



## Gerrymandering

**Rev. Elizabeth Dilley**

**Minister and Team Leader for the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization (MESA)**

A just world for all includes an equal voice in the ballot box.

Perhaps you remember the problem of gerrymandering from your high school civics class. Gerrymandering happens when one political party draws electoral maps that seek to dilute the voting power of another political party.

And because political power and racism have always been intimately entwined in the United States, gerrymandering also dilutes the voting power of people of color. That was supposed to be averted by the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which prevented states from dividing minoritized populations across multiple districts to thwart the election of their preferred candidates. While the creation of “majority minority” districts helped to ensure the election of some desired candidates, but it also produced situations where only those districts represented the influence of minoritized populations – thus diluting their power in neighboring districts.

Every state has had gerrymandered maps, though some states have attempted to develop fair, equitable, and sensible electoral maps. But only one state has gerrymandering on the ballot this November. Ohio has a long and storied history of gerrymandering issues, with all major political parties attempting to create district maps that favor their interests. In 2022, the Republican supermajority in the Ohio Statehouse drew up seven different maps that were all declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court (who nonetheless allowed one of those maps to be used for redistricting purposes going forward).

Issue 1 on Ohio’s ballot proposes to create a 15-member Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission to shape impartial, sensible, and equitable districts throughout the state. Spearheaded by an organization called Citizens Not Politicians, the proposal explicitly bars politicians, lobbyists, and political party officials from joining this commission.

While both sides of the Issue 1 debate claim that their efforts will stop gerrymandering in the state, a Yes will make substantive changes to the state redistricting process, while a No vote will continue to allow the political party in power to consolidate their power through election maps. And although this issue currently only impacts Ohio, other states are paying attention to the ballot measure as a potential model for future attempts to prevent (or consolidate) gerrymandering.

Why does this issue matter for people of faith? While the Bible reminds us that God is on the side of the oppressed, the injured, and the powerless, the Bible also calls us to create a just world where all people have agency. It is not enough for “us” to speak for “them,” but for all of us to have a voice and to be empowered to use it.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Elizabeth Dilley serves as the Minister and Team Leader for the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization (MESA) team in the national setting of the United Church of Christ.

**LEARN** [ucc.org/justice](http://ucc.org/justice)

**DONATE** [ucc.org/donate](http://ucc.org/donate)

ARCHIVE  
**WFJ** [bit.ly/witness4justice](http://bit.ly/witness4justice)

*The United Church of Christ has more than 5,000 churches throughout the United States. Rooted in the Christian traditions of congregational governance and covenantal relationships, each UCC setting speaks only for itself and not on behalf of every UCC congregation. UCC members and churches are free to differ on important social issues, even as the UCC remains principally committed to unity in the midst of our diversity.*