

The term Gerrymandering first came on the scene over 200 years ago, when the Boston Gazette in March 1812 coined the word to describe the State Senate District lines drawn by Governor Elbridge Gerry of the Democratic-Republican Party. As one Senate District was shaped like a salamander, the Boston Gazette combined the Massachusetts' Governor's surname "Gerry" with "salamander": Gerrymandering. Since then, both Democrat and Republican Governors have drawn lines for their particular party's benefit. California Governor Jerry Brown drew lines known as "Jerrymandered" lines, and Governor Rick Perry drew lines known as "Perrymandered" lines.

In 2014, Governor Hogan campaigned on a platform which included ending Gerrymandering in Maryland. The current process is that, every ten years, ostensibly based on the changes reflected in the most recent census, the Governor redraws the lines of Maryland's House of Representative districts. The reality is that many of those lines have recently been drawn so that areas, neighborhoods, and towns that bear little in common geographically or politically are combined to choose their representation in Washington.

Past Gerrymandering by Maryland Governors has been particularly painful to Anne Arundel County. Although our county makes up about 10% of Maryland's population, it has not had its own Congressional representative since 1986, when the well-respected Marjorie Holt retired. Since the 2002 election, Anne Arundel County has been divided among several Congressional districts. Congressional districts covering part but not all of Anne Arundel County have been called a "broken-winged pterodactyl prostrate across the center of the state," "blood splatter from a crime scene," "wounded spider," and a "picture from a Rorschach test." Indeed, Governor Hogan recently described Anne Arundel County as being "carved up like a Thanksgiving turkey" among its Congressional districts. National media sources have called the 3rd and 4th Congressional district two of the most Gerrymandered districts in the nation.

Following the 2010 census, Governor O'Malley redrew the Congressional district lines and relocated approximately one and a half million voters- approximately one-fourth of the state's population- into new Congressional districts. The obvious purpose of this redistricting was to maximize the Democratic Party's chances of electing Congressional Representatives from O'Malley's Democratic Party. Under the current scheme, of Maryland's eight Representatives in the House, four of them represent some small part of Anne Arundel County. In Maryland, where Democrats outnumber Republicans 2 to 1, their Democratic Representatives outnumber their Republican Representatives 7 to 1.

On August 6, 2015 Governor Hogan, fulfilling his campaign promise, created a commission to study redistricting reform. The commission is an eleven member panel comprised of bipartisan representatives and includes members from party neutral organizations such the League of Woman Voters.

Independence in drawing Congressional lines is widely supported by Marylanders. A Goucher College poll found that 72% of Marylanders would prefer an independent commission. Todd Eberly, a St. Mary's College Political Science Professor, has criticized the Maryland Congressional boundaries. Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, the Executive Director for Common Cause Maryland has stated that "our districts sprawl across the state, slicing and dicing communities

and neighborhoods, discouraging civil engagement in our democracy.” Fair Vote, an election reform group, has also joined in the support of the Governor’s plans. Some local runners even joined the Gerrymander Meander, a relay run last fall through the 3rd Congressional District designed to draw attention to the absurdity of the current districting scheme.

However, powerful leaders in Maryland oppose redistricting reform. State Senate President, Mike Miller says such plans are DBA-“dead before arrival” and are “not going to happen.” He has instead proposed that Maryland not address redistricting unless other states deal with it first. Such an opinion seems to suggest that just because a neighbor’s child has done something wrong, it’s okay if your child does the same wrong.

It is time for the citizens of Anne Arundel County and the State of Maryland to call upon their Representatives at the State House to support redistricting reform because it is the fair and right thing to do.

In conclusion, please contact your State Delegates and Senator and have your friends reach out to their State Delegates and Senator to demand change so that Anne Arundel County might one day again have a chance for its own Congressional Representative.