

Anti-gerrymandering jogger stops by Scranton

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Published: May 4, 2011

Man jogs against gerrymandering

Paul J. Mathison is on a mission that many of us would never take on, let alone dream of: jogging against gerrymandering.

On Monday, the suburban Philadelphia resident just finished the latest segment of his nearly 1,000-mile nonstop - with rest breaks - trek, from Carbondale to Scranton, a sojourn he has undertaken by himself to put a spotlight on the controversial practice of cutting up federal and state political districts to favor certain candidates.

"Pennsylvania is among a handful of states that have been notorious for ... gerrymandering," Mr. Mathison, 51, said.

While he acknowledged his jog around the edges of the commonwealth, from Philadelphia, to Pittsburgh, to Erie, to Scranton, and back to Philadelphia, may be a bit extreme, he wanted to bring attention to a subject that normally makes "people's eyes glaze over."

"Yeah it's a little Don Quixote and tilting-of-the-windmills type. That's why you do something ridiculous and outlandish," he said.

As a former state government lobbyist, Mr. Mathison said he got an up-close look of the ways of Harrisburg and decided that reforming the redistricting process, in which legislative districts are formed, to make it more transparent would better benefit voters.

And as a cancer survivor whose lymphoma is now in remission, he was looking for more purpose in life.

"I took a walk through the valley (of death) but what better way to celebrate than a run through Penn's Woods," he said.

After jogging through excruciating, mountainous territory from Erie to Towanda to Northeast Pennsylvania, he still holds on to the hope of stopping the practice of gerrymandering that makes legislative districts less representative of voters and caters more to maintaining political power, he said.

"Time is running out and I wanted to do something that was important," he said.

Tuesday morning, he was at Jefferson Avenue and Mulberry Street in the city. His next stop was Bethlehem.

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TRIVIA: Coincidentally, but regrettably, The Run arrived in Scranton just a few days after Michael Scott left Dunder Mifflin and "The Office." We wish Mr. Scott the best as he sets the pace in all his future endeavors.

