



Erie Times-News

Runner makes strides through Erie for redistricting awareness

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Candidates are busy running for political office.

Paul Mathison, 51, is running, too -- not for office, but around the state to draw attention to a political issue. "The PennUltimate Run" took him through part of Erie County on Wednesday.

Mathison is running 1,000 miles around the state to raise awareness about the remapping of congressional and state legislative districts. He wants residents to push the Legislature and Gov. Tom Corbett to conduct the process openly and to produce compact districts.

Current redistricting practices, he said, create "multitentacled, serpentine, gerrymandered monsters that really corrupt the process," deter qualified candidates from seeking office, and create public cynicism.

A five-member Legislative Reapportionment Commission -- including the leaders of the four legislative caucuses -- will remap state Senate and House districts this year to reflect changes in the 2010 census.

The Legislature will remap congressional boundaries.

Mathison, who lives just west of Philadelphia, traveled east from Fairview Township to the city of Erie on Wednesday. He made a brief side trip on Peninsula Drive to Lake Erie.

Mathison's smart phone, with a GPS application, allows people to track his progress on his website, www.pjmathison.com/pennultimaterun.

People can donate on his site to help cover his expenses, outreach and advocacy efforts. "This is not a charity, but at the same time, it's not the most brilliant business model," he said, managing a sense of humor despite the rain and road kill he has encountered.

About 12 volunteers are helping from remote locations with communications, social media, GPS tracking and other chores, he said.

Though Mathison is a cancer survivor who was diagnosed with lymphoma in 2008, his event is not tied to cancer awareness.

"It's a bucket-list item, for sure," he said. "But I'm more concerned about what I'd die for, not what I'd die from."

Mathison, who runs a management and government-affairs consulting firm, said his quest is nonpartisan. Mathison said his voter registration is "nonparty affiliated."

The run is the hook to get people to listen, said Mathison, the married father of a college freshman.

"There are saints and sinners on both sides of the aisle," he said during an interview along West Lake Road in Millcreek Township. "I vote both ways so I have my regrets as a result of that."

He started the endurance run April 1, and has already gone through two pairs of running shoes.

Passers-by can't miss him as he pushes a jogging stroller that contains a solar-powered battery charger, an ultralight tent, bottles of water and energy drinks, energy bars, packages of oatmeal and other gear.

Mathison, whose longest prior run was a marathon, has stayed at motels and camped out during his trip.

Mathison planned to stay overnight Wednesday at a motel in Summit Township, near Interstate 90.

He plans to start heading toward Warren today. But first things first.

In 500 more miles, he'll be home, where he will be reunited with his family.

"I'm kind of celebrating because this is the halfway point," he said.



Paul Mathison, of the Philadelphia area, jogs eastbound on State Rt. 5 in Millcreek Township on April 20. He is running around the state, to all four corners, to shed light on the remapping process for congressional and state legislative districts. ROB ENGELHARDT/ERIE TIMES-NEWS

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