliver (*Last Week Tonight*) clip, also share that it is late night comedy, so may be a bit 'cheeky'. If using John Oliver, be sure to know that it could be perceived as *liberal leaning*. **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE AND BE PRUDENT IN WHAT YOU CHOOSE!** *To view the following videos, type the URL link into your web browser. Be sure to practice this before the event.*
 - a. Arnold Schwarzenegger youtube: **Congress and Gerrymandering**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2w-pgvRsluE>
 - b. Schwarzenegger's clip—**Gerrymandering couldn't beat herpes**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qfc3N0ZngXs>
 - c. John Oliver's April 9, 2017 clip on gerrymandering
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-4dlImaodQ>
 - d. **CNN interview with Arnold Schwarzenegger on Gerrymandering**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUNk3e2h_Dc

CONVERSATION FOLLOWING VIDEO CLIPS (BE INFORMED AND CONFIDENT IN THE FOLLOW TALKING POINTS). INVITE QUESTIONS, PERSONAL RESPONSES, DIVERSE VIEWS. BE OPEN AND FLEXIBLE IN RECEIVING COMMENTS.

1. Invite personal response and reaction to the clip(s). Ask questions like, “**What did you notice?**”, “**Did you learn anything new about redistricting?**” “**How does this issue impact you personally or our community?**”
2. As the conversation unfolds, you may want to share some of the following:
 - a. Both parties have equally contributed to this issue
 - b. Independent commissions are one possible solution
 - c. Voter apathy, less competitive elections, and hyper-partisan divides are consequences of extreme and prolonged gerrymandering
 - d. Gerrymandering impacts state and local elections
 - e. There is increasing support for reform, but it will take voters demanding reform if anything is to happen
 - f. There is a way to measure unfair advantage; the ‘efficiency gap’ developed by the University of Chicago. The *Whitford v. Gill* case is headed to the Supreme Court and will be heard on October 3, 2017.
 - g. Other states may follow suit in litigation depending on how the Supreme Court decides the case. Stay tuned over the summer concerning this.
3. Be sure to share the following ‘history’ of redistricting efforts in Indiana. **Be brief, concise, and objective. Be enthusiastic about the possibilities for the upcoming General Assembly and stress how much we need their support in moving this forward.**
 - a. Indiana had an 2015-2016 Interim Study Committee on Independent Redistricting lead by Rep. Jerry Torr. The Indiana Coalition for Independent Redistricting (ICIR) followed the committee and attended all five committee meetings in mass. *The study committee made a recommendation in favor of creating an independent commission with narrow bi-partisan support.* During the 2016-17 General Assembly, HB 1014 was co-authored by Speaker Bosma and Rep. Jerry Torr. The bill was not scheduled for hearing in time for the session mid-term, so the ICIR got busy and made hundreds of phone calls and sent scores of emails demanding a hearing. The bill was scheduled for the last date possible if it was to survive and be sent to the Senate. Hundreds showed up for the hearing, and there was 90 minutes of public testimony overwhelming in favor of the bill. However, at the end of the testimony, the chair of the House Apportionment and Elections Committee, Rep. Milo Smith, declined to call a vote. He explained that the bill was incomplete, needed amendments, and there was no time to afford that to happen. We subsequently learned that the House GOP caucus had decided it didn’t want to support this bill in light of other

issues they were supporting in the 2016-17 General Assembly. **We have every reason to believe the issue will come back to the 2017-18 General Assembly.** (Be open and matter-of-fact about the history of what happened in 2016. Democracy is messy and good ideas can take a long time. **We are patient, passionate and non-partisan in our approach!**)

- b. Elected officials need to know that Hoosiers are informed about redistricting and will be following the issue next year.
- c. On October 3, 2017, the Supreme Court will hear arguments concerning the Gill v. Whitford case. This is the first time the Supreme Court has heard a case relative to partisan gerrymandering in more than a decade. This case will determine if partisan gerrymandering is constitutional and the findings can have major implications for redistricting. Until now, the courts have not been able to determine when a map goes too far in 'partisan' gerrymandering. The decision will most likely be given in late Fall or early Winter. Stay tuned!

CREATING AN ACTION STEP FOR EACH PARTICIPANT

1. Be ready with a particular 'action item' that you hope everyone will be willing to accomplish.
2. Have support and resources available for what you ask.
3. Examples include:
 - a. Have a Letter to the Editor writing session following the video clip that everyone agrees to sign for a local paper. Have a sample letter already written that the group can revise and personalize.
 - b. Have available the names and contact information of local officials in which you want each person to contact to request support of redistricting reform when it comes up in the next General Assembly. Encourage participants to visit their elected officials following their phone or email contact. **Encourage phone contact!**
 - c. Have pre-printed post cards/stamped and addressed...to be filled out and mailed by each attendee that requests support of redistricting reform.
 - d. Have a template for a resolution to be signed by the local town mayor, city council in support of redistricting. (**see lwvin.org for sample template**) Ask for volunteers to contact the appropriate person to get this started. Be one of the volunteers to make sure it happens.
 - e. Ask for 2-3 others to host a similar House Party. Have the House Party Guide printed off them to take with them.
 - f. Invite everyone to join the distribution list for the *Indiana Coalition for Independent Redistricting* newsletter. Ask each participant if you have their permission to send their email to our distribution list. Forward all email requests to redistricting@lwvindy.org

FOLLOW UP

1. Follow up the evening with a ‘thank you’ email to each participant. Include a reminder about the follow up action and provide support as needed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Listed below are a few additional resources that you may want to have on hand as possible handouts or make available to each participant in your follow up thank-you email. You may link or download copies at lwvin.org under “Redistricting Initiatives/Resources” tab.

1. “Trump Can’t Stop the Freedom Caucus, He Has GOP Gerrymandering to Blame”, Washington Post, 3/29/17 [click here](http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/03/29/trump-cant-stop-the-freedom-caucus-he-has-gop-gerrymandering-to-blame/?utm_term=.0968d6c00e3b) or type the following URL into your web browser https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/03/29/trump-cant-stop-the-freedom-caucus-he-has-gop-gerrymandering-to-blame/?utm_term=.0968d6c00e3b
2. “This is the Best Explanation of Gerrymandering You Will Ever See”, Washington Post 3/01/15 [click here](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/01/this-is-the-best-explanation-of-gerrymandering-you-will-ever-see/?utm_term=.29cd6ff2f3bc) or type the following URL into your web browser https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/01/this-is-the-best-explanation-of-gerrymandering-you-will-ever-see/?utm_term=.29cd6ff2f3bc
3. “This Will Get Rid Of Gerrymandered Districts”, Washington Post, 3/17/17 [click here](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/03/17/this-will-get-rid-of-gerrymandered-districts/?utm_term=.fcf90c6a02a6) or type the following URL into your web browser https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/03/17/this-will-get-rid-of-gerrymandered-districts/?utm_term=.fcf90c6a02a6
4. *Indiana Coalition for Independent Redistricting Recommendations* (lwvin.org)
5. *LWV and Common Cause Redistricting Fact Sheet* (lwvin.org)
6. *Template for Redistricting Resolution* (lwvin.org)
7. *LWV Redistricting FAQs* (lwvin.org)
8. *LWV Redistricting Glossary* (lwvin.org)
9. *Common Cause Activists Handbook* (lwvin.org)
10. Brennan Center for Justice <https://www.brennancenter.org/partisan-gerrymandering>

NEXT STEPS

The Indiana Coalition for Redistricting Reform will continue to monitor the issue and organize for citizen events, rallies, training sessions and house parties. Fall 2017 will be a time to engage your state elected officials and let them know that you care about this issue and are following the General Assembly for redistricting legislation. Events will be scheduled for Organizational Day at the Statehouse in November. Watch the newsletter for details.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO!

LWVIN ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

(contact redistricting@lwvindy.org if you have questions or comments.)



This 1812 cartoon in *The Boston Gazette* skewered twisting legislative districts in Massachusetts and helped give rise to the term “gerrymandering.”