



MEMO

TO: Sen. Joe Scarnati, Sen. Jake Corman, Rep. Mike Turzai, Rep. Dave Reed
FROM: Nathan Benefield, Vice President and COO
DATE: March 23, 2017
SUBJECT: Fair Districts PA and CF Priorities

Over the past few weeks, Commonwealth Foundation has received several questions about our participation in the Fair Districts PA Coalition and their advocacy of redistricting reform. I wanted to personally let you know that we are withdrawing from the coalition and asking that they don't use our name in support of coalition goals.

Commonwealth Foundation supports redistricting reform as a good government practice and this does not reflect a change in our position. However, the recent rhetoric of the coalition and of other groups talking about redistricting—and particularly in the media coverage of this issue—does not match the Commonwealth Foundation's position or views.

Specifically, [some speaking at recent events](#) contend that the party and ideological composition of the General Assembly has been driven solely by gerrymandering. [Testimony we gave](#) supporting redistricting reform suggests otherwise:

Additionally, our analysis suggests redistricting reform would not significantly alter the composition of the General Assembly—that it would not inherently benefit one party more than the other.

That is, in the November 2014 elections, Republican House candidates received 229,000 more votes than Democrats, with 30 House Republicans winning districts carried by Gov. Wolf. Republican Senate candidates received 202,000 more votes than Democrats in 2014 (in 25 races), and 9 Senate Republicans won districts carried by Gov. Wolf. These dynamics, not gerrymandering, explain the current legislative compositions.

Additionally, [we have repeatedly noted](#) that it is issues, not gerrymandering, which explain recent election results. Pennsylvania voters overwhelming support comprehensive pension reform, paycheck protection, full privatization of Pennsylvania's liquor system, expanded education choice for parents and children, limiting the growth of state spending, and lower taxes on working families, and have elected candidates who support such popular issues.

Those transformative and achievable policy goals remain Commonwealth Foundation's chief priorities, and we look forward to working with you to make that vision a reality.