

A lot to like in redistricting plan

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One of Greenwich's leading Democrats is trying to reconfigure the town's three state House of Representatives districts.

Greenwich Republicans, naturally, accuse that Democrat, Edward Krumeich Jr., of trying to jigger lines to make the districts more favorable to Democrats. Mr. Krumeich counters he's merely trying to correct past Republican gerrymandering.

No one's changing the other's mind on this one. Frankly, it doesn't matter if they do. The political ping-pong is the sideshow. What's important is whether or not the model Mr. Krumeich is pushing is a better one than what the town has now.

It is.

The districts as they are now drawn lack demographic integrity. The plan Mr. Krumeich is proposing would do much to correct that.

And yes, it likely would make two of the town's three districts more competitive from a Democratic point of view. But Republicans would still enjoy an advantage in all three, and would still retain an absolute lock on the northernmost district.

A look at the northern, or 149th, district's current layout, however, illustrates Greenwich's problem. Comprised mostly of the backcountry, the 149th also swings deep into Glenville and Chickahominy. So a guy living on St. Roch Avenue might be in a different district from his neighbor across the street, but the same as someone miles away in Northeast Greenwich, whose life has little in common with his.

Similarly, downtown has been chopped up in unnatural ways. It's all a bit of a mess.

Mr. Krumeich's plan would stretch the three districts stacked atop each other lengthwise across the town. Central Greenwich would become part of one district instead of being divided among all three. Cos Cob would be put back together, as would Chickahominy. Across town, the integrity of neighborhoods would improve.

The General Assembly's bipartisan Reapportionment Committee is holding public hearings this month on the redistricting process. The one closest to home will be next week, July 18 at 7 p.m. at Norwalk City Hall.

To consider the political ramifications for a moment: There is no way for Democrats in Greenwich to shift districts to give themselves an edge. The voting rolls still are stacked too heavily against them. But more competitive districts would be better districts.

It has now been 100 years since Greenwich has sent a Democrat to the state House. A few have come close. Mr. Krumeich came very close five years ago, which is what some of his critics say is driving him here.

That's speculation. The fact is, for a very long time a Republican elected to the General Assembly from town has been pretty much guaranteed to keep the seat as long as he or she has wanted it. That's just bad government. Which is not a comment on the Republicans who have held those seats. The Greenwich GOP has a remarkably good track record of sending quality people to Hartford. But that's not the point.

Given the town's history, it's been hard for Democrats to even find candidates to run for the state House. In most elections, at least one Republican incumbent runs for reelection unopposed. We may have mentioned it in this space once or twice before, but Greenwich voters have much too little power in choosing the government that decides issues hitting closest to home. Due to town election rules they rarely have a say in who sits on the Board of Education (the GOP is giving voters a choice this year) and the Board of Estimate and Taxation. RTM elections are rarely competitive and voters frequently have no choice for the state House.

That is not how it should be.

The Reapportionment Committee will consider census changes most heavily in its decisions. But even if Mr. Krumeich's plan is adopted whole cloth, don't expect Democrats to start winning state House elections with regularity. Two of the state House districts should become more competitive, however, and that is a good thing whether you are a Republican, Democrat or Independent.

**Correction to Map Error,
Greenwich Redistricting Plans
for Districts 150 and 151**

