

BOROUGH OF SWARTHMORE
RESOLUTION 2016-07

ENDORISING REDISTRICTING REFORM LEGISLATION

WHEREAS, the Council of Swarthmore Borough is dedicated to upholding democracy in Swarthmore and across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, elections should represent the will of all the people, not political Party leadership and should provide citizens with meaningful choices in electing representatives; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania Senate Bill 484 and House Bill 1835 propose amending the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to assign redrawing congressional and legislative district boundaries to an independent redistricting commission, prohibit districts from being drawn for the purpose of favoring any political Party or candidate, mandate strict compliance with constitutional anti-gerrymandering standards, and guarantee meaningful opportunities for public input; and

WHEREAS, current congressional and legislative redistricting is undertaken by incumbent state legislators who have enormous political Party leadership and personal interests in the outcome of the commission's work; and

WHEREAS, districts are often redrawn to optimize the probability for incumbents to stay in office and to disadvantage candidates of the opposing political Party, which diminishes competition and choice during elections, as well as accountability to the voters; and

WHEREAS, only a truly independent commission composed of a diverse group of qualified members of the voting public, chosen to assure the fairness of the redistricting process, should be able to define congressional and legislative districts; and

WHEREAS, districts should not be drawn for the purpose of favoring any political Party or candidate; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution should define the maximum allowable deviations from the requirements that district populations be equal in population, compact, and contiguous, as well as prohibit unnecessary splitting of political subdivisions, and require explanation in detail for any departures from any plan that would achieve the stated standards, and mandate that these rules shall be enforced by the commission and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and


WHEREAS, there must be transparency in the redistricting process and opportunities for the public to be involved with the commission through comments and public hearings throughout the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, redistricting should be permitted just once during each decennial census cycle, unless required by a court order;

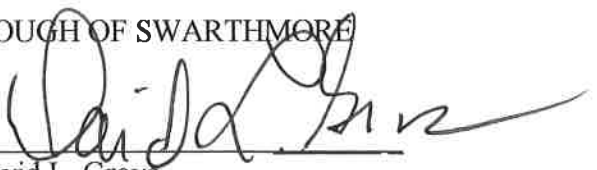
NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Borough Council of Swarthmore Borough believes that our current system of districting has the potential to diminish meaningful choice during elections, diminish the accountability of elected officials to the voters, and jeopardize the democratic process as it leaves redistricting to political Party leadership instead of a diverse and representative sample of the people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Borough Council of Swarthmore Borough calls upon the Members of the Pennsylvania Senate and the Pennsylvania House of Representatives to vote for passage of legislation as embodied in Senate Bill 484 and HB 1835 to amend the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and to do so in a timely manner so as to enable the amendment to be in full force for the 2021 redistricting of the Commonwealth's congressional and legislative districts.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE and seconded, the above Resolution is adopted as of the 9th day of May, 2016.

ATTEST: 

Jane C. Billings
Borough Manager

BOROUGH OF SWARTHMORE
BY: 

David L. Grove
Council President