

September 2023: The Ohio Redistricting Commission unanimously passes maps to be used in the 2024 Election, which Democrats say they agreed to because they say Republicans would have passed even more gerrymandered maps that would've likely been approved by the new Republican majority Ohio Supreme Court without O'Connor on it as a swing vote.

October 2023: The Citizens Not Politicians amendment petition is cleared as "fair and truthful" to begin collecting signatures.

November 2023: 57 percent of Ohio voters pass the state's new reproductive rights amendment. Moreover, 57 percent pass a new law for adult-use recreational marijuana.

July 2024: Citizens Not Politicians submits petition signatures, and 535,000 signatures are certified, putting Issue 1 redistricting reform on the November 2024 ballot.

August 2024: As chair of the Ohio Ballot Board, Secretary of State LaRose, who opposes the Issue 1 anti-gerrymandering amendment, uses his official position to write a ballot summary for the amendment that uses loaded language against the amendment.

Oct. 8, 2024: Early voting begins in Ohio.

MOURNING THE LOSS OF JOAN DEZEMBER

HON. VINCE FONG

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mr. FONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the remarkable life and legacy of Joan Dezember, a beloved figure in our community who passed away on October 13, 2024, at the age of 89. Alongside her late husband, Ray, Joan dedicated her life to family, community, and philanthropy.

Joan was born in Whittier, California on February 19, 1935, to Martin and Jeannette Erreca. While attending Whittier College, she met her husband Ray Dezember in 1951, a Whittier College football star. An early sign of the couple's complementary qualities, Ray led the football team as captain while Joan rallied the crowd as the head of Whittier College's cheerleaders. Rising to a new and exciting chapter in their lives, the couple married in 1954, and briefly lived in Phoenix before settling in Bakersfield, where Ray helped found American National Bank. American National Bank was acquired by Wells Fargo and the Dezembers were able to focus on their passion for giving, especially to California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB).

The generous support to the community from Joan and Ray enabled the creation of important programs and facilities, including the Walter W. Stiern Library's Dezember Reading Room and the Dezember Leadership Development Center, which continue to inspire students seeking to follow Joan and Ray's path to achieve the American Dream. While such facilities will continue to uphold their names, it is the lives of fellow neighbors who were blessed to know Joan and Ray's virtuous and loving touch, felt by so many in their family and in the Kern County community. The Dezembers certainly believed in the transformative power of education, as their support for scholarships like the Wendy Wayne Nursing Scholarship and the Hispanic Excellence

Scholarship Fund has opened doors for countless students. As a lifetime member and the first Chairwoman of the CSUB Foundation Board of Directors, Joan's ability to help others reached far and wide, earning her the CSUB President's Medal in 1999.

Joan is survived by her four children, Becky, Brent, Cheri, and Katie, eleven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren who will remember her as their kind, loving matriarch who found great joy in the success of others. Amanda and I send our deep condolences to the whole Dezember family and all who knew and loved her. On behalf of the 20th Congressional District, I am grateful to Joan, for what she has done for our community. She will be deeply missed but never forgotten.

CONGRATULATING CAPTAIN JOSEPH J. RING ON HIS SERVICE AND RETIREMENT

HON. JILL N. TOKUDA

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Ms. TOKUDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate my friend Captain Joseph J. Ring, the Commander of the Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific on his retirement from the United States Navy after thirty years of service to our Nation.

As Commander of Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, Captain Ring led the successful transition of the newly aligned MIDPAC team in manning, training, and maintaining all surface ships homeported at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam. Thanks to Captain Ring's leadership, the U.S. Navy's Hawaii-based ships remain combat ready for sustained operations in the Indo-Pacific and around the world.

Over the course of his career as a Surface Warfare Officer, Captain Ring served in four countries and operated at sea in every Combatant Command theater of operation. At sea, he served as Commander of Destroyer Squadron Three One, Commanding Officer of the USS *Hopper* (DDG-70), and Commanding Officer of the USS *Mustin* (DDG-89). Ashore, he served as Flag Aide to the Commander, Navy Region Hawaii; Warfare Systems Advisor to the Royal Australian Navy in Sydney, Australia; Director, Joint Operations Center (J31), United States Africa Command in Stuttgart, Germany; and as Chief of Staff to the Director, Maritime Operations, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

His many awards include the Royal Australian Navy Chief of Navy Gold Medal, Peruvian Naval Medal of Honor for Merit, the Legion of Merit, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, and various other personal, campaign and unit awards including the Battle "E" Excellence Award. He also received the title of Honorary Chief Petty Officer in recognition of his contributions to the Chief Petty Officer community and the enlisted force.

On a personal note, Joe has always been the one who helps "get me to yes." Service above self is a way of life for Joe, and the values we cherish in Hawaii mirrors his own. While his Navy service brought him to Hawaii, we know our islands are a place he loves and protects as his home.

As Joe, Nada, and their entire family transition to a new chapter, I proudly join them in

celebrating a tremendous career that will continue to inspire and motivate future generations of leaders. But even more importantly, I wish them all the best in enjoying a well-earned retirement.

Joe, mahalo for all that you have done and given to our country.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PRAMILA JAYAPAL

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I missed Roll Call vote No. 474 on November 20, 2024. Had I been present, my vote would have been Yea on Roll Call No. 474.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DANIEL T. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to attend due to a memorial service. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 474 (H.R. 3012).

HONORING THE LIFE OF MR. HENDRIK POPPEN

HON. BILL HUIZENGA

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mr. HUIZENGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the service and life of Hendrik "Hank" Poppen of Portage, Michigan. Hank Poppen was born in Wildervank, Netherlands, on July 28, 1951. He immigrated to the United States with his family in 1957 and became a United States citizen in 1988. Hank attended Kalamazoo Christian Schools and dedicated much of his life to serving the Kalamazoo and Portage communities.

In 1989, Hank found a lifelong passion when he and his son Brian joined Boy Scout Troop 244, where he then became the Scout Leader. Through the years Hank watched his son, daughter, granddaughter, and 175 other scouts rise to Eagle Scout. He took his beloved troop on hundreds of trips throughout the United States, even when his health failed him.

Hank was a remarkable individual characterized by his faith and love for his community. Most of all, he loved his family. On November 12, 2024, at the age of 73, Hank passed away surrounded by the people he loved most. He is survived by his children, grandchildren, siblings, dearest friends, and the many scouts, students, and people he impacted throughout his life.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in cherishing the memory of Hendrik Poppen. His dedication to his community, family, and friends, was unwavering, and his character will be remembered in the highest order.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JIMMY PANETTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Speaker, I regret that I could not be present for the vote on H.R. 3012—North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act of 2023. Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 474.

GERRYMANDERING

HON. ALMA S. ADAMS

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Ms. ADAMS. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Census seeks to count every American, every ten years. They do this so that every American may be equally represented and heard in this chamber by one of us. Friends, colleagues, Democrats, and Republicans, I submit this statement tonight, because nearly 250 years after our founding, the people of North Carolina are still not being fairly heard on this floor.

Before the first US Census count was conducted in 1790, North Carolina lawmakers, who looked nothing like me to say the least, joined with other representatives from southern states in advocating that African-American slaves be counted as “three-fifths” of a resident. More residents meant more congressional power. So they wanted our ancestors to count—but they denied them the vote. They wanted our bodies, but not our voices.

The echoes of that anti-democratic sentiment live today through gerrymandering. The effects of it are felt by all North Carolina voters and indeed, most voters around the country. The people of Alabama, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Ohio, Texas, and Florida are not being fairly heard on this floor.

To this day, the practice of gerrymandering drags the feet of our democracy, back to the early days of our nation when most of our citizens did not have a voice. The New Majority is built on it, but both parties are complicit in it. I am standing on this tonight, because I won't stand for it anymore.

Gerrymandering does more than sand the gears of our democracy. It harms our ability to govern. We can count people a lot faster than we could in 1790, but there's a reason the Census is only done every ten years. The long stability period gives us time to get to know our constituents, their needs, and the needs of the land, businesses, and organizations therein. It's why it's important that these districts represent cohesive communities. But that stability in governance has not been the case for my constituents, or for most in North Carolina.

The Republican Majority in the North Carolina General Assembly engaged in political pornography to stack congressional districts in their favor, locking 10 of our 14 congressional districts into Republican control in a state that voted 50–50 for the US House.

Over the past ten years of my service, this district has undergone changes in 2016, 2020, 2022, and now here in 2024. My first district looked something like a potted plant, growing along I-85 from Charlotte to Greensboro. If I knew then my district would evolve four more

times, I might have traded my house for an RV. Starting in January I'll have served the fifth configuration of my district in ten years. Most of you in this chamber who've served as long as I have, have served just two in that same time period.

Think about what serving five different districts does to our efforts at governance. Every year I give a State of the District speech, and I'm either saying goodbye or introducing myself to half my constituents. Many are surprised to hear from me.

Frequently redrawn districts mean weakened and less effective governance. Constituents need a representative in Congress often for basic help with federal services, like their Social Security checks, unemployment insurance, Veterans benefits, passport services, etc. Constantly scrambling relationships between offices and constituents hurts this process, and hurts our constituents. Worse, it undermines the basic faith Americans have in democracy.

The problem is especially bad in Charlotte, one of the Nation's fastest-growing cities, where many inhabitants relocated from elsewhere and feel especially disengaged with local politics. As hospitable southerners, our state leaders should take responsibility for changing this. Unfortunately, perpetuating it is more in line with our history.

State-level lawmakers are egged on by their counterparts and former colleagues here in Washington. They think they are here to deliver for a party agenda, but let me tell you, we are not here to govern for ourselves or for a party. We're here to govern for the people. America has never been about those in power, but about the work to make a more perfect union.

And there are answers.

While it took nearly 200 years, the sons and daughters of former slaves did eventually realize their right to help choose the representatives who walk these halls tonight. As the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

Legal standards for fairly drawn districts are not rocket science. The process worked—in Michigan, in Pennsylvania, and even, for a brief time, in North Carolina. National standards would be imperfect, but far greater than the status quo. They would ensure that the 330 million Americans we counted in 2020 are divided into 435 equally numbered, fairly and transparently drawn, more competitive districts that are representative of real communities. They would give us as representatives time to get to know our constituents, and maybe even solve a few more of their problems, too.

While North Carolina Republicans have chosen party power over the cultivation of democracy, cynicism over faith in the people, and their newfound fears over whatever once inspired them to public service, the people will win in the end.

Democracy will always have the last word.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I was absent from votes on November 20 and 21, 2024.

Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 474; YEA on Roll Call No. 475; YEA on Roll Call No. 476; NAY on Roll Call No. 477; and YEA on Roll Call No. 478.

CONGRATULATING OFFICER
CHUONG VO OF THE CITY OF
TORRANCE, CALIFORNIA FOR HIS
RETIREMENT AND YEARS OF
SERVICE**HON. MICHELLE STEEL**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mrs. STEEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my sincerest congratulations to retiring police Officer Chuong Vo.

Officer Vo has served as a law enforcement officer for 28 years, proudly defending his community and uplifting his neighbors.

Officer Vo's career has been defined by a legacy of honor, hard work, and love of his community. I'm sure he will be greatly missed by the department.

In addition to his time in law enforcement, Officer Vo has also served on the Cerritos City Council, the Cerritos Community Safety Committee, as well as Mayor Pro Tem and the Mayor of Cerritos.

I congratulate Officer Vo and I sincerely hope he enjoys the next chapter in his retirement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RICHARD McCORMICK

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Mr. McCORMICK. Mr. Speaker, after giving prior notice to House leadership, I was not present for floor votes on November 20, 2024 while attending to a personal matter.

Had I been present, I would have voted YEA on Roll Call No. 474; YEA on Roll Call No. 475; and YEA on Roll Call No. 476.

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF
MS. MILLISA GARY**HON. ABIGAIL DAVIS SPANBERGER**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Ms. SPANBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Ms. Millisa Gary for her leadership and countless contributions over the course of her career in service of the American people.

Ms. Gary started her career in public service in 1973 when, as a junior in high school, she accepted a position at the U.S. Department of Defense as an accounting assistant. She later earned a Bachelor of Science from George Mason University and a Master of Business Administration from Averett University. Throughout the last 50 years, Ms. Gary has been a true asset within the federal workforce—providing leadership, guidance, and friendship to all who had the privilege of working with her.