

York public school system, the Oakland Unified School District, the Mt. Diablo Unified School District, and overseas in Japan and France.

On top of teaching, Norma was a founding member of the Black Families Association of Contra Costa County in the bay area. She was a member of the Oakland Symphony Chorus and served as president of the American Association of University Women's local chapter.

For her work, Norma was recognized in 1995 as Teacher of the Year and Woman of the Year for State Assembly District 11 in the California legislature in 2008.

Sadly, Norma has passed away, and our hearts are with her friends and family. Norma will be remembered for her kindness, determination, and courage.

Please join me in honoring Norma Griffin for her incredible impact on our community and on this country.

PARTISAN GERRYMANDERING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. NICKEL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. NICKEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to discuss the urgent need for Congress to act on partisan gerrymandering in the United States. The FAIR MAPS Act is a bill I have authored. We will talk about that today. This is a huge problem for the U.S. Congress, and I am glad to have the chance to speak about this today. I am joined by one of my outstanding colleagues from the great State of North Carolina, Congresswoman KATHY MANNING.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR), my friend and colleague, to speak on this issue.

Ms. KAPTUR. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me, and I really want to thank him, first of all, for his FAIR MAPS Act.

Ohio is the poster child for unfair maps. If you look at a State that voted twice for President-elect Trump and twice for President Obama, you would think that, for example, if the State has 15 Members, that it would be 8 and 7, you would sort of try to divide it equally because of 15 Members of Congress from Ohio and what is fair is fair.

What has happened in Ohio, because of a veto-proof legislature, due to gerrymandering in Ohio, in both chambers, what happens is that out of 15 seats, our side of the aisle, in Columbus, what they did down there, we have only 5 Democrats out of 15, only 33 percent, not 50 percent out of the 15. To be fair, if you have 15 seats, maybe it should be 8 and 7, you know, but to give us equal voice based on the public's right to full representation. Ohio is really the poster child for radical gerrymandering.

Recently, the polls showed that three-quarters of the people of Ohio wanted reform, and they wanted to set up a special independent commission to draw the districts in Ohio. The vast majority of people wanted change.

What happened? In Ohio, that issue was put on the ballot, but the secretary of state, who has been part of this veto-proof, one-party rule in Ohio that has become corrupt actually—Ohio is an extremely corrupt State right now, I am sad to say. People have gone to prison and more will go to prison because absolute power corrupts absolutely, including in gerrymandering.

There was this initiative that was placed on the ballot that the people voted to put on the ballot, but what did the secretary of state and attorney general in Ohio do? They wrote a gerrymandering proposition that was placed on the ballot that took up 3 pages. When the people went in to vote, just reading that, on these computers that we vote on now, took so much effort, the measure failed by a small margin because they were afraid. They didn't know what it was exactly, and it was made so complicated. Study Ohio as a classic case of hurting the people and not giving fair representation.

I just wanted to place that on the record so that those who are listening across this Chamber, across the intelligent media in our country, and the people of Ohio could hear this because they are not being represented fairly, and voices are being suppressed. That really goes against the very principle of one person, one vote and one person, one mind, to be able to have all of those views properly reflected.

I thank the Congressman for introducing the FAIR MAPS Act and focusing on this really critical matter of a democratic voice for the people of the United States of America. I can't compliment him enough. I am proud of his work and thank him for doing this.

Mr. NICKEL. Madam Speaker, I am grateful to my colleague from the great State of Ohio, a true champion for Ohio families.

Madam Speaker, I am going to talk about this a lot today, but in 1984, we had 190 Members elected to Congress in split-ticket districts. These are districts that voted for President of one party and a Member of Congress of another. This election, it looks like we are down to 13. Representative KAPTUR was one of those and has a great story to tell.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. MANNING).

Ms. MANNING. Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend from North Carolina, Representative WILEY NICKEL, for holding this Special Order hour so that we can talk about such an important issue, an issue that strikes at the very heart of our democracy, and that is gerrymandering.

Last year, in my State of North Carolina, the Republican-led general assembly passed blatantly gerry-

mandered congressional districts engineered with one clear purpose: to reduce the number of Democrats in Congress.

These new maps deliberately distort the will of the people, systematically diluting the votes of Democratic-leaning areas, like my district.

Communities of interest were split, districts were manipulated with surgical precision, leaving many voters voiceless in the very communities they call home.

In my own Sixth District, the city of Greensboro, a city of 300,000 people, was split into three parts. Each piece combined with farflung, ruby-red, rural districts. The majority of Greensboro was drawn into a district stretching across 10 counties all the way to the Tennessee border. In doing so, the new maps also separate the heart of Greensboro from High Point and from Winston-Salem, effectively dismantling a triad district, a community of interest that deserves cohesive representation.

Remarkably, and not coincidentally, the newly drawn Sixth District gives a 16-point advantage to a Republican candidate over a Democratic one. As someone who has lived in Greensboro for four decades, I am outraged by the brazen disregard Republicans in Raleigh have shown the citizens of my district.

Let's be clear. This is not democracy at work. This is political manipulation at its worst, designed not to represent the people but for partisan gain.

I want to give a little bit of history about how ridiculous this gerrymandering is and what has taken place, because the Republican-led legislature in North Carolina did the exact same thing in 2021. Despite their own statements that they would keep communities of interest together and avoid splitting counties, they drew a map back then that split my former triad district into three pieces and split two counties.

My constituents brought a lawsuit. The North Carolina Supreme Court found that the partisan gerrymandering, which the court found, based on presentations by esteemed statisticians and computer experts and other experts, that extreme gerrymandering was done with surgical precision and that that violated the North Carolina State Constitution.

The court ordered the maps to be redrawn, and eventually they had to appoint a three-judge panel to redraw fair maps. That panel, two Republicans and one Democrat, redrew the maps to keep communities of interest together and to avoid splitting counties. The result? In a truly purple State, where voters have just elected—well, I am going to come back to that. In a truly purple State, the voters elected seven Republicans and seven Democrats to the U.S. House of Representatives. Now, that was in 2021.

□ 1130

What happened to those same maps in 2023? That same North Carolina Supreme Court that found that gerrymandering was not allowed under the North Carolina State constitution was now dominated by Republicans, and they actually reversed their prior decision. They decided that extreme partisan gerrymandering is just fine in the State of North Carolina.

There were no new facts, no new communities of interest, no new counties, no new law, no new North Carolina constitution, just new Republican Supreme Court judges.

The result of those new maps drawn with no guardrails by our Republican-dominated general assembly, well, North Carolina, the State that just elected a Democratic Governor, a Democratic Lieutenant Governor, a Democratic attorney general, a Democratic secretary of state, and a Democratic superintendent of public instruction will, next term, have 10 Republicans and only 4 Democrats in the House of Representatives.

Thanks to the hypocrisy of our supreme court, the elected officials of our State have decided whom they want to represent rather than allowing the voters to decide whom they want to represent them.

In a democracy, the voters should choose who represents them, not the other way around.

That is why I was so proud to join my fellow North Carolinian Democratic delegation colleagues, including Congressmen WILEY NICKEL and JEFF JACKSON, whose seats were also targeted by the partisan Republican gerrymander, to introduce the Redistricting Transparency and Accountability Act.

I thank my colleague, Representative WILEY NICKEL, for that legislation.

The legislation goes after the partisan, secretive redistricting process, which, in North Carolina, Republicans used to overhaul the balanced, fair maps that I described earlier that were in place for the 2022 election by enhancing public input and increasing transparency in the map-drawing process. The maps this time around were drawn in secret with no legitimate public input.

Additionally, I am proud to cosponsor the Freedom to Vote Act, which seeks to put an end to partisan gerrymandering once and for all.

This critical legislation will ensure that all North Carolinians, Republicans and Democrats alike, have the right to fair representation. While these gerrymandered maps will prevent me from continuing to serve my constituents in Congress, the fight for fair districts is far from over.

Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank the hundreds of constituents who have called me, texted me, written letters, emailed me, and stopped me in the public streets to tell me how disgusted they are by the extreme partisan gerrymandering that will prevent me from continuing to

represent them. I appreciate their support. I want them to know what a true privilege it has been for me to represent them and the communities I love so much in the Sixth District of North Carolina. I will continue to stand with all those who fight for a system where every voter's voice is heard and every vote truly counts.

Mr. NICKEL. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from North Carolina. She deserves to have a fair shot to come back to Congress and the ability to continue representing her constituents. She was robbed by partisan Republicans in the North Carolina General Assembly, which gerrymandered our State with surgical precision.

This is a huge problem not just for North Carolina but for the entire rest of the country. Voting rights have been under the legislative microscope for years now, with threats to roll them back and add obstacles for voters who want to cast their ballots.

Madam Speaker, I firmly believe voters should choose their politicians; politicians should not choose their voters. North Carolinians deserve a fair and transparent electoral process that ensures that every voice and every vote is heard and accounted for. This shouldn't be a partisan or political issue. It is about fairness.

In States and in places where voters have a choice, where they are allowed to put ballot initiatives on the ballot, they vote overwhelmingly for fair maps to bring balance to the U.S. Congress, but the fact of the matter is that 90 percent of the people in this Congress come from districts that are gerrymandered or safe seats for Democrats or Republicans. Less than 10 percent of the seats in this body are in seats like the one that I won in 2022 that are truly competitive and that could go either way. That is what gerrymandering has done to this Congress and to this country.

We are on track, Madam Speaker, to be the least productive Congress in our Nation's history, and if you want to put your finger on one thing, it is 100 percent partisan gerrymandering, which is wrecking our democracy and the U.S. House of Representatives. It is far past time that we end this.

This, for me, is a personal issue. It is why I got involved in elected office. As a former staffer for President Obama, I traveled all over the country and all over the world with him during his first term in office and his first campaign. When he left office, like many, I was sad. I was tuned in for his farewell speech, where he said if you want to fix the way things work in Washington, then grab a clipboard, get moving, and get organized.

I took those words to heart. I grabbed my clipboard and was elected to the North Carolina State Senate in 2018. As he left office, President Obama said the one thing that we have to fix in this country to bring politics back to the center is to end partisan gerry-

mandering. He has continued to be a leading voice on this issue, putting his time and attention toward ending partisan gerrymandering.

It was one of the main reasons I put my name on a ballot back in 2018 to run for the North Carolina State Senate, and then, as I was elected to the senate, I continued to work on this issue in North Carolina. The top issue for me was voting rights and an end to partisan gerrymandering in the great State of North Carolina.

In the State senate, I served on the North Carolina Senate Redistricting Committee, where I got to see firsthand how Republicans targeted communities of color with surgical precision as they drew maps that disenfranchised voters across the State. I saw firsthand how the process works and the way that politicians picked their voters instead of allowing voters to choose their politicians. They circumvented the transparency that came with drawing fair maps.

I spoke out against partisan gerrymandering as a State senator over and over and joined with so many others—Democrats, Republicans, and Independents—in North Carolina to outlaw this practice. Then, I was reelected again to the North Carolina Senate, and we continued to fight on this issue.

In 2021, a 4–3 Democratic court, our Supreme Court of North Carolina, drew fair maps for North Carolina. They responded to partisan gerrymandering from Republicans in the legislature, but they didn't draw Democratic maps, and they didn't draw Republican maps. They drew fair maps.

They drew maps that, in all likelihood, would have elected seven Republicans, six Democrats, and one seat that could have gone either way. That was the seat that I won. That is North Carolina's 13th District. In a 50–50 State like North Carolina, which is a true purple State, we elected Donald Trump in the last election, but we elected a Democratic Governor and Democrats up and down the ballot.

Madam Speaker, you would expect to have seven Democrats and seven Republicans. That is what North Carolina sent for the 118th Congress, seven Democrats and seven Republicans. We won a Republican-leaning seat. It was an R plus 2 seat. It could have gone either way, but the best ideas won at the ballot box.

Right now, we have maps that are fair. This is the current map right here. Madam Speaker, you can see seven Democratic seats and seven Republican seats. There is North Carolina's 13th District right there. You can see this is what maps look like. There is no packing and cracking. These are maps that represent communities of interest, that represent the State, and that allow voters to have a real choice in whom they send to Washington. This is what maps should look like.

Again, this North Carolina 13th District, by some accounts, was exactly in the middle of the U.S. Congress. It is

one of the most fair districts in the country. It is a competitive district where every vote is critical to our election. We won by 10,000 votes. It was a close election, but we were able to do it in a fair map.

Again, we got to have a real debate over the best ideas and whose party had the best ideas, and the best ideas won. In the same election when I won this district in North Carolina by a small margin, two seats flipped on the supreme court from Democratic to Republican, taking the court from 4-3 for Democrats to 5-2 for Republicans. They have proven over and over again that this extreme partisan MAGA court is nothing more than a rubber stamp for a MAGA Republican legislature.

In February, after the 2022 election, the North Carolina Supreme Court relied on a rarely used procedural rule to rehear the 2022 partisan gerrymandering case, *Harper v. Hall*, and took the incredibly unprecedented step of reversing its prior ruling on April 28. This opinion, authored by Justice Michael Morgan, charged the majority with improper motivations and willful blindness.

Madam Speaker, I am very glad and grateful to be joined by Democratic Leader HAKEEM JEFFRIES, who I understand is here to join and put his name and his voice behind this incredibly important piece of legislation and this incredibly important push.

I will say this: It looks like we are on track to have a 220-215 Congress. The three seats that Republicans gerrymandered in North Carolina with surgical precision are going to be the difference in this election. There are still a few more votes to count, but that is why I expect we will land a three-seat majority for the Republicans.

Had North Carolina had the chance with fair maps to send Democrats back, a 7-7 delegation, then I would be addressing him as Speaker HAKEEM JEFFRIES.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the distinguished gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES).

Mr. JEFFRIES. Madam Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina, Representative WILEY NICKEL, for yielding and for his leadership on this incredibly important issue around prohibiting extreme partisan gerrymandering across the country and certainly in the great State of North Carolina.

I thank Representative WILEY NICKEL for his extraordinary leadership in this Congress.

I thank Representative KATHY MANING for all that she has done to combat anti-Semitism and for many other issues throughout her time in Congress.

I thank JEFF JACKSON for his leadership and certainly congratulate him on his continued journey as a public servant as the next attorney general from the great State of North Carolina.

These are three extraordinary public servants who were elected by the peo-

ple but then unable to continue to serve not because of any decision made by the people of North Carolina, but because of extreme partisan gerrymandering by far-right extremists in the North Carolina legislature and this MAGA North Carolina Supreme Court. It is an extraordinary thing.

As Representative NICKEL has indicated, the people of this great country should determine who represents them. We shouldn't have so-called representatives making the decision as to the people whom they will represent.

There has been a lot of talk in the aftermath of this most recent election about an extraordinary and overwhelming mandate. Let's just look at the State of North Carolina.

I congratulate the incoming President on his success in North Carolina—a close race—on his success in North Carolina and in every other battleground State. In that very same State, every single Democrat running statewide for constitutional office won, proving the point that North Carolina is an evenly divided State. It is a 50/50 State. That should be clear to anyone.

When fair maps were drawn in advance of the 2022 election, the North Carolina congressional delegation, upon the success of Representative WILEY NICKEL in an evenly divided district, was seven Democrats and seven Republicans. That is the will of the people of North Carolina. It makes sense in an evenly divided 50-50 State.

Apparently, because far-right extremists in this country aren't convinced that they can win elections on their own or even hold the United States House of Representatives on their own, they decided to rip away three seats from the people of North Carolina through extreme partisan gerrymandering.

It is interesting. I hadn't fully thought about that because we are still counting votes, but as Representative NICKEL indicated, Democrats are on their way to perhaps 215 seats. In the 119th Congress, when every single vote is counted in California, House Republicans will have 220 seats. By the way, that is the smallest majority of any incoming party, Democratic or Republican, since before the Great Depression.

What mandate? It is an evenly divided House of Representatives. The people of this country want us to work together, which we are willing to do, and find bipartisan common ground on any issue whenever and wherever possible to make life better for the American people and deliver real results for hardworking American taxpayers.

□ 1145

At the same period of time, we will push back against far-right extremism whenever necessary, but it is interesting that this so-called overwhelming mandate wouldn't have even yielded a majority in the House of Representatives if it wasn't for the extreme partisan gerrymandering that took place in the great State of North Carolina.

I thank Representative NICKEL for raising this issue because it should shape how we proceed in the next Congress of finding bipartisan, common ground together to get things done because there is no mandate to enact far-right extremist policies in the United States House of Representatives or, by the way, anywhere in this country. That is the reality of this most recent election.

I thank Representative NICKEL for his leadership, his service to the people of the great State of North Carolina, to the Congress, and to the country. I know that the great Representative from North Carolina is not finished in his public-service journey, and we look forward to the best being yet to come.

Mr. NICKEL. Madam Speaker, my colleagues heard it here. In my 2 years in Congress, I have voted 19 times for HAKEEM JEFFRIES for Speaker of the House. I had very much hoped to be able to once more vote for him for Speaker of the House. Unfortunately, partisan gerrymandering has robbed the voters of that choice, and I did not run for reelection.

We have an incredibly important issue here before us in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Going back to North Carolina and how we got to this point in our State, the North Carolina Supreme Court, in an incredibly rare procedural rule, decided to rehear a case that had already been decided. The only reason they decided to rehear the case was because the election changed the composition on the court. It was unprecedented and the rule is very rarely used.

The dissenting opinion by Justice Michael Morgan charged the majority with improper motivations and willful blindness. Speaking to their motivation, the dissent wrote that "the five justices which constitute the majority here have emboldened themselves to infuse partisan politics brazenly into the outcome of the present case. . . ."

Madam Speaker, that was an absolutely terrible ruling, giving Republican extremists in North Carolina's gerrymandered legislature the ability to draw any maps they chose and the North Carolina Supreme Court did nothing there.

There is so much more work to do, but the North Carolina General Assembly Republicans carved up North Carolina's 13th District.

As you can see here, this is the current map that our rubber-stamped supreme court allowed that is now sending 71 percent of the seats in a 50-50 State to Republicans. It would have been almost 79 percent if DON DAVIS hadn't won in a Trump district by just a little bit.

This is a 10-to-4 delegation, you can see. You can see North Carolina's 13th District which is not connected by any real road or actual way to get there, but only by the colors of a map going all the way around the triangle in an obvious partisan gerrymander.

This is not a fair map, Madam Speaker. This is a map where politicians

have chosen their voters instead of voters choosing their politicians, giving Republicans three extra seats in the 119th Congress that they would not have had had there been fair maps.

Again, while the votes are still being counted, I believe we will end up at 220 Republicans and 215 Democrats. Had we been allowed to have fair maps in North Carolina, I would have returned, KATHY MANNING would have returned, JEFF JACKSON would have returned, and we would have had a 7-7 delegation, and we would be preparing for the legislative agenda under Speaker HAKEEM JEFFRIES. Those three seats are very likely the difference in the control of Congress.

This was a rare, mid-decade redraw of our maps. It is wrong, and we need to do something about it.

Madam Speaker, as we see, this is another example of extreme partisan gerrymandering, but it happens all over the country. If we look to Texas, Florida, Tennessee, and again, North Carolina, these are extreme gerrymanders, legislators handpicking their own voters and predetermining the outcome of our elections before they even happen.

Madam Speaker, we have gotten this down to a science. It is with surgical precision that maps can be drawn. It is known that if a map is drawn a certain way, the outcome can be guaranteed if you take it out of the middle range of a 45 percent to 55 percent district, which I will get into in a little bit, and I have a chart for that.

I will talk about folks in North Carolina who have experienced a continuous redrawing of their maps. We are the most litigated State in the country. We continue to spend more and more money fighting over maps instead of allowing nonpartisan, independent redistricting, which is the goal of the FAIR MAPS Act. Folks have seen a change of representation 4 times in the last 10 years in many districts because of Republican gerrymandering in the North Carolina General Assembly.

Madam Speaker, courts threw out electoral maps drawn by the legislature three times in the past decade due to gerrymandering. That was in 2016, 2019, and 2021.

Again, North Carolina is a 50-50 State. It is not fair to force a 10-to-4 map on the voters. Again, this very easily could have been 11-3. If DON DAVIS hadn't run such a tough campaign, that would be 79 percent of the seats for Republicans, again, in a 50-50 State.

My colleagues heard before that North Carolina in the last election gave its electoral college votes to Donald Trump, but it gave Democrats votes for the North Carolina Supreme Court, for superintendent of public instruction, for secretary of state, for attorney general, for Lieutenant Governor, and for Governor. We are a true 50-50 State. We deserve to have fair maps.

These maps that you see here target African-American voters with surgical

precision to diminish their voting power. They are clearly unconstitutional. We have lawsuits going on right now.

We have seen success in southern States on racial gerrymandering. I expect and hope that this map will be changed because it is not a constitutional map. It is not a fair map.

Those lawsuits are ongoing. We are going to fight for fair maps. We are going to continue fighting to end partisan gerrymandering and to protect the right to vote for every single North Carolinian.

Madam Speaker, partisan gerrymandering has been a tool used by politicians in nearly every State to manipulate the outcomes of elections. It doesn't matter who is doing it. Partisan gerrymandering is wrong whether it is Democrats doing it or it is Republicans doing it. It is bad for our democracy. It is bad for the United States Congress.

There are some States—not many—where Democrats gerrymander with surgical precision. It leads to hyperpartisanship, increased polarization, and it disenfranchises voters. We need to end the practice. We need to put in place nonpartisan and independent redistricting commissions.

We can do that by removing the ability of politicians to draw lines in their favor. We can restore fairness and ensure that voters are the ones choosing their politicians and not the other way around.

Now, I have in front of us here a chart with 140 dots. We have 14 congressional districts in North Carolina. We are an even, 50-50 State, 50 percent Democrats, 50 percent Republicans in terms of this map right here.

If you have the power to decide how you draw the maps, you can do it any way you want. We can easily see here a map where you give four of the blue dots to Democrats, six to Republicans. It is a pretty safe Republican seat. You could it again here, again, 6 to 4. Again, you do it here with this one here, and then I have got this one here, and then this one here, 6 to 4. Then you want to draw a Democratic seat, packing and cracking, you select two of the red dots, eight of the blue dots.

If you do this over and over, you get a map that would send 4 Democrats, 10 Republicans to the U.S. Congress. Again, six and four; six and four; six and four. Again, you can do it over and over, and the outcome will be the same. If you have the ability to do it, you can predetermine the outcome.

Here is the next chart.

Again, you can see right here, this is what it looks like, 4 to 10, and this last 1 here could have gone either way.

How does that work?

What does that look like when you draw a map a certain way?

From what we have seen here, this is what North Carolina looks like in the congressional elections that just happened. You see 10 safe Republican seats outside of this middle competitive zone

that I want to talk about, 3 Democratic seats accomplished through packing as many Democrats as possible into 3 congressional districts.

Then another one that was a 50-50 seat, this is DON DAVIS. It is a district that Donald Trump won, we believe. The votes are still being finalized. This is a 50-50 seat. It could have gone either way. This allows 71 percent of the seats for Republicans. Could have been 79 percent if DON DAVIS hadn't won by just a little bit.

When you put a district, Madam Speaker, outside of this middle competitive range, we kind of call it the 45-to-55 percent range, but to be even more precise, we have 46.5 to 53.5 percent. That is the range of districts where anybody has a decent chance of flipping a seat from red to blue or from blue to red.

When you draw it outside of this range, outside of 55 percent, the chances are minuscule. You are looking at less than 1 percent that any of these seats could ever flip. It may happen in a tsunami year, or maybe with a candidate who does something absolutely horrific, but when you draw a map and you put it in this area, you know that it is virtually impossible to flip.

Again, here, you see three Democratic seats, incredibly safe. They put as many Democrats as possible. This is the place. This is the place right here, Madam Speaker, where we need to have many, many more congressional districts.

I sent a survey to all of my constituents to ask how they felt about gerrymandering. I got over 1,300 answers. Here are some of the quotes from my constituents, and here is what they said: I feel like my vote doesn't count the way both sides use the maps.

Another constituent said: I haven't moved in 20 years but have been in 3 or 4 different congressional districts.

Another constituent said: It is hard to have a relationship when they keep changing because the district keeps being changed.

Another constituent said: Since moving to North Carolina in 2015, I believe we have been in at least three different congressional districts. It has become frustrating and confusing.

Another constituent said: I don't feel like I am accurately represented.

Another said: Having my district number change is confusing.

Another said: Makes me feel distrustful in my Representatives.

Another said: Not sure what is going on. We need transparency.

Another said: It decreases trust that Representatives have citizens as their top priority.

Another said: It adds to the dirty politics stereotype.

Another said: Political races have become very noncompetitive.

They certainly have if you are outside of that range.

Another said: Once elected, they only care what their party wants.

Lastly, another said: It makes me feel like my vote doesn't matter and reduces a desire to engage with elected officials since I don't feel like my Representatives truly represent me.

They used words including "distrust," "confusion," "unrepresented," and "extreme" over and over and over, as you see the word cloud of responses from my constituents who wrote in about their thoughts on this.

Madam Speaker, I think it is important, as we are talking about North Carolina, to explain where we are as a State. In order to change our constitution to require fair maps, there is no way that citizens can put something on the ballot. The only way to get something on the ballot is to have 60 percent of the statehouse and the State senate agree to put an initiative on the ballot.

When you have extreme partisan gerrymandering, gerrymandering legislative districts, as well as congressional districts, it is virtually impossible to ever allow Democrats to get to 60 percent under these partisan gerrymandered maps, so we can't put anything on the ballot.

The only choice we have is the supreme court. Democrats in North Carolina have shown repeatedly they are willing to draw fair maps, to push for the fact that our State constitution says we should have free and fair elections. Right now, it is two Democrats to five Republicans on the North Carolina Supreme Court. We just elected Justice Allison Riggs by just a few hundred votes recently, but she won.

The next election, we will have one seat on the ballot. The next election after that, there will be three seats on the ballot. If Democrats win three out of four elections for supreme court over the next two election cycles, we might be able to see fair maps in 2030, but we need action in Congress. Congress can do this immediately.

With a simple majority in the House, simple majority in the Senate, signed by the President, we can get the FAIR MAPS Act entered into law to make sure that we have nonpartisan, independent redistricting in every State in the country with all States playing by the same rules. We don't have to worry about the North Carolina Supreme Court. We don't have to worry about the U.S. Supreme Court, if we just do the job that voters sent us here to do.

The majority of voters across the country support nonpartisan, independent redistricting. If we put it to a ballot initiative in the U.S., to the entire country, the vast majority would support nonpartisan, independent redistricting. When you do it in every State, you see it on the ballot, it succeeds, and you get fair maps.

□ 1200

One thing I will point out about North Carolina, the Governor of our State doesn't have the ability to veto legislative maps. They took that power away. We have one of the weaker Governors in the country.

Right now in North Carolina, we see legislative Republicans trying to weaken Governor-elect Josh Stein even more as they pass legislation to take away his powers. Unfortunately, the Governor can't veto legislative maps, congressional maps, so we need action in Congress.

The U.S. Congress can fix partisan gerrymandering in North Carolina and in every State in the country, and that is what my bill, the FAIR MAPS Act does.

Madam Speaker, the FAIR MAPS Act would help to make independent redistricting commissions a reality in every State. That means every State playing by the same rules. Specifically, I will mention Texas, I will mention Florida, Ohio, Tennessee, North Carolina. These are States where we see extreme partisan gerrymanders.

The number of truly competitive districts in Congress is declining. It leads to more polarization and less willingness to work across the aisle and to do what is right for our Nation. It is why we are on track to be the least productive Congress in our Nation's history. There is no incentive to work across the aisle.

As I stand here, it is so incredibly easy to reach across the aisle. It is not a large space. You can put your hand across and shake hands and actually do the right thing for folks.

What does that mean? What would the FAIR MAPS Act do for North Carolina? What would it do for the country? We analyzed this and we looked at the numbers. Right now, anybody will say we have less than 40 seats out of 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives that are competitive. The other seats, the other 90 percent of the seats, guaranteed to go to whoever wins the Democratic primary or Republican primary, almost without exception.

We took this issue to the experts at Duke University, and we said, if the FAIR MAPS Act were to become law, what would that do for this Chamber? What would it do for the people who serve here in Congress?

They said, if the FAIR MAPS Act were law in every State including Texas, Illinois, Tennessee, and Florida, and Texas had to draw fair maps, we would double the number of competitive seats. We would go from 40 to 80 where the voters are the ones picking their Representatives, where more Members of Congress would be forced to do the right thing by working across the aisle to get things done.

Madam Speaker, there are many amazing Members here who do what is right. They love their country, whether Democrats or Republicans in safe districts, but they are not incentivized to do it. If voters don't like a Member's position on ending gun violence, they really don't have a way to make their voice heard because the districts are overwhelmingly Democrat, overwhelmingly Republican. It is a big deal.

My bill, the FAIR MAPS Act, would double the number of competitive seats in the U.S. Congress.

Again, we see constituents all over the country who are gerrymandered, finding they have new Members every election, and they don't know who represents them. In the last election, again, we saw what happened in North Carolina: 4 Democrats, 10 Republicans.

When we take politicians out of the process completely, we had better results. We had more fair elections. We have competition to get here. It has been tried and it has worked successfully in other States.

We see great examples in Arizona, in Colorado where independent, nonpartisan redistricting commissions had been able to draw fair maps, and you have responsive districts that change with the will of the people.

The voters are the ones who should be deciding who serves in this body, not partisan Democrats or partisan Republicans trying to add an abnormal number of Members to these States.

We need more legislative action. We need to make it easier, not harder, for eligible voters to make their voice heard. In Congress, there is a lot we can do to make it easier for people to vote and to participate in our democracy.

I helped introduce the North Carolina Redistricting Transparency and Accountability Act, a bill that would establish transparency and accountability requirements for congressional redistricting processes.

I am proud to support the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and the Freedom to Vote Act, which would end partisan gerrymandering, expand voting by mail, protect early voting, help get big money out of our elections, combat dark money, support election integrity, and make additional reforms to improve ballot access.

As I stand here, I am, again, brought to the very simple conclusion: We are on track to be the least productive Congress in our Nation's history because there is no incentive for Democrats and Republicans to work together because there are so few competitive districts. Ending partisan gerrymandering would do so much to change this body.

Again, 90 percent of the Members here are in safe seats. All they are focused on is winning their Democratic primary or their Republican primary. It is statistically guaranteed, if you are going to bet money on it, it is a great bet that if you are in a safe Democratic seat, safe Republican seat, you are going to be able to win. Hyperpartisanship has been fueled by gerrymandering. It creates a legislative body that struggles to address even the most pressing issues facing Americans.

In this Congress, we have only been able to do must-pass bills: debt ceiling, continuing resolution. We passed one budget. We were able to stand with our allies in Ukraine and Israel and Taiwan, but that is pretty much it.

I was proud of some of the work that we have done. I worked on FIT21, one of the biggest nonmust-pass bills we

passed to finally provide a regulatory structure for digital assets. I organized 71 Democrats to vote with my Republican colleagues. That was one example of working across the aisle to get something done, but there have been so few examples of that in this Congress. There have been so few real accomplishments because of partisan gerrymandering and because of a Republican majority that is unable to get their act together, to do the work that they need to do.

Again, we have seen chaos and confusion in this body, and it has been fueled by partisan gerrymandering. It is contributing directly to the dysfunction by creating these safe seats where politicians are only focused on their primary elections and not the general election.

It is increasingly filled with Members here who are more beholden to party leaders than to the diverse needs of their constituents and their communities. Congress is failing to deliver because it is no longer designed to reflect the will of the people; it is designed to protect incumbents and perpetuate partisanship.

If we want Congress to actually get things done, we need to fix this broken system. The FAIR MAPS Act is one way to start. By implementing independent, nonpartisan redistricting commissions, we can bring fairness and competition back to our elections so that the best ideas win at the ballot box, the best people serve in the U.S. Congress as we will send more responsive Members to Congress to do what they are supposed to do to work for the American people.

Madam Speaker, we are doing our best to understand how partisan gerrymandering has affected this election, but one statistic that I think is incredibly important is the number of split districts in the U.S. Congress.

What is a split district? A split district is a district that elects a Member of Congress of one party and a President of the other party. Let's look over the course of our history here in the United States. Split districts used to be very common. We would have voters picking Democrats and Republicans for different offices up and down the ballot, but those folks in the center have continued to decline, in part, because of partisan gerrymandering and the extremism it has brought to the U.S. Congress.

In 1984, there were 190 Members of this body who came to Washington in districts that elected a President of one party and a Member of Congress of the other. In this election, it is districts that voted for KAMALA HARRIS for President and a Republican for the House, or districts that voted for a Democrat for Congress and Donald Trump for President.

In 1984, 190 split ticket districts. In 2004, 20 years later, we are down to just 58 split ticket districts in the U.S. House of Representatives. My election, 2022, just 23 Members of Congress from

split ticket districts, 17 Republicans, 6 Democrats, that is what we have in the 118th Congress.

With this last election, we are down to what looks to be—again, votes are still being counted—just 13 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives from split ticket districts. I know for sure that is DON BACON and BRIAN FITZPATRICK. Those are two districts where voters sent a Republican to Congress, but KAMALA HARRIS as their choice for the White House and then Democratic districts where the rest, including Members like JARED GOLDEN, MARIE GLUESENKAMP PEREZ, TOM SUOZZI, DON DAVIS, and others, but just 13.

We had 190 40 years ago down to 13 now. If you draw a congressional district that KAMALA HARRIS won or that Donald Trump won, you can be almost certain that they are going to send a Democrat or a Republican to the U.S. House of Representatives. That is why gerrymandering is wrong. That is why we have to fix it. The time for action is now. This is the most pressing need of this Congress.

Madam Speaker, as I close out my time, I will leave this body with this incredibly important thought. You heard it from leader HAKEEM JEFFRIES. We are very likely to see a Congress decided by North Carolina partisan gerrymandering, a mid-decade redraw of our maps.

This wasn't a 10-year draw. This is something that partisan Republicans in our legislature did sending 10 Republicans, 4 Democrats, a net gain of 3 for Republicans, and those 3 seats were not even close.

Gerrymandering will very likely decide control of the next U.S. House of Representatives, 220–215. That is what it looks like, and those three seats in North Carolina are very likely the difference.

Madam Speaker, thanks, again, for letting me take the time to be here on this incredibly important discussion. While my name won't be on the ballot and wasn't on the ballot this year, I am not giving up or going out quietly in the fight for fair maps and to end partisan gerrymandering.

I firmly believe that voters should choose their politicians; politicians should not choose their voters. Right now, democracy is on the line and North Carolina and all the other States in this country are worth fighting for to get this right, to end partisan gerrymandering.

We have got a bill to do that, the FAIR MAPS Act, which I have talked about at length. It just takes a majority of the House, majority of the Senate, and we would have districts that allow folks to have a real choice at the ballot box in November.

I continue to fight with every ounce of my energy for fair maps and to end partisan gerrymandering and to protect the right to vote for every single North Carolinian.

This is the biggest issue for this Congress. It is one that we need to address

and it would bring balance to the House. It would allow for more bipartisan legislation. It would require folks to know that if you don't work across the aisle, if you don't reach your hand across that aisle to the opposing party, the voters are going to send you home because it is a district that could go either way.

That is what we need more of, that is what my bill would do, and that is why I am going to continue pushing to end partisan gerrymandering, so we don't have States that look like North Carolina.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would ask Members to observe proper decorum in the use of exhibits in debate.

CONCEPTS THAT ARE INCONVENIENT TO THE COUNTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GROTHMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. ROGERS), my good friend.

□ 1215

HONORING NEIL MIDDLETON FOR HIS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Neil Middleton for his distinguished and award-winning career in journalism, as a longtime trusted news broadcaster and vice president of WYMT-TV, a CBS affiliate in Hazard, Kentucky.

Broadcasting from the heart of Kentucky's Appalachian region, the station's call letters, WYMT, stand for We're Your Mountain Television. It is much more than an acronym. It is the station's mission.

WYMT-TV has become synonymous with the very region it serves, thanks in large part to the leadership and journalistic integrity of Neil Middleton and those who blazed a trail for news coverage and weather alerts in one of the most rural areas of the United States.

In an expansive region separated by mountainous terrain, national media outlets have only made their way to Appalachia after major disasters, while others have blistered our communities by dredging up negative stereotypes that have misrepresented our beloved hometowns that are filled with hardworking, innovative, and extremely talented people.

As both well-known and unknown reporters from around the country have breezed in and out of our region for 15 seconds of fame, it is WYMT that has earned the trust of southern and eastern Kentuckians since the station first signed onto the air in 1985.

They have not only provided lifesaving weather alerts during catastrophic floods and tornadoes but they