

## Koy Kunkel\_SC

---

**From:** applications.administrator@capitol.local  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 28, 2021 5:13 PM  
**To:** Senate Redistricting  
**Subject:** INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input  
**Attachments:** Redistricting.pdf

Date: 2021-02-28  
First Name: Steven  
Last Name: Weintraub  
Title: N/A  
Organization: Self  
Address: [REDACTED]  
City: Austin  
State: Texas  
Zipcode: [REDACTED]  
Phone: [REDACTED]

Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: ALL

### Message:

Howdy y'all. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I'm Steven Weintraub, and I'm representing myself, but I am known in Travis County for my knowledge of voting maps and data. I have worked with the Travis County Clerk's Office, the Travis County Voter Registration office and various political groups in Travis county to explain, correct and handle voter data and maps.

Today I want to discuss with you two hidden costs of gerrymandering. The first is actual costs to the counties and the data people in both political parties, the second is a political cost of stability.

So, let's start with actual cost. Here in Travis county, there are 818 actual, unique ballots. This is not theoretical permutations, but 818 actual different ballots that have to be printed for 818 different groups of voters based on the piece of land they live. To be accurate, this is a slight overstatement, because 10 ballots exist with no voters. But it means 808 different real ballots. 280 of these ballots go to less than 100 voters, 149 actually go to less than 10 voters and there are 35 individual voters in Travis county actually have unique ballots unto themselves. The cost of managing such a diversity of ballots is costly in time and money and is error prone. And it's not just the county clerks but both political parties that have extra costs because of this. A little work in the mapping process can eliminate a lot of this.

Admittedly, this is not completely the state's fault. The 818 combinations go from US House districts down to the lowest MUD and ESD. But, considering just US House, Texas House and Senate and SBOE, the state drew 80 distinct ballot regions. If a viable urban district that can be economically administered is about 3000 voters, half the areas defined by your maps fail this criterion. 25 of your regions have less than 1000 voters, 16 less than 10 and 10 regions actually have no voters at all. Small unique voting districts cost counties real money and time to administer and are very error prone.

The root cause of this is gerrymandering. By etching the edge of a voting area on a house-by-house basis, it doesn't take much sloppiness and incoordination to give a voter a ballot completely different from any other. In Travis county you help do that 35 times.

Let's look at an example of how your map drawing did this. Here in North Travis county, there are three precincts, 267 with 1824 voters, 305 with 8 voters and 345 with 2 voters. These occur simply because state maps don't coordinate. If you look at the US House map, all three are on the southern border of US-17 (the green), while if you look at the Texas House map, they are on the northern border of HD-49 (yellow). When you overlap the maps, you see why three areas unique voting areas which become individual precincts. You might be able to argue that precinct 267 is a reasonable draw in gerrymandering, but the 10 total voters for 305 and 345 make no voting or demographic sense. They only exist because map drawers were caring too much about minutia of individual voters. If both districts just followed the same road, we would be spared two completely meaningless precincts, 3 if 267 is cleaned up. probably without any demonstrable change in the demographic or gerrymander intent.

My favorite example of this is precinct 213. 2 miles long and 45 feet wide, not only doesn't it have voters, it actually doesn't have any dry land. The culprit was the attempt to stretch the gerrymander for TX-10 for Mike McCaul, and the legislature got sloppy. The river at that point divides both the US House districts and SBOE districts, but the coordinates of the boarder down the center of the river for the two districts disagree, requiring a nonsense precinct.

Every error of this sort costs people working with these maps time and effort and real tax-payer money. Even if you intend to gerrymander (and telling you not to is like telling the sun not to rise), please try to be professional and neat in your maps. Get boarders to agree as much as possible and sometimes ponder if gerrymandering makes sense when it makes a 2-person precinct. You can spare a lot of cost, work, effort and error later on.

So that is a real cost of highly divided maps and gerrymandering. But there are political costs too.

There is a direct line from gerrymandering to the protests after the death of George Floyd and the insurrection on January 6. Also, Gerrymandering causes the most radical policies to become Texas law and policy leading to economic instability. Let me explain.

The basis of gerrymandering is to design districts only one party can win. You design the districts a way that the Republican districts are only slightly more Republican than the average, while the Democratic districts are much more Democratic than average. This allows you to design way more Republican districts than Democratic districts, giving you the majority. In the Republican districts, Democrats have little hope of making any political difference in their local races, similarly in the Democratic districts, Republicans feel the same way. On top of that, Democrats feel frustration they have no say in state policy. This leaves a sizable amount of the population frustrated at their political impotency. No wonder we have violence. I should add, in Maryland a heavily gerrymandered Democratic State the same problems arise the other way.

Similarly gerrymandering leads to bad Texas law and policy and economic instability. When a district is designed to be won by one party or the other, the race is decided in the primary. At that point, the primary becomes a show of who can win their party and not who can win the general election. When the Republicans win the overall election – you get the strongly Republican policies, when the Democrats gain control, you get the most radical Democratic ones. And the pendulum will swing. As a results, policy and law swing from one pole to another, back and forth, never stable and centrist. With the constantly changing policies, personal and business planning becomes problematic, leading to economic instability. A good example of the problems with radical policy is the recent electricity crisis. Because of the radical Republican fear of regulation, ERCOT, the PUC and the energy industry got away with cutting corners leading to catastrophic blackouts. Similarly, Democratic over regulation would have prevented the issue, but at much higher energy prices. Centrist policy would had hit the happy middle. With gerrymandering, we get the worst of both worlds.

SO I've shown the actual and management costs of gerrymandering, and the political and stability costs of gerrymandering. The real answer..... Don't gerrymander.

# Steven Weintraub

Testimony Before the State Redistricting Committee

## Slide 1

---

**SW1** Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

**SW2** Howdy y'all. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I'm Steven Weintraub, and I'm representing myself, but I am known in Travis County for my knowledge of voting maps and data. I have worked with the Travis County Clerk's Office, the Travis County Voter Registration office and various political groups in Travis county to explain, correct and handle voter data and maps.

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

# Problems With Gerrymandering

- Real costs to administer by Counties and political parties
- Adds to political strife
- Adds to unstable government and economics

## Slide 2

---

**SW3** Today I want to discuss with you two hidden costs of gerrymandering.

|The first is actual costs to the counties and the data people in both political parties.

|The second is a political polical strife and dysfunction it causes

|Third is the unstable government policies it causes

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

# Costs of Gerrymandering in Travis County

- 818 Unique ballots
- 10 ballots go to no voters
- 808 real ballots
- 280 ballots < 100 voters
- 149 ballots < 10 voters
- 35 ballots unique to one voter

High cost to manage, high error rate

## Slide 3

---

**SW4** So, let's start with actual cost.

Here in Travis county, there are | 818 actual, unique ballots. This is not theoretical permutations, but 818 actual different ballots that have to be printed for 818 different groups of voters based on the piece of land they live.

To be accurate, this is a slight overstatement, because | 10 ballots exist with no voters.

| But it means 808 different real ballots.

| 280 of these ballots go to less than 100 voters,

| 149 actually go to less than 10 voters and there are

| 35 individual voters in Travis county actually have unique ballots unto themselves.

| The cost of managing such a diversity of ballots is costly in time and money and is error prone. And it's not just the county clerks but both political parties that have extra costs because of this. A little work in the mapping process can eliminate a lot of this.

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021



# Cost of State maps in Travis County <sup>SW5</sup>

- 818 is all races
- 80 unique map ballot areas just from state races (US House, Tx Senate and House, SBOE)
- ~3000 voters make an optimal precinct
- Half of areas have < 3000 voters
- 25 areas (31%) have < 1000 voters
- 16 areas < 10 voters
- 10 area have no voters

## Slide 4

---

**SW5** Admittedly, this is not completely the state's fault.

| The 818 combinations go from US House districts down to the lowest MUD and ESD.

| But, considering just US House, Texas House and Senate and SBOE, the state drew 80 distinct ballot regions.

    If a viable urban district that can be economically administered is about 3000 voters,

| half the areas defined by your maps fail this criterion.

| 25 (31%) of your regions have less than 1000 voters,

| 16 less than 10 and

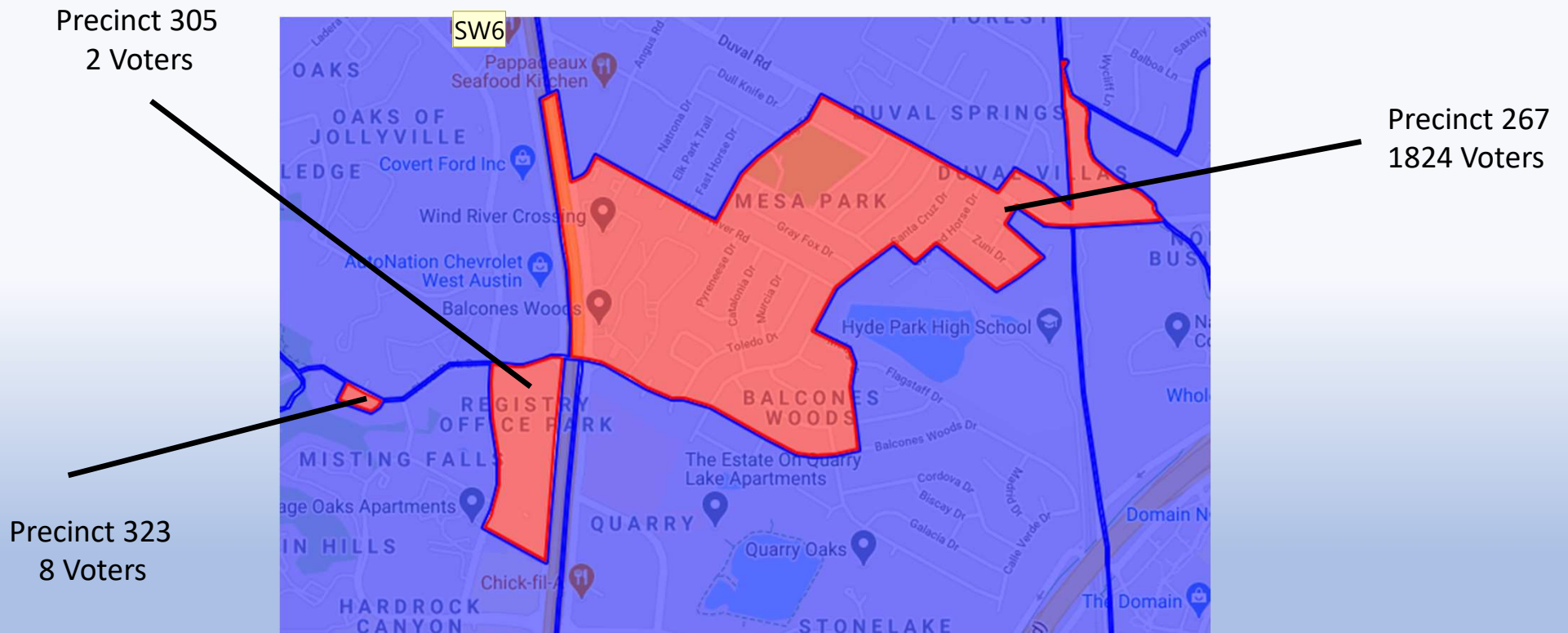
| 10 regions actually have no voters at all.

| Small unique voting districts cost counties real money and time to administer and are very error prone.

The root cause of this is gerrymandering. By etching the edge of a voting area on a house-by-house basis, it doesn't take much sloppiness and incoordination to give a voter a ballot completely different from any other. In Travis county you help do that 35 times.

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

# How do the state maps cause the problem?



Lets look at an example in Northern Travis County. Three precincts.

## Slide 5

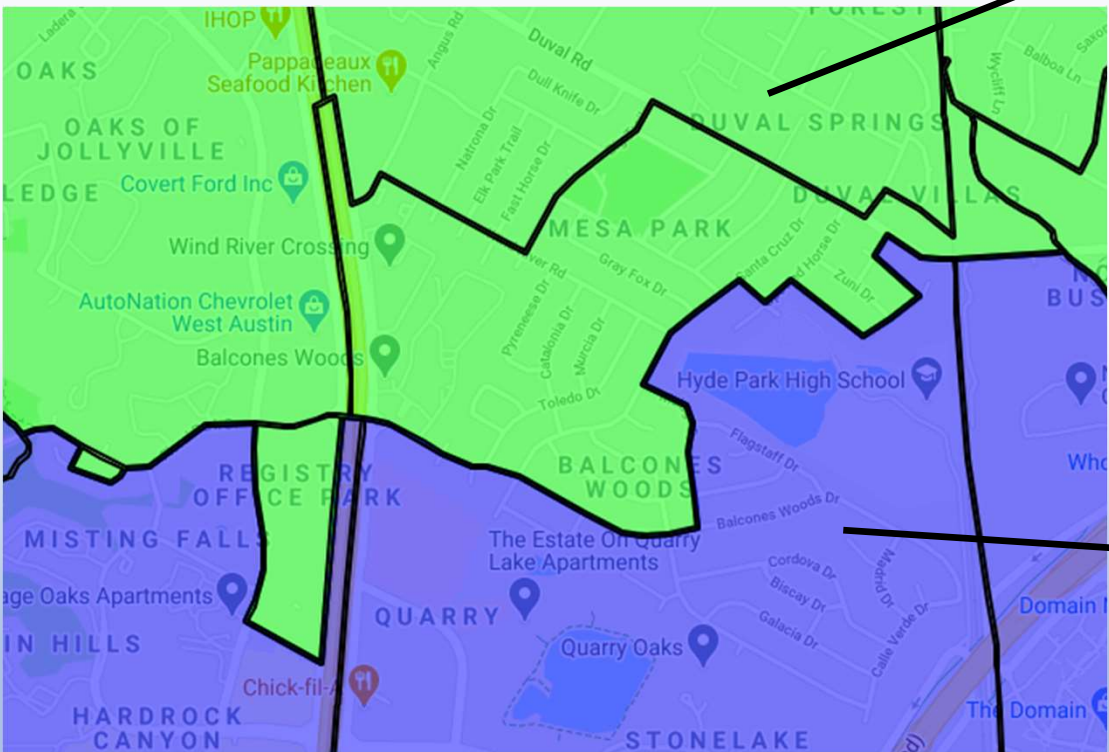
---

**SW6** Let's look at an example of how your map drawing did this. Here in North Travis county, there are three precincts, 267 with 1824 voters, 305 with 8 voters and 345 with 2 voters. These occur simply because state maps don't coordinate.

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

# US House

TX-17



TX-10

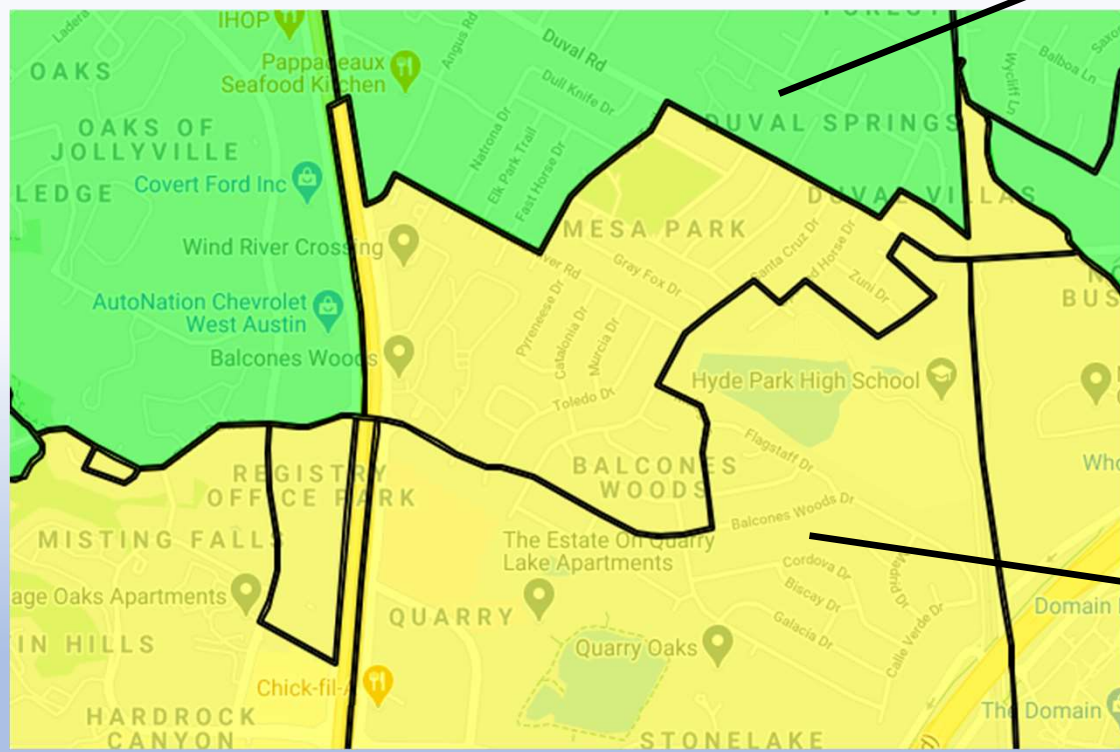
## Slide 6

---

**SW7** If you look at the US House map, all three are on the southern border of US-17 (the green),  
Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

# Texas House

HD-50



HD-49

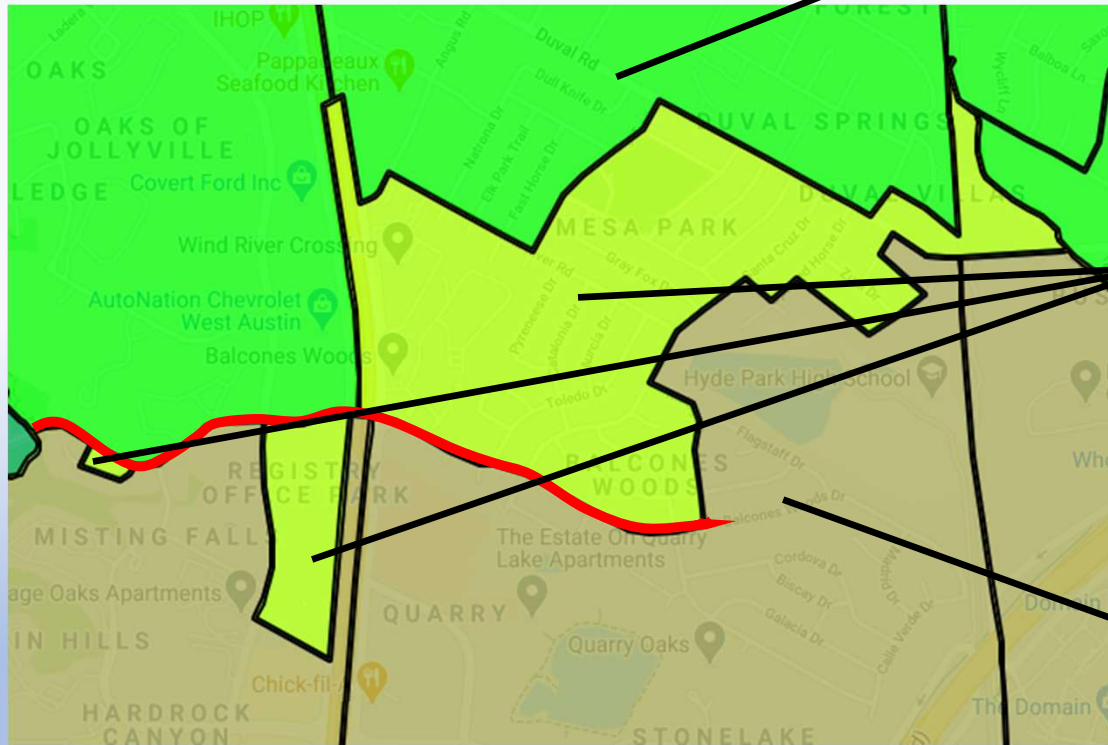
## Slide 7

---

**SW8** while if you look at the Texas House map, they are on the northern border of HD-49 (yellow).  
Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021



# Overlapped Districts <sup>SW9</sup>



TX-17/HD-50

TX-17/HD-49

TX-10/HD-49

## Slide 8

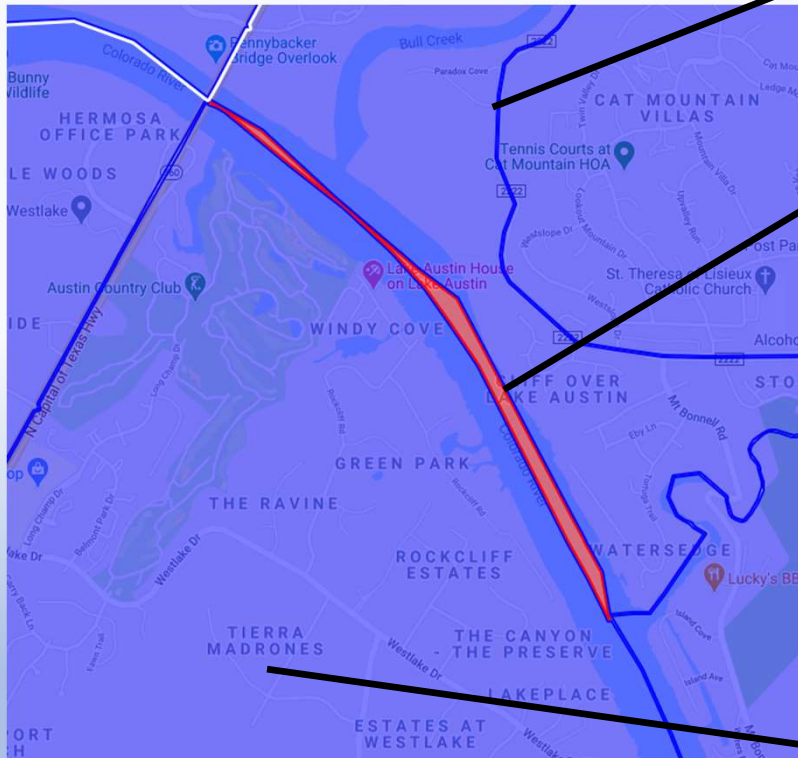
---

**SW9** When you overlap the maps, you see why three areas unique voting areas which become individual precincts. You might be able to argue that precinct 267 is a reasonable draw in gerrymandering, but the 10 total voters for 305 and 345 make no voting or demographic sense. They only exist because map drawers were caring too much about minutia of individual voters.

| If both districts just followed the same road, we would be spared two completely meaningless precincts, 3 if 267 is cleaned up. probably without any demonstratable change in the demographic or gerrymander intent.

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

# A real mapping mistake



TX-25/SBOE 10

Precinct 213  
No Voters

SW10  
SW15  
No Land

1 ½ miles long  
45 feet wide

TX-10/SBOE 5

## Slide 9

---

**SW10** My favorite example of this is precinct 213.

| US House district 25 and SBOE 10 north of the river and

| House10 and SBOE 5 to the south.

| But here the Legislature got sloppy. The TX House and SBOE maps disagree on the border, leaving a precinct with

Not only no Voters, but  
No dry land

| one and a half mile long  
| and 45 feet wide

A nonsense precinct.  
Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

**SW15** `1

Steven Weintraub, 2/27/2021

# There are real dollar costs to gerrymandering

- Political costs too
- Gerrymandering to the protests after the death of George Floyd and the insurrection on January 6.
- Gerrymandering causes radical and changing policies and economic instability.

## Slide 10

---

**SW11** Every error of this sort costs people working with these maps time and effort and real tax-payer money. Even if you intend to gerrymander (and telling you not to is like telling the sun not to rise), please try to be professional and neat in your maps. Get borders to agree as much as possible and sometimes ponder if gerrymandering makes sense when it makes a 2-person precinct. You can spare a lot of cost, work, effort and error later on.

So that is a real cost of highly divided maps and gerrymandering.

! But there are political costs too.

! There is a direct line from gerrymandering to the protests after the death of George Floyd and the insurrection on January 6. Also, Gerrymandering causes the most radical policies to become Texas law and policy leading to economic instability. Let me explain.

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

# Gerrymandering leads to political violence SW12

- Gerrymander by design makes a party a winner in every district
- Republican districts are marginally Republican, Democratic districts are strongly Democratic, giving a Republican majority
- Democrats in Republican districts are politically frustrated
- Republicans in Democratic districts are politically frustrated
- Democrats as a whole are politically frustrated
- Majority of voters feel political impotence -> violence
- Maryland is the other way around

**SW12** The basis of gerrymandering is to design districts only one party can win.

! You design the districts a way that the Republican districts are only slightly more Republican than the average, while the Democratic districts are much more Democratic than average. This allows you to design way more Republican districts than Democratic districts, giving you the majority.

! In the Republican districts, Democrats have little hope of making any political difference in their local races,

!similarly in the Democratic districts, Republicans feel the same way.

! On top of that, Democrats feel frustration they have no say in state policy.

!This leaves a sizable amount of the population frustrated at their political impotency. No wonder we have violence.

! I should add, in Maryland a heavily gerrymandered Democratic State the same problems arise the other way.

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021



# Gerrymandering leads to bad law and Economic instability

SW13

- Primary decides the election therefore...
- Election gets decided on the center of the party and not center of electorate
- Thus you get strongly Republican policies
- When party strength switches, you then get strongly Democratic policies
- Policy swings between the extremes, not the center, making economic planning problematic
- Look at ERCOT

**SW13** Similarly gerrymandering leads to bad Texas law and policy and economic instability

When a district is designed to be won by one party or the other, the race is decided in the primary. At that point, the primary becomes a show of who can win their party and not who can win the general election. When the Republicans win the overall election – you get the strongly Republican policies, when the Democrats gain control, you get the most radical Democratic ones. And the pendulum will swing. As a result, policy and law swing from one pole to another, back and forth, never stable and centrist. With the constantly changing policies, personal and business planning becomes problematic, leading to economic instability. A good example of the problems with radical policy is the recent electricity crisis. Because of the radical Republican fear of regulation, ERCOT, the PUC and the energy industry got away with cutting corners leading to catastrophic blackouts. Similarly, Democratic over regulation would have prevented the issue, but at much higher energy prices. Centrist policy would have hit the happy middle. With gerrymandering, we get the worst of both worlds

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021

Gerrymandering is just a bad idea

**Don't Gerrymander**

## Slide 13

---

**SW14** SO I've shown the actual and management costs of gerrymandering, and the political and stability costs of gerrymandering. The real answer..... Don't gerrymander.

Steven Weintraub, 2/23/2021