

Democracy North Carolina

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Report: Redistricting Reform Momentum Builds Across Southeast

State lawmakers from across the U.S. Southeast — a region known for some the nation's worst gerrymandering and voting restrictions — are now standing up for redistricting reform, according to a new report from the nonpartisan voting rights group Democracy North Carolina.

The organization's researchers looked at proposed redistricting legislation in nine Southeastern states — Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

In the first half of 2017, lawmakers in seven out of nine Southeastern states filed redistricting reform bills, totaling approximately 25 proposals.

See more about this legislation in the full report at demnc.co/fairmapssouth.

Democracy North Carolina's report attributes the high number of redistricting reform bills offered in 2017 to the strong desire among dozens of lawmakers — and the millions of voters they represent — to "rehabilitate Southeastern politics and democracy" by taking aim at what has for decades been a "closed-door process focused on maintaining political power."

"Too often, elected officials prioritize their own reelection and partisan political power over the concerns of the people they represent," said Isela Gutierrez, Democracy North Carolina's associate research director. "Thankfully, Southeastern legislators from both major parties stepped up for redistricting reform in 2017."

The report highlights important and emerging trends in redistricting reform legislation in the SE, including proposals that would empower citizen-led redistricting commissions, end prison gerrymandering, and restrict partisan favoritism in redistricting. The report also offers recommendations to help ensure that the redistricting reform momentum continues across the region, even in light of current legislative barriers to reform in states like North Carolina.

"North Carolina's history of gerrymandering and lawmakers' current impasse on how to reform the redistricting process reflect the tensions at play region-wide," said Sunila Chilukuri, Democracy North Carolina's lead researcher on the report. "Similarly, the interest in reform in our state parallels renewed activism on the issue across the Southeast. The Southeast — a region long criticized for our political history — has a chance to lead the way on this important issue."

Learn more about North Carolina's work for redistricting reform at demnc.co/fairmaps.

Democracy North Carolina is a statewide nonpartisan organization that uses research, organizing, and advocacy to increase civic participation, reduce the influence of big money in politics, and remove systemic barriers to voting and serving in elected office.