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Op-Ed: Pennsylvania CEOs must act on redistricting reform

Paul Mathison Your Turn

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You are CEO of a formidable Pennsylvania business or institution.

You've been performing remarkably well during these rocky times, all things considered.

Your responsibilities never seem to end however. (Sigh)

Yet another existential threat needs your attention before it's too late.

Thankfully, today you are better prepared and have more leeway to perform this heroic act.



This spring marks the last, brief moment for a long time ahead in which Pennsylvanians (and much of America) can reform politics for the better.

Soon, state lawmakers will redraw our congressional and state legislative districts, and, if you do not act now, these districts will likely be drawn in a way that sustains extreme partisanship and gridlock for yet another decade.

Sadly, Pennsylvania is expected to lose yet another congressional district, going from 18 to 17 districts (down from a high of 36 districts 100 years ago) and thus lose even more of its voting power in Washington. (Since there are a fixed number of congressional districts, "our" district must go to another state whose population growth has been more favorable.)

You, as a CEO, know that it is unacceptable for your institution to not be growing or to not keep up with the competition.

You know that a polarized body politic and society does not work.

You have experienced too much partisanship, and it adversely affects your ability to do business.

While previously you were circumspect about political reform (you knew it was better to play it safe), lately you and other CEOs are saying "enough."

Your voice is now needed in Harrisburg — inside the state Capitol.

If you are skeptical, and if you lean Republican, know that in Pennsylvania, if you do not act, there will likely be a Democratic "gerrymander" of districts this time around, or a combined Democratic-Republican gerrymander, all but assuring ongoing gridlock for another decade.

Thankfully for you, a better paved road lies ahead.

Your board of directors is giving you more latitude to act on political and public policy matters.

Your customers and employees increasingly expect it.

Your investors, peers, and neighbors probably expect it.

Your daughters and sons surely do.

(Maybe your ever-forgiving other-half too.)

Polarized politics threatens your institution's livelihood and you know it.

Business opportunities, customers, jobs, innovation, and investment for too long have been going elsewhere due to gridlock and too much partisanship in Harrisburg.

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PAUL J. MATHISON, CO-FOUNDER, FAIRDISTRICTSPA

Luckily, you are accompanied in your journey by [FairDistrictsPA](https://fairdistrictspa.com) (<https://fairdistrictspa.com>), [DrawTheLinesPA](https://drawthelinespa.org) (<https://drawthelinespa.org>), and allied organizations.

Their statewide advocacy and education efforts have been second to none in terms of ethics, accuracy, diplomacy, nonpartisanship, inclusiveness and persistence.

This past decade, no issue saw more public, media, local government and legislative support in Harrisburg than redistricting reform did. (Legislative leaders rejected it.)

While time has run out, for now, to provide for an independent (citizens) redistricting commission, two crucial bills ([House Bill 22](#) and [Senate Bill 222](#)) also known as the Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act (LACRA), are the last means to assure that guardrails exist for the next redistricting, which is beginning to roll.

Your support — your action — is key to passage of these redistricting transparency bills.

Make no mistake, Pennsylvania needs politicians. We all need politicians.

The kind that can reach across the aisle and forge an agreement.

The kind that can hold the hand of a constituent and together go up and over a mountain.

Talk today to your Pennsylvania senators and representatives (representing where you live and do business) and to their leaders on both sides of the aisle. Tell them to support these bills and to support transparent political redistricting.

Specific advocacy guidance and LACRA details may be found at FairDistrictsPA.com.

You must take this step.

Paul J. Mathison 10 years ago ran a lap around the perimeter of Pennsylvania in support of redistricting reform. He is a co-founder of FairDistrictsPA and he lives in Radnor, Pa.

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