



Text File

Introduced: 12/8/2015

Bill No: 2015-2344, **Version:** 1

Committee: City Council

Status: Adopted

WHEREAS, the Council of the City of Pittsburgh is dedicated to upholding democracy in the City of Pittsburgh and across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and;

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania Senate Bill 484 proposes an amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania which will assign redrawing congressional and legislative district boundaries to an independent redistricting commission, prohibit districts from being drawn for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against any political party or candidate, mandate strict compliance with constitutional anti-gerrymandering standards, guarantee meaningful opportunities for public input, and limit redistricting to just once during each decennial census cycle, and;

WHEREAS, current congressional and legislative redistricting is undertaken by a legislative reapportionment commission, comprised of people who have enormous political and personal interests in the outcome of the commission's work, and;

WHEREAS, districts are often redrawn to optimize the probability for incumbents to stay in office and to disadvantage candidates of the opposing party, which diminishes competition and choice during elections, as well as accountability to the voters, and;

WHEREAS, only a truly independent commission composed of a politically diverse group of qualified members of the voting public, chosen to assure the fairness of the redistricting process, should be able to define congressional and legislative districts, and;

WHEREAS, districts should not be drawn for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against any political party or candidate, and;

WHEREAS, the constitution should define the maximum allowable deviations from the requirements that district populations be equal in population, compact, and contiguous, as well as prohibit unnecessary splitting of political subdivisions, and require explanation in detail for any departures from any plan that would achieve the stated standards, and mandate that these rules shall be enforced by the commission and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and;

WHEREAS, there must be opportunities for the public to be involved with the commission through comments and public hearings throughout the commonwealth, and;

WHEREAS, redistricting should be permitted just once during each decennial census cycle, unless required by a court order;

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NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh believes that our current system of districting has the potential to diminish meaningful choice during elections, diminish the accountability of elected officials to the voters, and jeopardize the democratic process as it leaves districting to partisan legislators instead of a diverse and representative sample of the people of The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh calls upon the Members of the Pennsylvania Senate and the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to vote for passage of Senate Bill 484 to amend the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and to do so in a timely manner so as to enable the amendment to be in full force for the 2021 redistricting of the Commonwealth's congressional and legislative districts.