

Office of Senator Natasha R. Marcus



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Senator Marcus's Statement on State and Congressional Maps

Raleigh, NC – State Senator Natasha Marcus (D-Mecklenburg) provided the following statement following the passage of North Carolina Congressional and State district maps:

“The maps passed by Republicans this week in the North Carolina General Assembly are bad on so many levels. They will give Republicans an unearned partisan advantage in the US Congress, the State House, and the State Senate.

Congressional Map & It's Impact in Mecklenburg County

The Congressional map gets an [F from the non-partisan Princeton Gerrymandering Project](#) for giving a “significant partisan advantage” to Republicans and creating a high efficiency gap (21% “wasted votes”). The map will likely result in the election of 10 or 11 Republicans and only 3 or 4 Democrats to Congress (compared to the current mix of 8 R and 5 D). This is clear and extreme partisan gerrymandering given that NC voters are pretty evenly split between Republicans and Democrats and that the current maps, drawn under court order, are much closer to an even partisan split. Gerrymandering like this causes many voters to feel like their votes do not matter.

The Republican map splits the three most populated (and most Democratic) counties, Mecklenburg, Wake and Guilford, into three parts each. This dilutes the power of the Democratic votes in those counties and divides communities of interest, putting metropolitan areas into districts that are largely rural and far away. One egregious example is that the towns of Davidson, Cornelius, Huntersville and Pineville, plus part of the Steele Creek area of Charlotte, will be carved out of Mecklenburg County's Congressional district and attached to the outer limit of a new Congressional district made up of six rural counties to the west. Also, the Southeastern portion of Mecklenburg County will be attached to a “Sandhills region district” stretching east of Charlotte into eight rural counties.

Democrats offered two alternative maps, both of which were graded A by the non-partisan Princeton Gerrymandering Project. They beat the Republican map on all the adopted criteria, but were nevertheless rejected by Senate Republicans.

The Republican-drawn Congressional map passed the Senate on Tuesday without any Democratic support, 27 to 22. This gerrymandered map will have a significant impact on Mecklenburg County residents' and North Carolina's representation in Washington.

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State Senate Map

The State Senate map also gets an [F from the non-partisan Princeton Gerrymandering Project](#) for giving a “significant partisan advantage” to Republicans. We believe the map violates the Voting Rights Act and includes a pattern of partisan gerrymandering in several counties, including Mecklenburg, in violation of the NC constitutional guarantee of free elections. Democrats offered several amendments that would have cured the violations - drawing districts that met the committee’s adopted criteria better than the Republican map. Our maps met the adopted criteria better than the Republican maps. Yet, in almost every case, Republicans rejected our amendments, in order to keep their partisan advantage.

Republicans even unnecessarily double-bunked 4 sets of incumbents (1 in Guilford, 1 in Wake, and 2 in Mecklenburg) in their original map. They later agreed to separate those incumbents into separate districts in all but one case -- mine.

State Senate Map in Mecklenburg/Iredell

In Mecklenburg County, the Republican Senate map gerrymanders all of Davidson (where I live) and part of Cornelius (Precincts 242 & 208) into a new district that is made up mostly of Iredell County, which is currently represented by Sen. Vickie Sawyer (R). In other words, I am double-bunked with a Republican incumbent in a Republican district. This outcome dilutes the votes and representation of these North Mecklenburg residents by shifting us to another county, where we have little in common with the rest of the district. It also makes my re-election to the Senate highly unlikely.

The Mecklenburg Delegation offered an amended map that would have corrected this problem. Our amendment also eliminated the partisan gerrymander in southeast Mecklenburg. Our map was more compact and more closely followed the committee’s criteria. Republicans were not willing to accept our amendment, but did ask in committee on Tuesday to displace it so they could consider some options. We learned that they were firm in wanting the southeastern portion of their Mecklenburg map to remain as they drew it. If that could be locked in, they would consider options to move me back into my district.

That evening the Mecklenburg Delegation drew another map in the public legislative map drawing room that would undouble-bunk me, keep all municipalities whole (except Charlotte), and be more compact than the Republican map, but it also split voting districts (VTDs) and kept the egregious partisan gerrymander that Republicans drew in southeast Mecklenburg. We wanted to know if such a map was possible, but we decided we could not move forward with that map given the problems with it. We did not ask staff to prepare it as an amendment.

Minutes before session began on Wednesday morning, Republicans made us an offer. Sen. Newton and a Republican staffer said they had seen the map the Delegation drew the night before and that they would agree to undouble-bunk me, but only if the entire Mecklenburg delegation agreed to introduce and vote for that specific version which included their gerrymandered district in southeast Mecklenburg. They offered no alternative option by which I could be undouble-bunked. **They insisted, in other words, that we endorse their gerrymandering in order to save my place in the Senate. We would not agree to that deal. The need for fair maps in NC is too important.**

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Session began. We offered our original amendment to undouble-bunk me with a more compact, more constitutionally compliant map. As expected, it was rejected. Thus, I remain gerrymandered into the Iredell district, along with the Town of Davidson and a portion of Cornelius.

The Republican-drawn Senate map passed on Wednesday without any Democratic support, 26 to 19.”

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