



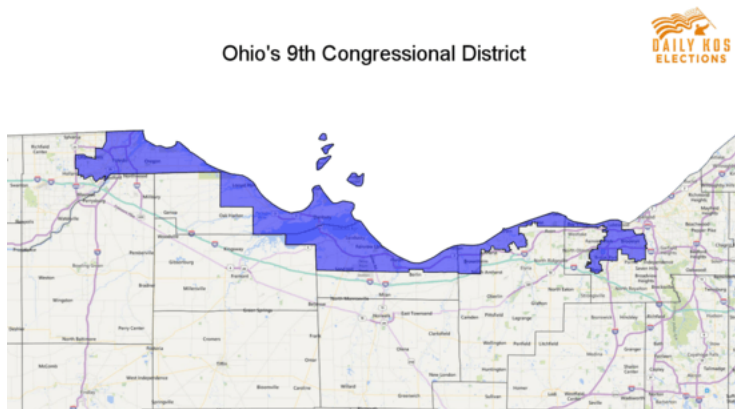
Incumbent Gerrymandering

Incumbent gerrymandering is another form of gerrymandering that is little discussed but very important. There are two forms of incumbent gerrymandering:

- The party in control seeks to get rid of a highly visible member of the other party. Thus determining the candidate of not only its own party, but also of the opposition party.
- The party in control seeks to protect one of its own against a strong potential challenger.

The Snake by The Lake

The Snake by the Lake district in Ohio offers an excellent example of the party in control getting rid of a visible member of the other party.



- After the 2010 census, Ohio lost two congressional districts.
- The Republicans created the district called The Snake by the Lake.
- This pitted two incumbents, Marcy Kaptur, from Toledo, who had served in Congress since 1982, against Dennis Kucinich, from Cleveland, who had served in Congress since 1996.
- Of the two, Kucinich was the more radical and visible, so Republicans decided he should be the one to lose.
- They drew the district, in which Kaptur and Kucinich lived 100 miles apart, along the lake with more voters from Kaptur's former district.
- Kaptur won the primary, with a strong showing her former voters, and Kucinich was forced into retirement.

Thus, the Republicans decided which Democrat they wanted in Congress and carved up the district to produce the results they wanted.

The second form of incumbent gerrymandering is when the party in control seeks to protect one of its own members by eliminating a potential challenger from within the same party.

Hakeem Jeffries is currently Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus and the 4th leading Democrat in the House. He is one of the most important members of his party. However, earlier in his career, this was not the case.

- In 2000, Jeffries ran against Roger Green for the State Assembly in New York. Green had already served in the Assembly for 20 years. The primary was contentious. Green won, although Jeffries made a strong showing.
- Green did not want to campaign against Jeffries again. He did not like Jeffries and was worried he would not win.
- To accommodate Green, the Democratic leadership modified the boundaries of the district, moving the block on which Jeffries lived to another district.
- In June 2004, Roger Green pleaded guilty to petty larceny, paid a fine, and was given 3-years' probation. Jeffries was unable to run against Green, because he no longer lived in the district. In November 2004, Green won re-election.

The Democrats wanted to protect Roger Green, despite his legal difficulties, and did not want Hakeem Jeffries running against him, so they gerrymandered Jeffries out of the district by changing the map on a block-by-block basis.

The Snake by the Lake and the gerrymandering of Hakeem Jeffries are two examples of how the party in control can use its power of gerrymandering to undermine the will of the people and shape election results to suit their personal interest.

These examples demonstrate why the task of redistricting should be taken out of the hands of politicians and placed in the hands of independent commissions.

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