



GERRYMANDERING

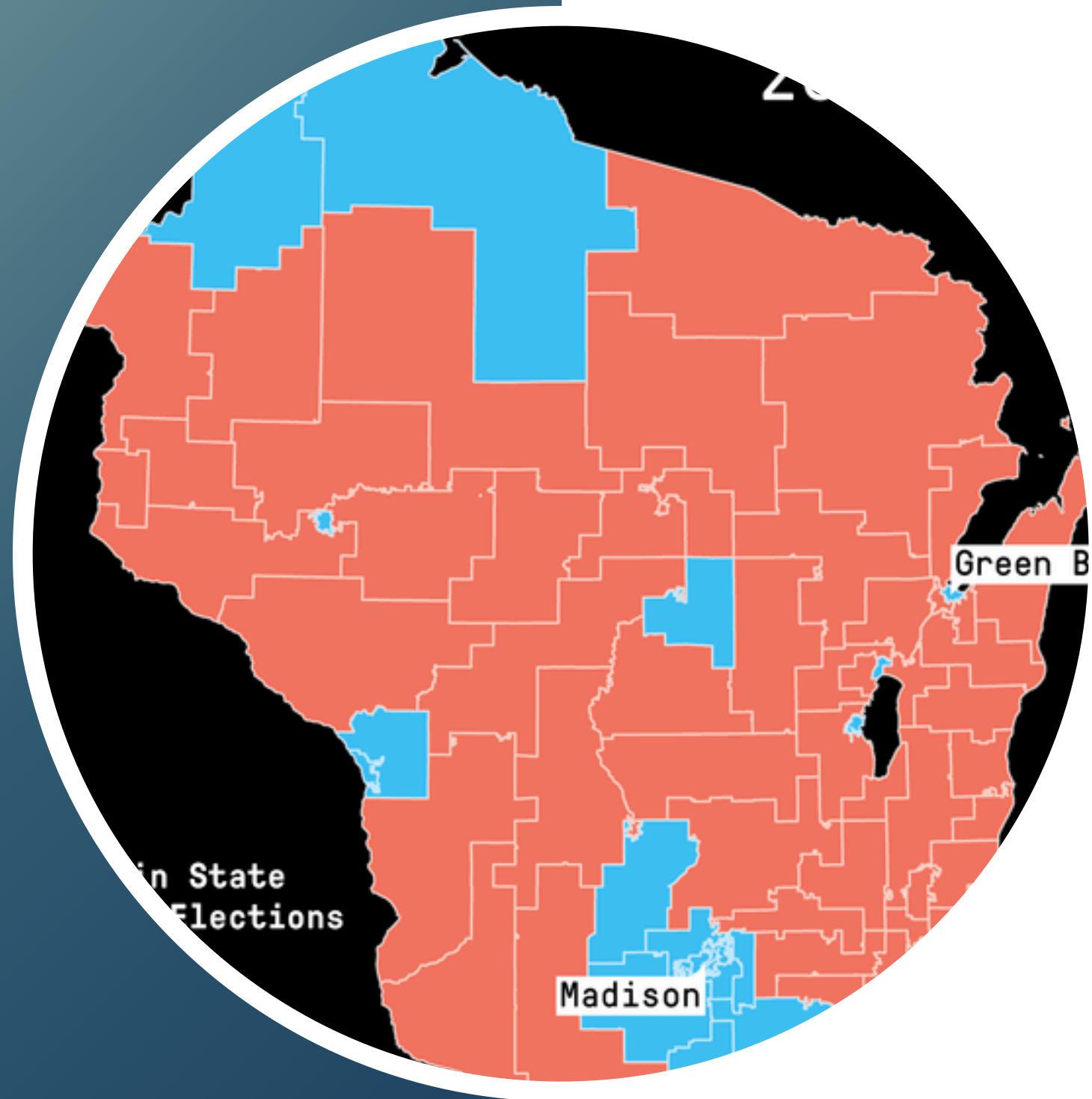
Where the Constitution Slips

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INTRODUCTION



The word *gerrymander* originates from the name Elbridge Gerry, a former governor of Massachusetts.

Gerrymandering is the practice of drawing irregular city, state, or county lines to 'filter' the votes into your favor.

"A bill passed by the Massachusetts legislature in 1812 divided the state into districts for the election of state senators. This division grouped together certain counties that had large Federalist majorities" (Jones, Charles O.).





Part One:

THE PROBLEM



*A picture of Elbridge Gerry

This is a problem in today's world because parties in elections and even state legislatures use this as an unfair advantage. The bill passed in 1812 (mentioned in the introduction) grouped a few counties that had a sweeping amount of Federalist majorities. By doing this, the Federalists only won a few seats with huge majorities; therefore, the extra votes were wasted. Meanwhile, their opponents won many seats with small majorities

Fun Fact:

Did you know that just in the last decade, 191 districts have been drawn by the Republican Party, and 75 have been altered by the Democrats! The remaining 39% is drawn by commissions, courts, or divided governments.



A few Amendments that Gerrymandering is Against

First Amendment

Partisan gerrymandering weakens the idea of political expression and free speech by taking away the power of voters who support opposing parties.

Fourteenth Amendment

Drawing boundaries to dilute minority voting power violates the principle of equal protection under the law.

Fifteenth Amendment

This amendment states that you may not be denied the right to vote based on race. However, racial gerrymandering splits counties based on ethnicity/race to suppress the power of those voters, so that their vote has minimal effect.



Part Two:

THE SOLUTION



Cases

Below are two court cases about gerrymandering. Unfortunately, all of the cases against it have been lost.

01

Rucho Vs. Common Cause (2019)

This case focused on partisan gerrymandering. The plaintiffs accused the defendant of violations of the First and Fourteenth Amendments. However, in the end, the Supreme Court ultimately held that federal courts do not have jurisdiction over claims of partisan gerrymandering.

5 - 4

02

Alexander Vs. South Carolina (2024)

This case involved racial gerrymandering and alleged violations of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The legislature was accused of using race as a strong factor and of discrimination. But just like in the previous case, the Supreme Court ruled that the legislature did not violate the 14th Amendment

6 - 3





My Vision



01 Raise Awareness

I would tell this problem to many people that I knew and I would write a compelling e-mail to one of the Senate's legislators. I would talk about gerrymandering on social media and how it is unfair and against our rights. People could also go to public hearings.

02 Consideration

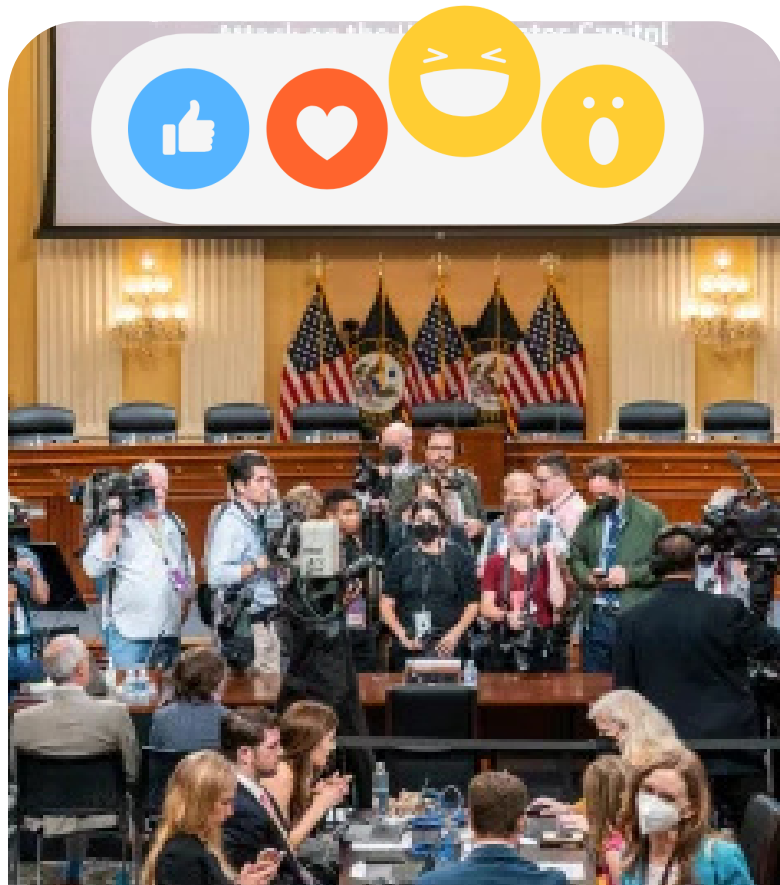
After listening to the public and seeing posts on social media, they could research and discuss the idea with their committee members and staff. Finally if they really liked the idea, it would be referred for the House and Senate to vote on.

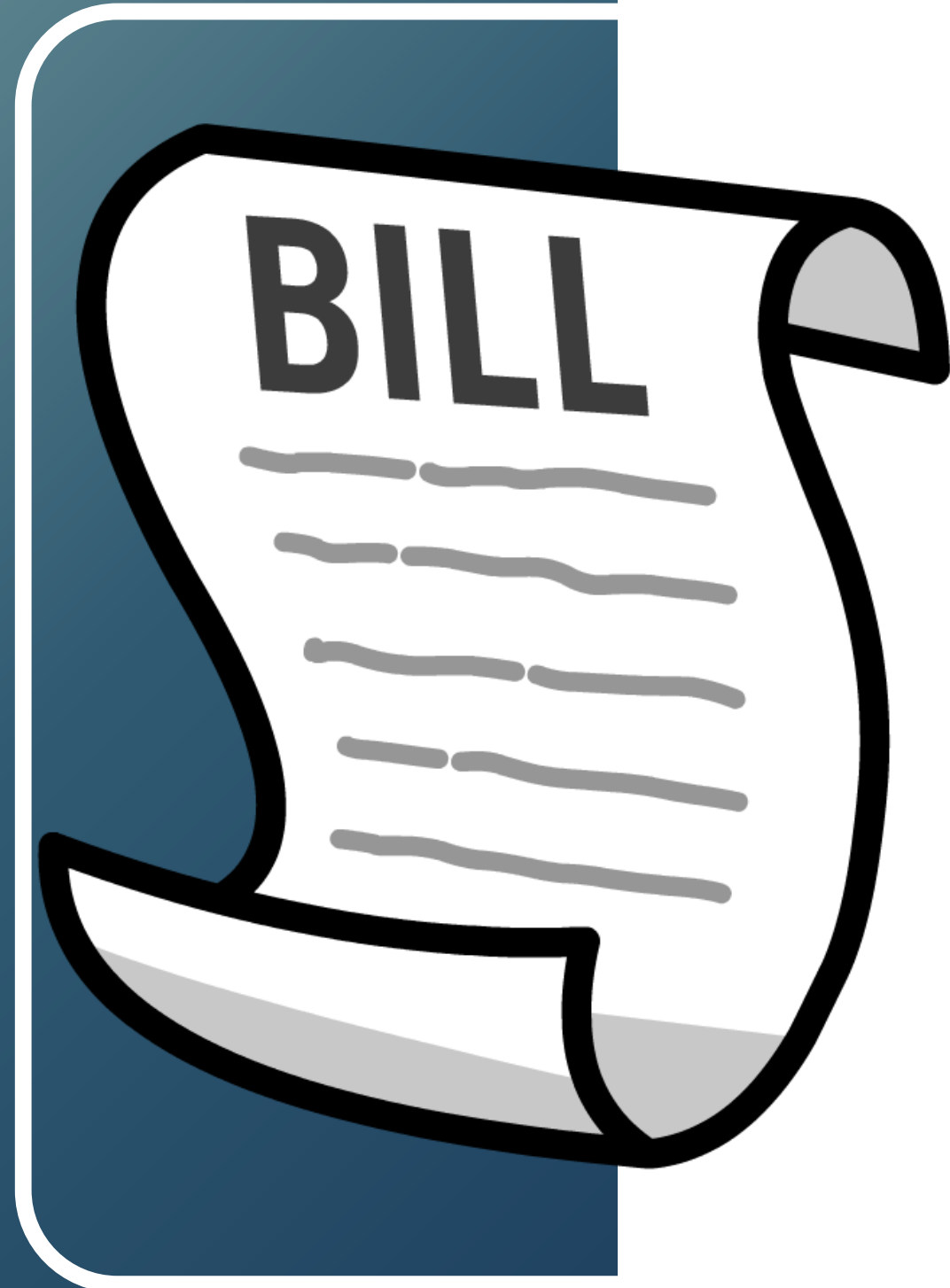
03 Higher Decision

If it passes the House and Senate it would go to the president. Now this is where it would get controversial. Parties use it to their advantage, so why would they want to ban it? Therefore, it might be vetoed.

04 Revival

If Congress decides to reconsider and override the bill they need a 2/3 vote for the bill in both the House and Senate. If they manage to pull this off, it becomes a law and elections would be more fair.





What The Bill Would Say

It is unlawful to draw or alter district, city, or county boundaries for unethical or political purposes.

Downsides

- Defining "unethical or political purposes": These terms are subjective and could lead to frequent legal challenges.
- Difficulty in enforcement: Determining whether a redistricting plan is based on unethical or political motives can be difficult, even with advanced data analysis.
- Potential for unintended consequences: Strict restrictions on boundary drawing could unintentionally lead to less compact districts or split communities of interest.



CONCLUSION



In Conclusion,

Passing laws to ban gerrymandering is tough—especially since the Supreme Court rarely steps in on partisan redistricting—but it's still essential for protecting fair representation. If we clearly prohibit gerrymandering, districts will better match real communities instead of serving political interests. Making elections fair builds trust and supports the core values of our democracy. Even though this is complicated, the payoff for our system would be huge.



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THANK YOU

