



A Funder Collaborative for Fair Districts

REIMAGINING REDISTRICTING

How Philanthropy Invested in Fairer Maps,
Community Engagement, and Racial Equity
During the 2021–22 Redistricting Cycle



A case study prepared
for Fair Representation
in Redistricting by
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Executive Summary

Redistricting—the redrawing of election district lines based on U.S. census data—is a process that traditionally has happened behind closed doors. It’s also a process that is regularly and repeatedly abused by elected officials and political parties to protect their interests, largely at the expense of communities of color and other populations who are often “gerrymandered” into districts in ways that minimize their power and reduce their representation in government.

The result is that communities that are already underrepresented and underserved have even *less* of a voice in government decisions affecting their healthcare, their housing, their education, and other aspects of their lives.

During the 2021–22 redistricting cycle, however, community groups across the country (most of them led by and serving communities of color) received unprecedented support from philanthropy to get involved in the redistricting process in ways they never had before. They organized their communities to speak up for their interests; they developed and advocated for their own district maps; they challenged unfair maps proposed by others; and they helped people understand that redistricting is a core democratic process that *demands* public input and participation in order to deliver on the promise of fair and equal representation for all.

This case study shares the story of philanthropy’s engagement and investments in the 2021–22 redistricting cycle via the funder collaborative Fair Representation in Redistricting (FRR). It also shares how the FRR partners have committed to *continuing* their support for redistricting litigation, reforms, and other activities, based on the understanding that this is “evergreen” work requiring steady attention and investment in the years between redistricting cycles.

“Because of FRR we now have a more cohesive ecosystem of groups thinking deeply about democracy issues and bringing a racial justice lens to this work.”

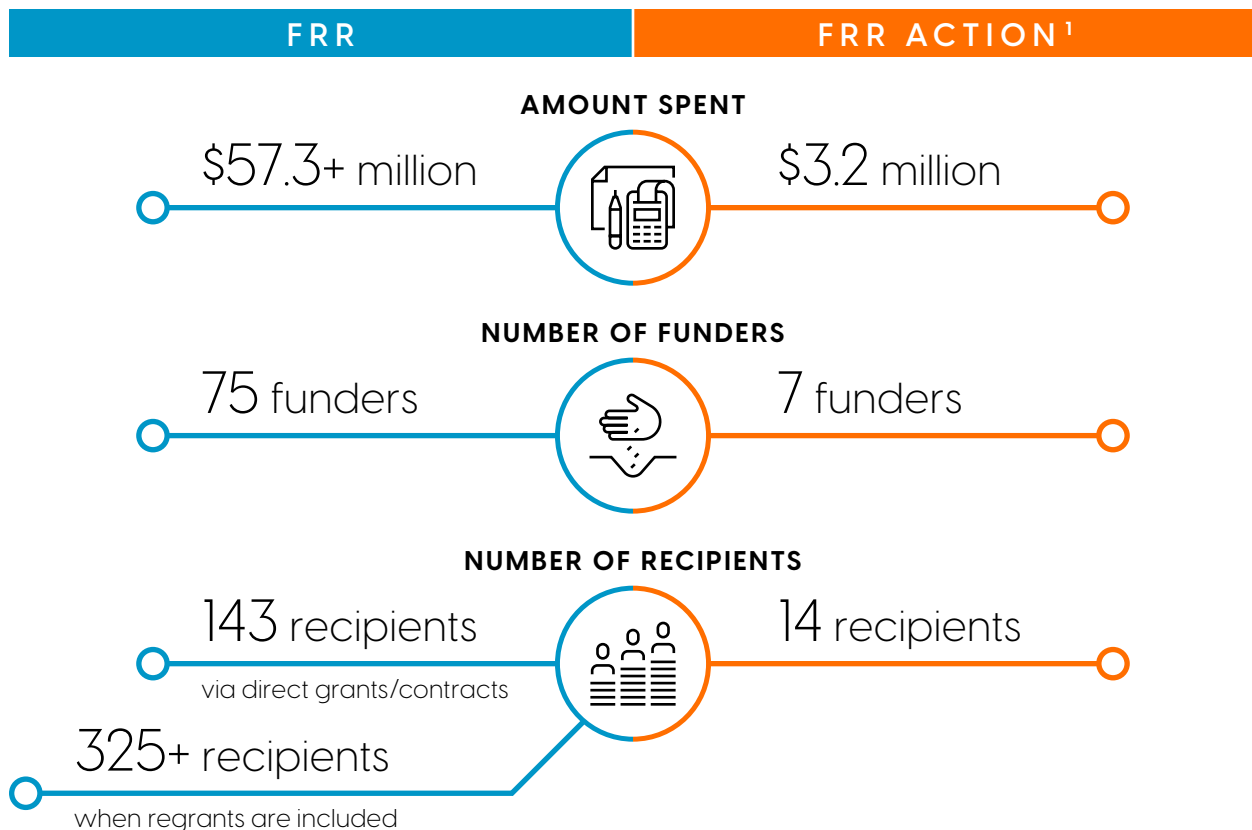


—Javier Valdés, FRR Co-chair and U.S. Director of Civic Engagement and Government, Ford Foundation

What FRR Achieved

During the 2021–22 redistricting cycle, FRR united more than 70 funders and raised more than \$57 million. The focus of the funders’ work: supporting grassroots groups and statewide networks to produce and promote fairer maps that would deliver power for communities of color whose voices and whose votes historically have been diluted because of racial gerrymandering.

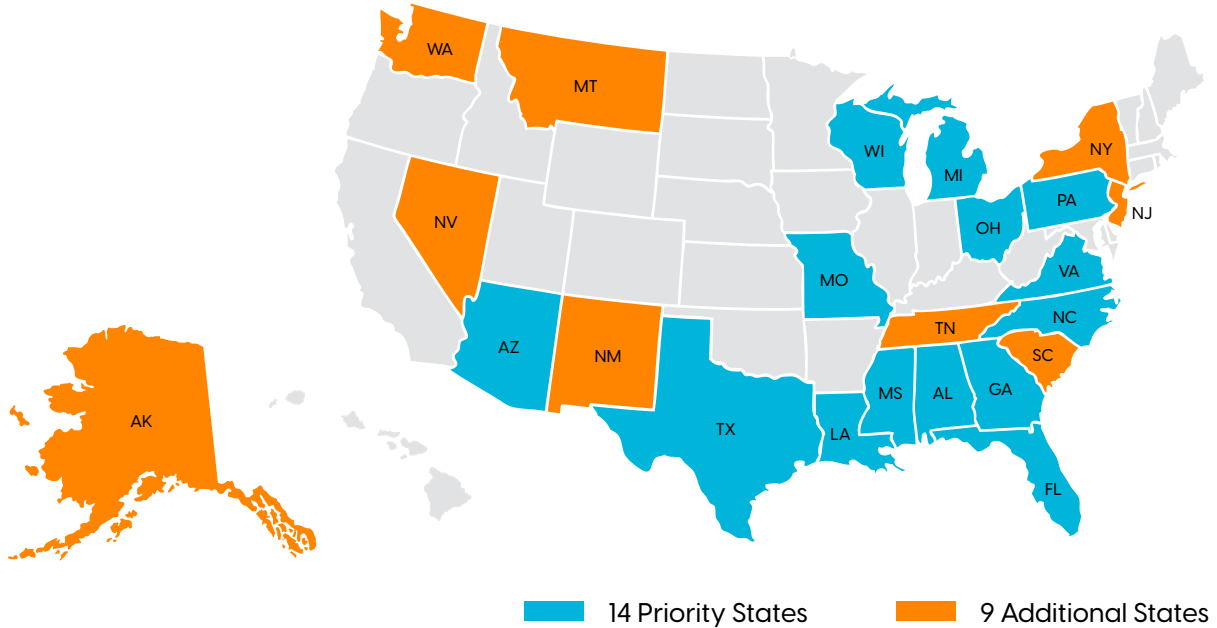
FRR’s investments supported more than 325 grantees (when counting regrants by state groups), with a focus on groups that organized communities of color to engage as active participants in the redistricting process in 23 states. More than half of the \$57 million went directly to state and community groups.



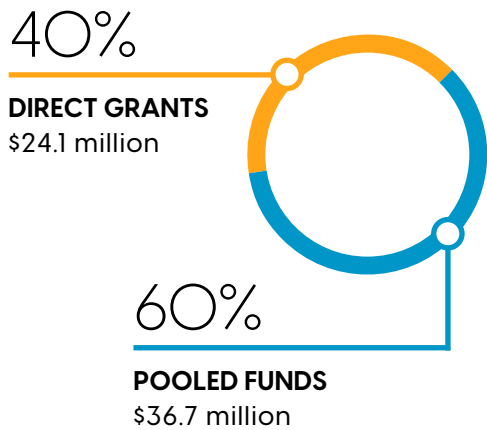
¹ The vast majority of FRR activities entail public education, community organizing, research, policy analysis and other efforts that are fully supportable by private foundations and also do not constitute lobbying. FRR established a smaller, separate Fair Representation in Redistricting Action Fund (FRR Action) to support complementary activities that may involve lobbying or otherwise not be permissible as a charitable activity.

FRR POOLED GRANT FUNDS IN 23 STATES

FRR used its pooled fund at New Venture Fund to direct philanthropic support to community groups and collaboratives working in 23 priority states where it saw the most opportunity for impact or the greatest challenges to fair representation. Funders also provided direct grants to grantees recommended by FRR.



FRR FUNDING RAISED BY TYPE



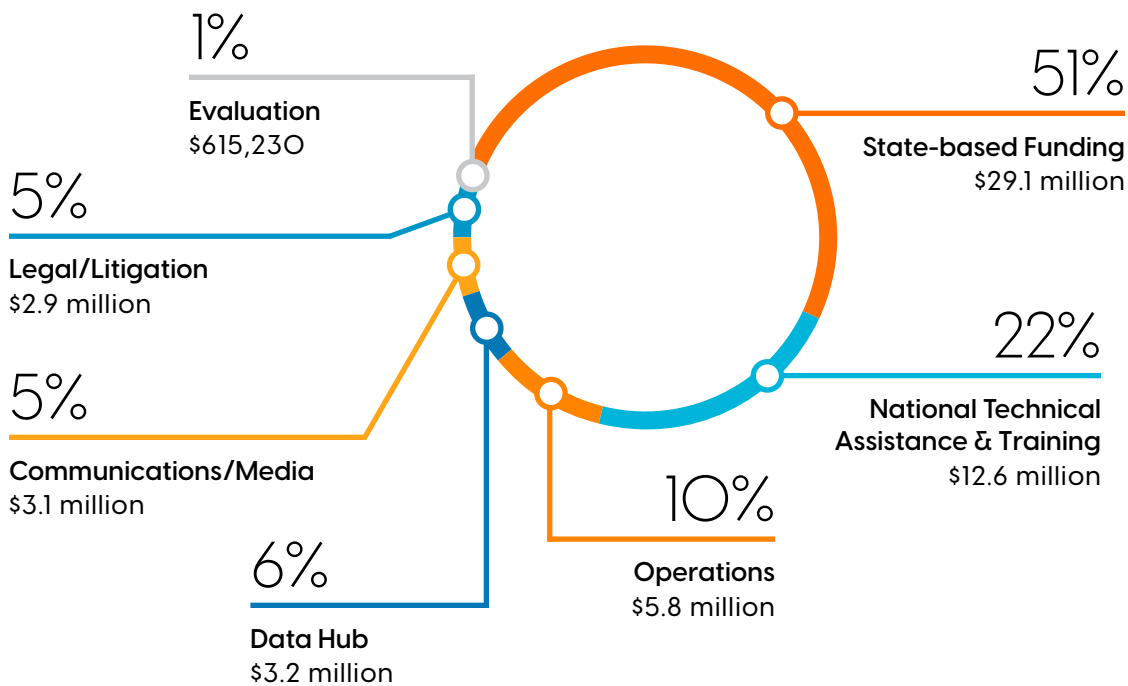
“We saw FRR’s work as an opportunity to be part of a national conversation on race and democracy and to help inform how other funders are thinking about racial equity and investing in the South.”



—Ethan Hamblin, Senior Network Officer, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation

FRR also supported a range of other activities, including technical assistance for grantees on communications and other priorities, and the creation of the Redistricting Data Hub to provide broader public access to datasets and mapping tools so groups could engage more actively in the redistricting process. Another priority, especially since the 2021–22 redistricting cycle ended, is support for litigation. In spite of a conservative Supreme Court, this ongoing work has resulted in important wins for fairer maps.

FRR TOTAL SPENDING BY ACTIVITY THROUGH 2022



While racial gerrymandering still reared its ugly head in many places around the country in the 2021–22 redistricting cycle, FRR and its member funders supported community partners to achieve fairer maps in many states. They also helped shift the conversation about redistricting away from the partisan horse race to focus on elevating racial equity and increasing representation for communities of color. Last but not least, the funders and their partners succeeded in supporting community-based groups to build their capacity and skills to work on redistricting, voting rights, and related issues on an ongoing, year-to-year basis.

In the words of the Equity Research Institute at University of Southern California's Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, the independent evaluator of FRR's work:

“FRR’s support of state-based convenors paired with technical assistance allowed for many more local and grassroots organizations to get involved in redistricting. As a result, there was an expanded presence of grassroots communities in the redistricting process—submitting community-of-interest maps, mobilizing to public hearings, providing public testimony, and calling and emailing legislators—as reported by interviewees, documented in evaluations, and covered in media outlets.”²

Why Funders Participated

In interviews for this case study, funders highlighted seven key factors that drove their decisions to get involved in redistricting and support FRR's work. Here's what funders valued most about FRR and its approach:

- 🔍 **A “bigger tent” philosophy about philanthropic engagement.** FRR didn't just include “democracy funders.” The collaborative intentionally built a table including a diverse assortment of issue-based and place-based funders whose work and missions are affected when gerrymandering curtails community power.



“Overall, FRR was very intentional about creating a bigger-tent coalition that could speak to all the ways in which the redistricting process impacts daily life for people, and the result was a table with a good mix of regional, state, and national funders and funders with varying issue priorities.”

—Daniella Flores, Program Officer,
Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

2 USC Equity Research Institute, “An Assessment of the Fair Representation in Redistricting Initiative: Key Themes Emerging from Interviews,” October 18, 2022.

- 📍 **A determined focus on racial equity.** FRR focused on supporting grassroots groups and statewide networks to produce and promote fairer maps that would deliver more power and representation for communities of color.
- 📍 **An easy pathway to support fair redistricting.** Funders appreciated how FRR's expert team of staff and consultants identified the best grantees across numerous states, navigated where funds were needed most, and recommended grants to varying strategies.
- 📍 **Helpful information and guidance on legal, compliance issues.** FRR devoted considerable attention and resources to helping the staffs and boards of foundations understand that redistricting is a nonpartisan, non-political activity and that investing in this work is entirely appropriate and legal for philanthropy.
- 📍 **A strategic emphasis on the grassroots and the states.** FRR used its pooled fund at New Venture Fund to direct philanthropic support to community groups and collaboratives working in 23 priority states where it saw the most opportunity for impact.
- 📍 **A powerful mix of funded activities.** Funders said they appreciated FRR's strategic mix of investments and technical assistance offerings, including the Redistricting Data Hub created to democratize access to datasets and mapping tools used in redistricting.
- 📍 **A community of like-minded funders.** For many participating funders, a key benefit of supporting and engaging with FRR was the opportunity to work alongside colleagues across philanthropy who share their commitment to upholding an essential pillar of U.S. democracy.



“[Funding] can't be an on-again, off-again thing. We want to be long-term funders working for the vision that everyone, and especially communities of color, should have the same opportunities to participate in democracy as everyone else.”

—Sorien Schmidt, Senior Program Officer, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

Lessons Learned

Participating funders also identified a number of important takeaways from the 2021–22 redistricting process that FRR—and philanthropy more broadly—can apply in ongoing work on redistricting and other democracy issues.

- 🔍 **Start early—and keep investing throughout the decade.** Redistricting is a multi-year, multi-cycle process; philanthropy and its grantees cannot wait until the end of the decade to engage. This is evergreen and ongoing work.
- 🔍 **Connect redistricting, census.** Philanthropy and its partners should be more strategic about connecting census and redistricting work—for example, by combining redistricting education and outreach with census outreach.
- 🔍 **Engage grassroots groups more directly.** Some funders expressed an interest in more direct engagement between philanthropy and nonprofits working on redistricting at the state and local levels.
- 🔍 **Keep the community together.** FRR showed how funder collaboration pays off; through pooled funding and aligned strategies, grantmakers achieved far more than they could have done working independently or alone. Now, philanthropy needs to stay together to sustain the momentum.
- 🔍 **Make a more powerful case for philanthropic engagement.** FRR rallied funders to support an issue many have avoided in the past, but some funders said they and their colleagues could still make a more powerful case for redistricting as a cross-cutting priority for philanthropy.



“I think there is still a perception that redistricting is too political and partisan. We need to be stronger and bolder in saying this is an entirely appropriate and necessary investment for funders. Building a stronger democracy and having people’s interests fairly represented is crucial to making sure government works—for everybody.”

—Kathleen Keating, Program Officer,
The Heinz Endowments

➤ **Keep racial equity front and center.** Going forward, some suggested that FRR place even greater emphasis on racial equity in its work and funder outreach—in part as a way to clarify for funders and other audiences the nonpartisan nature of this work.

The 2021–22 redistricting cycle demonstrated that FRR’s approach—investing in state and local groups serving communities of color, and ensuring that those communities have the resources and support they need to engage fully in redistricting—can deliver results. Now, FRR is determined to keep the work going and to defend and expand fair representation for communities of color through the next redistricting cycle and beyond.

“This redistricting cycle shows the power and importance of ongoing investments in litigation. We had some important wins, but the Supreme Court and other courts are by no means done with this issue, and litigation groups need continuing support so they can stay in the fight.”



—Erica Teasley Linnick, Vice President, NEO Philanthropy, and Director, State Infrastructure Fund (SIF)



Provided by Alabama Values.



Provided by Ohio Organizing Collaborative.

Introduction: Protecting a Pillar of American Democracy

The Washington Post

Texas redistricting discriminates against minorities, federal court says³

by Robert Barnes
August 28, 2012

WRAL NEWS

NAACP threatens suit over Congressional redistricting plan⁴

Posted and Updated July 7, 2011

INDY week

Cracked, stacked and packed: Initial redistricting maps met with skepticism and dismay⁵

by Joe Schwartz 06/29/2011

3 https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/texas-redistricting-discriminates-against-minorities-federal-court-says/2012/08/28/f6e6a2e0-f156-11e1-892d-bc92fee603a7_story.html

4 <https://www.wral.com/story/9833005/>

5 <https://indyweek.com/news/northcarolina/cracked-stacked-packed-initial-redistricting-maps-met-skepticism-dismay/>

As the 2011 redistricting cycle came to an end, media headlines captured the stark consequences for communities of color around the country. The 10-year exercise of redrawing district lines based on new census data had been co-opted and corrupted –yet again and with fresh intensity–by political interests determined to protect and expand their power at the expense of already underrepresented and marginalized groups.

At a time when philanthropy was gradually stepping up its commitments to and investments in communities of color, the results of the 2011 redistricting cycle became a spark for action by many funders. Here was an example of structural and systemic racism at work in ways that clearly undermined the voice and agency of people of color across the country. And here was an opportunity to rally philanthropy to support reforms, litigation, and organizing to make sure the next redistricting cycle would yield a fairer outcome.

This case study tells the story of how philanthropy invested an unprecedented amount of resources in redistricting before and during the 2021–22 redistricting cycle. The funders supported community partners to achieve fairer maps in many states, while helping to shift the conversation about redistricting—traditionally focused solely on the partisan horse race—to instead emphasize elevating racial equity and increasing representation for communities of color. The funders and their partners also succeeded in supporting community-based groups to build their capacity and skills to work on redistricting, voting rights, and related issues on an ongoing, year-to-year basis.

Gerrymandering still resulted in unfair maps in many places in the 2021–22 go-round, but philanthropy’s investments helped deliver important wins for communities and states across the country. In this case study, we share how the funders came together, what they achieved through their support for grassroots and national nonprofits, and where their work is headed now.



Prentiss Haney, Co-Executive Director of Ohio Organizing Collaborative, speaks at a protest demanding fair districts. Provided by Ohio Organizing Collaborative.

Explainer: How Gerrymandering Affects Democracy and Reduces Power for Communities of Color

U.S. politicians have used so-called “gerrymandering” since the 1800s to draw election districts in ways that boost their chances of re-election, increase their parties’ chances of gaining or holding onto power, and marginalize Black voters and other communities of color.

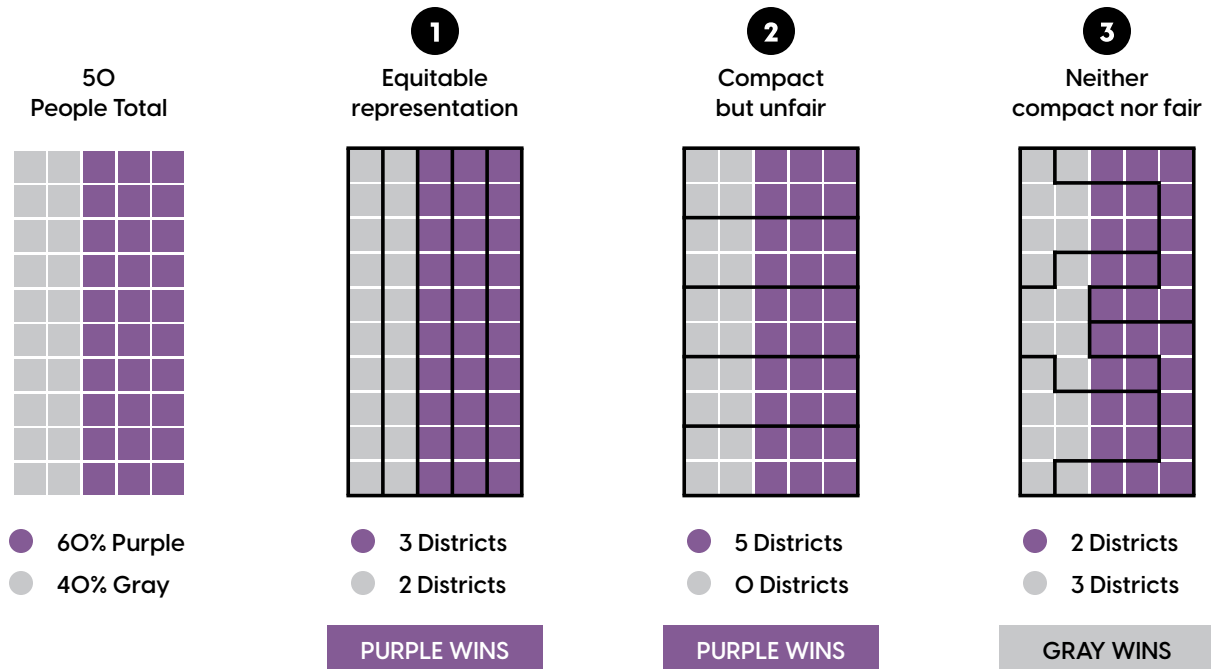
Gerrymandering is designed to *advantage* people already in power by allowing them to choose their voters, rather than having a more representative population of voters choose them. As a result, the practice generally *disadvantages* already underrepresented groups of voters, including young people and people of color. Gerrymandering allows politicians to distribute these and other groups within and across districts in ways that diminish their voting power.

“Partisan gerrymanders” are those designed to benefit a political party. Racial gerrymanders occur when politicians dilute the representation and power of Black, Latino, Asian American and Native American voters. Both in the U.S. Congress and across the country, racially gerrymandered, unrepresentative legislatures have proven a significant barrier to positive action on racial justice and other issues that are priorities for foundations across the country, including health equity, climate and the environment, education, and more.

Gerrymandering also contributes to political polarization and extremism. To the extent that elected officials are able to create politically homogeneous districts of voters who are already likely to support them, then they have little incentive to try to appeal to a broader base of the population. As a result, their positions on issues are likely to harden, they avoid compromise, and they are more likely to embrace oppositional tactics that contribute to gridlock and government dysfunction.

GERRYMANDERING, EXPLAINED

Three different ways to divide 50 people into five districts

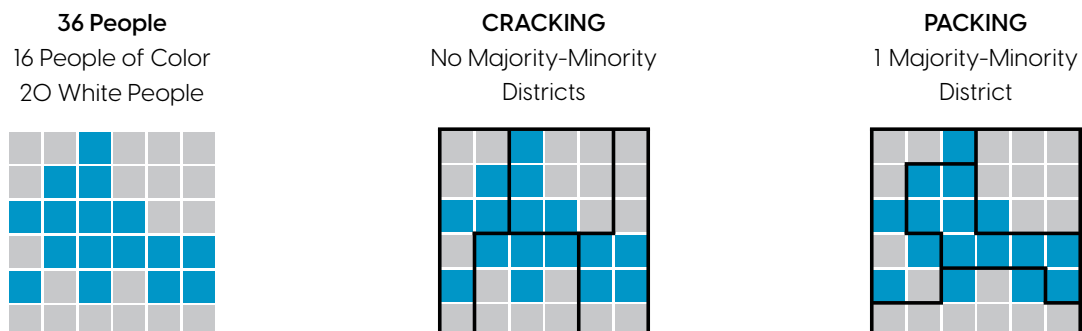


Derived from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/01/this-is-the-best-explanation-of-gerrymandering-you-will-ever-see/>; Christopher Ingraham, adapted from Stephen Nass

REPRESENTATION FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR

The impact of "cracking" and "packing" on majority-minority districts

In gerrymandering, "cracking" refers to the practice of splitting up people of color into many different districts to dilute their power. "Packing," on the other hand, means placing as many voters of color as possible into one district, again as a means of assuring that they have less power and influence compared to a fairer distribution of the population across multiple districts.



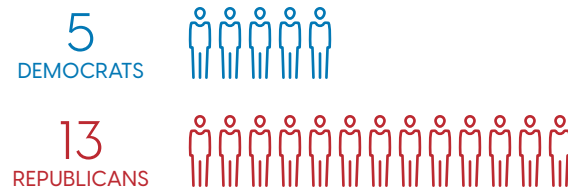
Case Study: Gerrymandering in Pennsylvania

While FRR supports nonpartisan, non-political efforts to advance fairer maps without regard to partisan outcomes, recent elections in Pennsylvania reveal how partisan gerrymandering can subvert the will of the electorate. In 2012, 50 percent of Pennsylvania voters voted for a Democratic House candidate, and 49 percent of voters voted for a Republican House candidate.

Equal representation in Congress would have looked like this:



After the 2012 election, PA's congressional delegation actually looked like this:



On January 22, 2018, the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court set a new standard against partisan gerrymanders. After the 2018 election, Pennsylvania's congressional delegation looked like this:



In the 2021–22 reapportionment process, Pennsylvania lost one congressional seat. In 2022, 52 percent of Pennsylvania voters voted for a Democratic House candidate, and 48 percent of voters voted for a Republican House candidate. Because of fair redistricting, PA's congressional delegation looks like this:



How It All Started: The Origins of a Funder Collaborative

It was fall 2013 when a group of about two dozen funders started meeting by phone to talk about the next redistricting cycle following the 2020 U.S. Census. A common motivation for the funders was their alarm about the extreme gerrymandering that occurred in the 2011 redistricting cycle. Another shared concern was the impact of the June 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Shelby v. Holder*, which eliminated key voting rights protections for people of color in states with a history of racist voter suppression tactics.

The expectation was that the *Shelby* decision would clear the way for states to use the 2021-22 redistricting process to further dilute the voting power of communities of color. Indeed, several states, including Texas and North Carolina, immediately used the *Shelby* decision to draw new gerrymandered maps and defend existing unfair maps, while also passing legislation to restrict voting rights for people of color and others.

An early result of the funder conversations was a December 2013 convening in Washington, DC, where funders, academics, and nonprofit leaders reviewed key issues and concerns about redistricting, along with possible solutions. Over the following 12 months, several lead funders⁶ co-hosted two more convenings on the issue.

Gary Bass, who was serving as executive director with the Bauman Foundation at the time (he is now executive director emeritus), said he was encouraged by funder interest in the early convenings. “First we had 60 people, then 75 for the next one, and then 100,” he said. “It became increasingly clear early on that people recognized there was a problem and that this was a consequential issue for democracy and representation.”

⁶ Hosts and organizers of the early convenings included the Bauman Foundation, Ford Foundation, Joyce Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Proteus Fund and Rockefeller Brothers Fund, with support from the Funders’ Committee for Civic Participation.

At the same time, Bass said the early convenings revealed a lack of common ground when it came to precisely why funders were interested in redistricting, as well as possible solutions they might support. Some funders, he recalled, viewed the issue through the lens of government accountability and transparency; others were concerned about the impact of gerrymandering on underrepresented communities, primarily people of color; others (especially state and regional funders) saw their priority issues, such as health care or education reforms, getting roadblocked again and again by out-of-balance and unrepresentative state legislatures. Still other funders were interested in redistricting because of its impact on their broader ideological (e.g., progressive or conservative) policy agendas.

Similarly, funders joined the conversation with a varied list of hoped-for solutions. Activities that funders initially wanted to support included: stepped-up litigation and legal work on redistricting; grassroots organizing and public education; federal legislation; and the creation of independent redistricting commissions in more states to remove responsibility for redistricting from the hands of elected leaders. Many funders wanted to embrace a one-size-fits-all approach for how states should approach redistricting, relying on the expertise of national organizations and redistricting experts. Others believed that redistricting is ultimately a state-based activity and requires strategies and actions that fit the unique considerations of each state.

The core funders initially formed a collaborative they called the Redistricting Reform Project. Between 2013 and 2015, they collectively supported case studies of successful state reform efforts, along with opinion polling aimed at finding messages that could advance public understanding of the issue and create more support for reforms. A top concern from the start was the lack of knowledge about redistricting and the harmful effects of racial gerrymandering among the general public, community and nonprofit leaders, and the media.

Agreeing on the Work

Building on growing funder interest, in 2015 the Redistricting Reform Project hired Cathy Duvall, an organizing expert and former Sierra Club political director, to help craft a plan for stepped-up philanthropic engagement in redistricting ahead of the 2021-22 cycle. By early 2017, Duvall and an “implementation committee” of early funders had developed and shared a five-part plan of action based on extensive outreach to philanthropy, nonprofit and academic leaders.

Duvall said uniting the funders around an aligned plan (the “how” of the work) meant setting aside any differences on the “why.” “My focus at the beginning was that we don’t all have to agree on the reason we are here. We need to agree on *the work*, and the work is going to be the same no matter what brought you to this table,” Duvall said.

At the outset, agreeing on the work meant agreeing on what types of organizations philanthropy should support to lead it. Whereas in the past redistricting had been an important focus for groups in the democracy and “good government” spaces (such as Common Cause and the League of Women Voters), some funders wanted to prioritize groups working on racial equity and civil rights, given that communities of color pay the biggest price (in terms of diminished power and representation) because of gerrymandering.

As the 2021–22 redistricting cycle approached, the funders shifted from an initial emphasis on achieving redistricting reforms—including ballot measures and other efforts to change the rules around redistricting in ways that could achieve fairer representation. Their plan of action ultimately centered on supporting grassroots groups and statewide networks to produce and promote fairer maps that would deliver power for communities of color whose voice and votes had been diluted because of gerrymandering and other barriers. Over time, the funders renamed their collaborative to reflect the strategy shift; it was now called Fair Representation in Redistricting (FRR). *(For more on FRR’s racial equity focus, see page 22.)*

Connecting Redistricting and the 2020 Census

At the same time that the FRR initiative was refining its strategies and attracting new funders for the 2021-22 redistricting cycle, a bigger philanthropic table was convening and driving resources to organizations working to ensure a fair and accurate 2020 U.S. Census. Ultimately, the Democracy Funders Collaborative Census Subgroup raised \$118 million in national philanthropic funding to support more than 265 organizations working to increase census participation among historically undercounted communities, among other activities.⁷

Members of the Census Subgroup included many of the core FRR funders. In addition, FRR and the census table were engaged in many similar activities, including convenings, the creation of a national pooled fund, and support for capacity-building and technical assistance for groups. “Many of us started working on the census because we wanted to make sure everyone was counted. Now we were turning to making sure everyone counts,” explained Bass, who chaired both efforts.

However, funders regularly observed that securing funder engagement in census-related work was significantly easier than it was for redistricting. In fact, some of the largest funders of census work in the 2020 cycle ended up not supporting redistricting in a significant way.

“It wasn’t always an easy lift getting funders on board for redistricting because of the perception that it’s too partisan and political,” said Duvall. In response, FRR engaged in a determined recruitment effort emphasizing the power of equal voice and representation for communities of color (see page 20 for more on what worked in funder recruitment). “That made it a little easier, and folks seemed to respond when we talked about community voice and public policy,” Duvall said.

7 For more on philanthropy’s investments in the 2020 Census, see William H. Woodwell, Jr., *Philanthropy and the 2020 Census: Stories and Lessons from an Unprecedented Funder Collaborative*, Democracy Funders Collaborative Census Subgroup. <https://funderscommittee.org/philanthropy-and-the-2020-census-report/>

FRR also differed in important ways from the Census Subgroup in its structure and design. While the census effort created a shared national table for funders and movement groups, FRR relied on its expert staff and state and regional funders to maintain communications with grassroots and field organizations and recommend projects and groups for funding.



Musician John Legend speaking at an Ohio Organizing Collaborative event. Provided by Ohio Organizing Collaborative.



A Washington, DC rally supporting fair districts as the Supreme Court considers *Allen v. Milligan*. Provided by State Voices.



Southern Echo and partners lead a community redistricting training in Mississippi. Provided by Southern Echo.



Provided by Houston in Action.

Analysis: How FRR Works

The funder collaborative Fair Representation in Redistricting embarked on the 2021–22 redistricting process with three broad goals for the work it intended to support:

- 1 Draw maps that fairly represent communities
- 2 Promote fair representation by ensuring total population is included when districts are drawn⁸
- 3 Ensure that traditionally underrepresented communities have a voice in the process

FRR's Redistricting Advisory Committee (RAC)⁹ of funders sets overall strategy for the initiative and recommends grants from a pooled fund at New Venture Fund, a funder intermediary based in Washington, DC. FRR staff recommend grants to the RAC based on consultations with field leaders and state and local funders.

During the 2021–22 cycle, FRR's grants focused on supporting statewide tables and grassroots groups working in 14 priority states. FRR also made smaller investments in nine additional states where limited, strategic funding from FRR could help close gaps or accelerate efforts supported by local, state and regional funders. FRR supported a range of other activities as well, including redistricting litigation, technical assistance for grantees on communications and other priorities, and the creation of the Redistricting Data Hub to provide broader public access to datasets and mapping tools so groups could engage more actively in the redistricting process. (See page 30 for more on FRR's diverse portfolio of investments.)

In 2022, FRR developed a renewed Plan of Action to continue its support for litigation, redistricting reforms and other activities for six years (2023–28). (See page 62 for more on the plan.) In addition to grantmaking from a pooled fund, FRR also works with participating funders to ensure that their direct redistricting grants are aligned with the broader plan of action for the collaborative.

8 FRR adopted this goal in response to proposals aimed at excluding specific populations—including undocumented residents, unregistered voters or those ineligible to vote, and incarcerated individuals—from population counts used to draw district lines.

9 For a list of RAC members active during the 2021–22 redistricting cycle, see Appendix 2.

Building a Bigger Table: What Funders Valued About FRR's Work and Approach

As the FRR initiative evolved, the participating funders and FRR staff engaged in deliberate and strategic efforts to attract more colleagues across philanthropy to the work. Through convenings, webinars, funder briefings, materials, a listserv and other activities, FRR invited diverse funders to join the table and do their part to ensure a fairer redistricting process.

In interviews for this case study, funders highlighted seven key factors that drove their decisions to get involved in redistricting and support FRR's work. Here's what funders valued most about FRR and its approach:

- A "Bigger Tent" Philosophy About Philanthropic Engagement
- A Determined Focus on Racial Equity
- An Easy Pathway to Support Fair Redistricting
- Helpful Information and Guidance on Legal, Political Issues
- A Strategic Emphasis on the Grassroots and the States
- A Powerful Mix of Funded Activities
- A Community of Like-Minded Funders

A "Bigger Tent" Philosophy About Philanthropic Engagement

To the extent that philanthropy was engaged during prior redistricting cycles, it was mostly "democracy" funders that got involved—national and regional funders whose program priorities included a focus on democracy, voting and related issues. But as the 2021-22 cycle approached, FRR funders and staff agreed they needed to expand the table to include a more diverse assortment of funders whose work and missions are affected by extreme gerrymandering, even if those funders didn't fully appreciate the connection. Consequently, FRR funders and staff cast a wide net in inviting colleagues to webinars and other events, and they appeared before foundation affinity groups such as Grantmakers in Health to describe how an unfair redistricting process can stifle progress on grantmakers' priority issues.

FRR also partnered with the Funders' Committee on Civic Participation (FCCP) to create a redistricting listserv and develop a "funder toolkit" on redistricting. In addition, FRR and participating funders supported and commissioned other redistricting resources for philanthropy, including a series of fact sheets and articles created by organizations such as the Center for American Progress, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and others on how gerrymandering affects important topics from racial equity and children's issues to gun violence and the environment. FCCP became an important partner in disseminating these and other resources to a broad group of funders.¹⁰

"Overall, FRR was very intentional about creating a bigger-tent coalition that could speak to all the ways in which the redistricting process impacts daily life for people, and the result was a table with a good mix of regional, state, and national funders and funders with varying issue priorities," said Daniella Flores, program officer with Wellspring Philanthropic Fund. "It was a lot of unique perspectives and a lot of good sharing across vantage points."



“[T]he census, redistricting and voting all are about one thing: protecting and strengthening democracy. It is one continuous process, and groups need our support to tie it all together and stand up for their communities.”

—Sue Van, President and CEO,
Wallace H. Coulter Foundation

Local and state funders in particular emphasized the value of sitting at a national table with colleagues who could help direct resources and attention to work in their geographic areas. "Having that table allowed me to have pointed conversations with national and regional funders about the great things our grantees were doing," said Sorien Schmidt, senior program officer with the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, which focuses its grantmaking on North Carolina.

¹⁰ Many of the resources developed for philanthropy for the 2021–22 redistricting cycle are archived at the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation (FCCP) and its redistricting web page: <https://funderscommittee.org/redistricting/>

John Mitterholzer, program director for climate and environmental justice with the Gund Foundation in Ohio, echoed Schmidt's comments. He noted that FRR's Cathy Duvall specifically asked him to participate in FRR so he could help other funders understand what was happening in Ohio, a historically gerrymandered state. "There was no way to get the resources we needed to implement a full redistricting plan without FRR and those national funders," he said.

A Determined Focus on Racial Equity

As FRR began drawing in more funders, and especially in the wake of the racial reckoning brought about by the 2020 murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black Americans, the funders coalesced around a strategy emphasizing racial equity.

"It's important to remember that the world changed in the course of this work," Duvall said of FRR's adoption of a racial equity lens. "Over time there was a conscious and strategic decision that this work was about community voice and representation. We wanted to build the power and capabilities of communities of color across the country to get involved and lift up their voices and protect their interests in a process that had closed them out for so long—and that resonated with many funders."

Among the foundations for which FRR's focus on racial equity was a key draw was The JPB Foundation in New York. Angela Cheng, senior program officer with the foundation, said JPB wasn't involved in the early funder conversations and convenings on redistricting for the 2020 cycle because of the perception that the issue was overly complicated and technical. However, as the foundation stepped up investments in the 2020 census, Cheng and her colleagues began to see how the census and redistricting



DeSoto County, Mississippi community members gather for a public hearing to discuss plans for new district maps. Provided by One Voice.

were “inseparable,” and how achieving fairer maps was critical to JPB’s broader focus on empowering communities of color and people living in poverty.

“We started reflecting on how gerrymandered districts are a huge problem when it comes to communities of color being able to elect people who truly represent their interests,” said Cheng. “And in FRR we saw there was a thoughtful and strategic approach to investing in redistricting in a way that matched our values and interests.” The JPB Foundation invited a proposal from FRR in 2019 and made its first grant to the collaborative in 2020; the foundation continues to support FRR’s work today.



“...in FRR we saw there was a thoughtful and strategic approach to investing in redistricting in a way that matched our values and interests.”

—Angela Cheng, Senior Program Officer,
The JPB Foundation

An Easy Pathway to Support Fair Redistricting

Funders regularly commented on how sitting at the FRR table and supporting the FRR pooled fund at New Venture Fund made it relatively easy for them to learn about and invest in redistricting. In many cases, funders said they likely would not have gotten involved in the issue without FRR. The reason: many of the funders said they simply did not have the staff or the capacity to identify the right grantees across numerous states, let alone the ability to navigate where funds were needed most and how to direct grants to varying strategies from litigation to organizing to communications.

That’s where FRR’s expert staff came in. In addition to FRR Manager Cathy Duvall, the team included Karen Narasaki, a longtime national civil rights leader and voting rights expert who also played a leadership role with the national funder collaborative working to promote a fair and accurate 2020 census; Vivek Malhotra, a former Ford Foundation program director and ACLU leader; and Amy Dominguez-Arms, a former James Irvine Foundation vice president of programs and philanthropic leader in advancing

redistricting reforms in California.¹¹ Duvall, Malhotra and Narasaki divvied up the FRR priority states and other areas of work, including litigation, communications, national technical assistance and data accessibility. They made grant recommendations based on their consultations with field leaders and funders in their states. Dominguez-Arms worked with funders to build support for FRR programming.

Pam Allen, senior program officer with the Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund, said the San Francisco-based family foundation initially became involved in redistricting through its support for the nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) arm of a redistricting effort led by former U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr. The foundation also was supporting the League of Women Voters and other longtime democracy grantees to work on the issue.

Allen said the foundation was subsequently attracted to FRR's work because it was so focused on what was happening at the grassroots. "We are a small-staffed organization and are limited in what we can do in the states," she said. "FRR's ability to support groups working locally and statewide and supporting groups to coordinate their work was key."

Helpful Information and Guidance on Legal, Compliance Issues

An early focus in FRR's funder outreach was helping the staffs and boards of various foundations understand that redistricting is a nonpartisan, non-political activity and that investing in this work is entirely appropriate and legal for private funders, community foundations and others.

"That was a big barrier for folks," said Cathy Duvall of the perception that redistricting is a political, partisan process and foundations should steer clear. "We made every effort to reframe it by saying this isn't about Democrats and Republicans; it's about fair representation and what that means for the functioning of democracy and for the prospects for real action on issues funders care about." Duvall added that communities

¹¹ Dominguez-Arms left the team in 2022. Ellyson Perkins, with more than 15 years of experience working with funders, took over Dominguez-Arms' role in 2023.

"need to be able to be at the table" to change redistricting from a partisan exercise where politicians with inherent conflicts of interest are picking who their voters are going to be.

Starting at the funders' earliest convenings in 2013 and 2014, experts walked participants through the many legal avenues foundations can follow to promote a fairer redistricting process, from investing in research and litigation to supporting community engagement in the process. The Bauman Foundation, on behalf of the emerging funder collaborative, commissioned a 2013 memo from Marcus Owens, former director of the IRS Exempt Organizations Division, and colleague Elizabeth Grossman, both of the law firm Caplin & Drysdale, highlighting the types of redistricting activities that private foundations could fund.¹² In 2021, FRR asked James Joseph, Bridget Weiss, and Declan Tansey of the law firm Arnold & Porter to prepare a similar but updated memo on the types of redistricting activities private foundations and their grantees can engage in or fund consistent with tax law.¹³

Gary Bass recalled that he and Sanjiv Rao, the former FRR co-chair who led the Ford Foundation's work on redistricting until 2021, spent considerable time and effort in the early briefings underscoring for other funders that investing in redistricting is nonpartisan work and is permissible. "The argument was that if we engage we at least have a shot at reimagining redistricting as it was always intended: as a community-centered activity and a critical part of the democratic process," Bass said.



12 Marcus S. Owens & Elizabeth A. Grossman of Caplin & Drysdale, "Redistricting Activities Fundable by Private Foundations," a December 4, 2013 memo to the Bauman Foundation, is available here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c-9hg63N3LJgBm4OlyW7tty_jsHOzSoT/view?usp=sharing

13 James P. Joseph, Bridget M. Weiss, & Declan Tansey of Arnold & Porter, "Private Foundation Support for Redistricting Activities," a June 1, 2021 memo to Fair Representation in Redistricting, is available here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QkGh55YtJELBrJeTqB7Pcr-ALLuEnlY/view>

Later, in cooperation with the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation, FRR created talking points and other materials for foundation boards and leadership on the various roles that foundations can play in ensuring a fair and transparent redistricting process.

FRR's messaging and outreach clearly had an impact in making funders more comfortable joining the effort. Giridhar Mallya, senior policy officer with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), said the foundation supported the FRR pooled fund for a variety of reasons, including its growing understanding of how gerrymandering in the states was blocking progress on critical health issues at the heart of its mission (*see page 53 for more on RWJF's work on redistricting*). FRR's due diligence and the resources it created on legal issues for foundations participating in redistricting was key in convincing RWJF leaders and colleagues that this was a smart investment, Mallya said.

"Having a well-conceived pooled funding vehicle and knowing that FRR had done a strong legal review of how funders could support this work was a big help and incentive," Mallya said.

A Strategic Emphasis on the Grassroots and the States

As the redistricting cycle approached, FRR decided it would use its pooled fund at New Venture Fund to direct philanthropic support to community groups and collaboratives working in 14 priority states.¹⁴ The FRR funders chose the states because of a number of factors, including the extent of past gerrymandering in the states, the population of historically underrepresented communities, and the presence of strong organizations or coalitions that could lead the work. In addition, FRR sought to ensure that states that had instituted reforms to make the process fairer were able to defend those reforms against attacks and ensure the reforms' effective implementation. Another key consideration was focusing in part on states that lost voting rights protections for underrepresented populations due to the 2013 *Shelby* decision, which meant a notable focus on states in the South.

¹⁴ Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Bass said the focus on states with a legacy of gerrymandering and voter suppression was proof of the funders' intent to try and tackle entrenched issues around racism and power. "By focusing on the most gerrymandered states, it meant we were focusing on places where it was going to take time and effort and ongoing investment to create meaningful change," he said. "It didn't set us up for immediate success, but this was a group of funders that really wanted to get at the roots of the problem."

Carrie Davis, democracy program director with the Joyce Foundation, said FRR's focus on what was happening in the states was an important shift for philanthropy—and it matched Joyce's approach to investing in policy work across the foundation's six priority Midwestern states (*see page 55 for more on the Joyce Foundation's work on redistricting*).

"In previous cycles, there was a major focus on supporting national groups doing redistricting work, but this time we didn't want to be so top-heavy," Davis said. "Philanthropy didn't ignore the national groups, but there was a determined effort in this cycle to drive resources to the grassroots and build infrastructure in the states."

Kiki Jamieson, president of The Fund for New Jersey, echoed Davis's comments on the importance of investing in the grassroots.¹⁵ Jamieson said one of the key lessons from the 2011 redistricting cycle was the need to invest in the "public components" of the redistricting process.



Provided by Ohio Organizing Collaborative.

¹⁵ In June 2023, The Fund for New Jersey announced that Jamieson would be stepping down as president later in the year.

"Most of this work in the past has been about exerting pressure on processes that were happening behind closed doors," Jamieson said. "This time we saw a real opportunity to organize and resource community groups to advocate to make redistricting a more public and transparent process. Residents were supported to draw maps delineating their communities of interest, to testify at public hearings, and spread the word to their neighbors about the connections between redistricting and representation—all activities to make the process more accountable."



“This time we saw a real opportunity to organize and resource community groups to advocate to make redistricting a more public and transparent process.”

—Kiki Jamieson, President,
The Fund for New Jersey

As more funders joined the effort, FRR decided to provide resources and support to community groups in nine additional states.¹⁶ These were states where the FRR staff and the RAC decided they could make comparatively small investments (relative to the 14 priority states) to close campaign budget gaps and help raise matching funds from state and local funders. In many instances, FRR's focus on a select group of states was made possible because local and state funders were making their own direct investments in other states during the 2021–22 redistricting cycle.



Common Cause members in Ohio rally for fair districts. Provided by Paul Becker/Becker1999.

16 Alaska, Nevada, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, South Carolina, Tennessee and Washington.

A Powerful Mix of Funded Activities

Beyond its grantmaking to states, FRR set out to direct capacity-building support and other resources to groups to support their efforts to create and promote fairer district maps (*see more on page 30*). Funders said they appreciated FRR's strategic mix of investments and technical assistance offerings, with some pointing to specific activities as key drivers of their support and engagement.

FRR's creation of the Redistricting Data Hub (RDH) was mentioned by several funders as a cornerstone contribution (*see page 33 for more on the RDH*). People and groups across the country used data and mapping tools from the RDH to develop and propose fairer, more representative maps for their communities that they could put in front of policymakers and commissions charged with approving the final maps.

Sara Kay, chief executive officer of the Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust, said the RDH provided the New York-based family foundation with a good pathway for getting involved in redistricting. "At the time, we funded a lot of work on data and data science issues and how they relate to policy and democracy," Kay said, noting that the trust was a key supporter of a group of data scientists and other experts focused on data quality issues related to the 2020 Census. "The idea of a one-stop shop where users can find software and data to get involved in redistricting was very appealing to us."

Other funders said they appreciated FRR's investments in communications and messaging around redistricting. "It was a small portion of FRR's overall work, but we liked how they targeted consulting support for groups to develop narrative frames and engage with local media on redistricting in a way where they could talk about it as apolitical and counter partisan messaging," said Daniella Flores of Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

Still other funders zeroed in on FRR's investments for litigation as an essential contribution. (*See page 39 for more on FRR's support for litigation.*)

FRR's Technical Assistance and Other Resources

In addition to its grantmaking in the states, FRR invested in technical assistance and other supports for organizations working on redistricting at all levels.



Redistricting Data Hub (RDH): FRR launched this [resource](#) in 2020 to bring together many disparate redistricting datasets and tools in a central hub accessible for anyone who was interested in drawing and evaluating fair maps and engaging more actively in the process. *(For more on the RDH, see page 33.)*

“Redistricting & You”: This [website](#) was developed by the Center for Urban Research at the City University of New York to help members of the public, journalists, and others learn more about the processes and data used to draw maps in their localities and states.

“All About Redistricting”: FRR supported All About Redistricting, a comprehensive online [resource](#) on the redistricting process in all 50 states and redistricting-related litigation; the site also includes searchable maps.

Legal technical assistance and litigation support. During the mapping stage of redistricting, FRR funded seven national and regional legal organizations to serve as resources to state-based community organizing groups to inform their engagement in redistricting. FRR also supported redistricting litigation undertaken by a collaborative of national civil rights legal groups convened by the State Infrastructure Fund (SIF) at NEO Philanthropy. SIF is a separate donor collaborative (and FRR steering committee member) created in 2010 to support voting rights work in the states. (See page 39 for more on FRR's support for litigation.)

Organizing assistance and coordination. The initiative also supported national organizing groups to provide trainings, materials, and other support to grassroots groups to help them engage community members effectively in state and local redistricting processes. One product of this work was the [Coalition Hub for Advancing Redistricting & Grassroots Engagement \(CHARGE\)](#), which provided a one-stop shop for information and training. CHARGE recently released an [assessment](#) of the 2021–22 redistricting cycle in every state.

Digital technical assistance. FRR supported a digital organizing expert to offer digital trainings and one-on-one technical assistance to state-based groups.

Messaging research and communications support. FRR invested in communications research, including in Spanish and several Asian languages, to lift up effective messages the field used to engage constituencies in redistricting issues and involve a broader audience in caring about fair and equitable representation, with an emphasis on Southern states. FRR also provided resources to grassroots groups directly to boost their communications capacity.

Briefing materials for philanthropy. FRR supported the creation of reports and other materials to help funders and stakeholders connect redistricting to other priority issues, such as public health, climate and environmental justice, and children's issues. These materials are archived on the [FRR website](#) and were shared widely with national, state and local funders.

A Community of Like-Minded Funders

For many participating funders, a key benefit of supporting and engaging with FRR was the opportunity to work alongside colleagues across philanthropy who shared their commitment to upholding an essential pillar of U.S. democracy. FRR's Redistricting Advisory Committee (RAC), the de facto steering committee for the initiative, included representatives of 19 foundations who met monthly throughout the 2021–22 redistricting cycle. The RAC also hosted three to four funder briefings and other activities each year.

Leslie Dorosin, executive director of the Grove Foundation, sat on the RAC and said it was a “wonderful opportunity” to learn what was happening across the country and share news and ideas with colleagues. “I loved the RAC process and I feel it was incredibly valuable being at those meetings and learning from other funders and FRR’s expert staff,” she said.



“I loved the RAC process and I feel it was incredibly valuable being at those meetings and learning from other funders and FRR’s expert staff.”

—Leslie Dorosin, Executive Director,
Grove Foundation

Sara Kay of the Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust said the RAC provided a “safe space” for her and her colleagues to learn more about redistricting. “This can be a really difficult issue, and to have that space for learning and sharing was invaluable.”



Provided by The Ordinary People Society.

About the Redistricting Data Hub (RDH)

By Kathleen Donovan, RDH Director



The Redistricting Data Hub was a signature initiative supported by FRR to support broader engagement in redistricting and advance the cause of fair maps across the country. John O’Neill led the team that created and ran the RDH throughout the 2021–22 redistricting cycle. Kathleen Donovan, who stepped in as RDH director in 2023, shared her reflections on its work and impact for this case study.

The Origins of the RDH

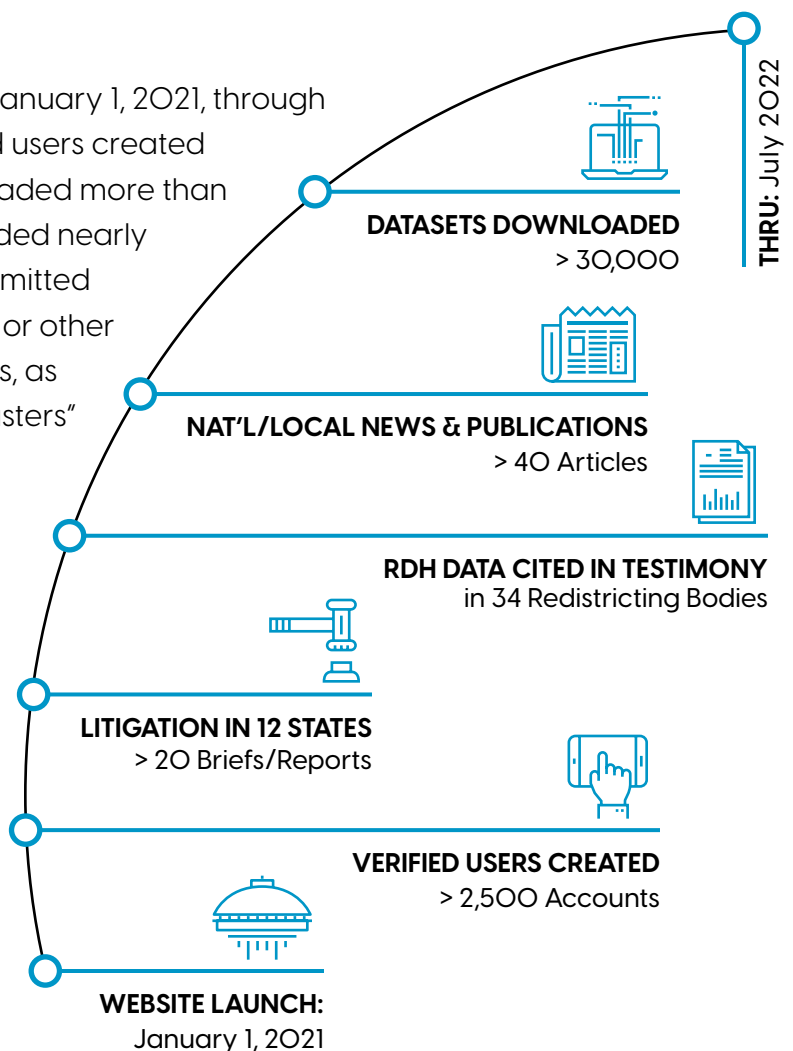
Redistricting is a data-intensive process. Meaningful participation requires access to data and technical skills that are beyond most people’s capabilities. Coming into the 2021-22 redistricting cycle, community groups and voting rights organizations made clear to funders that they wanted their staff to focus their time on analyzing maps and educating their communities, instead of tracking down and cleaning up data. FRR funded and created the nonpartisan RDH to support these groups and the public by making all of the necessary data to identify gerrymanders and propose legally compliant alternative maps publicly available.

How the RDH Team Did Its Work

The RDH created partnerships with academic and volunteer data collection groups, contracted with experts and other data vendors, and used its own data team to fill remaining gaps, all while processing the data for easy use and providing extensive documentation. The RDH team stayed in close contact with groups on the ground throughout the cycle, in order to be responsive to their data needs. When the U.S. Census Bureau announced there would be a month-long delay between the release of the 2020 data for redistricting in its cumbersome legacy format and its ready-to-use tabulated format, the RDH stepped in to tabulate the legacy data and make it publicly available within three days of its release. The RDH also established relationships across the states so the team could obtain official maps as they were enacted and make them readily available.

Engagement and Reach

From the launch of the website on January 1, 2021, through July 2022, more than 2,500 verified users created accounts with the RDH and downloaded more than 30,000 datasets. These users included nearly half of all expert witnesses who submitted more than 20 briefs, expert reports, or other testimony during litigation in 12 states, as well as three out of four “special masters” appointed by the courts to develop maps. Users also cited RDH data in testimony submitted to 34 official redistricting bodies, more than 40 articles in local and national news outlets, and in peer-reviewed publications. Users included many citizens and students seeking to engage with and understand their state legislative and congressional redistricting processes.



Additional RDH Activities and Support

Understanding that people would need technical support in addition to the data we provided, the RDH established a public help desk, and upheld a commitment to respond to all inquiries within one business day. The RDH staff fielded more than 450 inquiries during this time, ranging from questions about where to submit public testimony online to requests for custom datasets for litigation and other analysis. The RDH also provided support in the form of more than 50 trainings on a range of topics related to drawing and analyzing maps. Last but not least, the RDH team collaborated with the Prison Policy Initiative to produce reports on where incarcerated people come from in 12 states, an analysis that received nationwide press and that supported the ongoing campaign to eliminate prison gerrymandering (*for more on prison gerrymandering, see page 64*).

Assessing FRR's Impact

Participating funders said FRR had a clear impact in lifting up the importance of broad participation in redistricting and directing urgently needed resources to groups on the ground, especially those that are led by and that serve communities of color. Fueled by a growing funder focus on redistricting, there was an unprecedented increase in community organization involvement in this core democratic process during the 2021–22 redistricting cycle.

“It seems to me that FRR’s main impact was in raising significant sums for state groups representing historically marginalized communities. That’s a big win,” said Giridhar Mallya of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Mallya added, “Grantees were able to shift the conversation about redistricting beyond a political issue to something that impacts real people’s lives. And in some places there was meaningful impact on what the maps look like and on keeping not-so-equitable maps from moving forward.”



“It seems to me that FRR’s main impact was in raising significant sums for state groups representing historically marginalized communities. That’s a big win.”

—Giridhar Mallya, Senior Policy Officer,
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

In all, FRR brought together more than 70 funders and raised more than \$57 million. These funds supported more than 325 grantees (when counting regranteeing by state groups), with a focus on groups that organized communities of color to engage as active participants in the redistricting process. More than half of the \$57 million went directly to state and community groups.

FRR used its pooled fund at New Venture Fund to direct philanthropic support to community groups and collaboratives working in 23 priority states where it saw the most opportunity for impact or the greatest challenges to fair representation. Funders also provide direct grants to grantees recommended by FRR.

Six Areas of Impact

Interviews for this report highlighted impacts for FRR in six main areas:

- 1** **Fairer maps:** In a number of highly gerrymandered states, such as Michigan and Pennsylvania, the involvement of community-centered groups supported by FRR helped deliver fairer maps at all levels. While FRR and its grantee partners cannot claim broad or exclusive credit, they no doubt played a role in achieving what Nate Cohn of the *New York Times* called the "fairest (U.S.) House map" in 40 years, as well as fairer maps for local, state and congressional elections in many states.

Even in places like Ohio, where partisan gerrymandering still won out in the 2021-22 cycle, FRR and its partners helped ensure that community voices played an unprecedented role in the process, hopefully putting down a marker for future progress. According to John Mitterholzer with the Ohio-based George Gund Foundation, the data and mapping tools made available to nonprofits via FRR's support helped groups across the state submit more than 1,000 maps to the Ohio Redistricting Commission. The involvement of these groups in the process is widely believed to have influenced the Supreme Court of Ohio to repeatedly reject partisan maps created by the commission.

"Our grantees were able to do that because they had free access to trainings and they could have staff go out and train other Ohioans on how to use the tools and make fair maps," Mitterholzer said.

- 2** **An elevated focus on racial equity in redistricting:** Normally, the conversation about redistricting takes on a horse-race aspect, with a focus on which political party comes out on top. FRR's emphasis on racial equity meant state and local groups were receiving unprecedented resources to keep the focus on fair maps, and to organize and mobilize communities of color to engage in redistricting. Through these efforts, FRR helped ensure that people of color and other marginalized groups were able to: participate fully in this core democratic process; explain how rigged maps led to specific policy decisions harming their communities; achieve district maps that more fairly represented their communities; and build networks and capacity that will be critical to groups' ongoing civic participation and power-building efforts.

Funders and grantees alike said FRR helped shift the national dialogue on redistricting to include keeping communities of interest together¹⁷ and increasing representation for communities of color. Ethan Hamblin, senior network officer with the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, which supports organizations and networks focused on power building to advance racial equity across 11 Southern states, said he considers this “centering” of racial equity as one of FRR’s signature achievements.

“As a Southern funder, our partners are led by people of color and we are accountable to them to center racial equity as a priority across all of our investments,” Hamblin said. “We saw FRR’s work as an opportunity to be part of a national conversation on race and democracy and to help inform how other funders are thinking about racial equity and investing in the South.”



“It’s important for philanthropy to see redistricting, like the census, as a 10-year cycle and a critical building block—with census and voting rights—of achieving a participatory, multiracial democracy.”

—Gary Bass, FRR Co-chair and Executive Director Emeritus, Bauman Foundation

3 Improved skills and capabilities for grassroots nonprofits: By supporting a range of technical assistance offerings and resources, FRR helped advocates, organizers, and community leaders across the country strengthen their capacity for effective action on redistricting and other issues. The Redistricting Data Hub developed and supported by FRR (see *page 33 for more*) was widely considered a critical new resource, providing groups with the ability both to develop their own fair maps and to evaluate maps put forward by legislators, commissions and other parties.

¹⁷ In redistricting, a “community of interest” is a neighborhood, community, or group of people who have common policy concerns and would benefit from being maintained in a single district. Keeping communities of interest together is an important principle in fair redistricting. It can be especially helpful to communities that have been traditionally left out of the political process.

Carrie Davis of the Joyce Foundation said the availability of data tools through FRR was a game-changer for the 2021–22 cycle. “Making those tools available meant groups could put forward their maps, be part of the debate, and speak with authority on what constituted a fair map,” Davis said.

4

Stronger networks for civic engagement and democracy work: FRR encouraged and supported new collaborations among diverse organizations working in concert to represent and advance community interests in redistricting—building capacity and connections that will continue to serve organizations and their communities even beyond redistricting work.

“We didn’t win in a number of places, but the fact is that people were organized, groups were connected, and their voices were heard,” said Leslie Dorosin of the Grove Foundation. “And now that all of these people and groups were engaged in this process, it’s not a stretch to think they will stay involved not just in redistricting but in voting and census and everything else. It is all part of the continuum of civic engagement.”



North Carolinians from the state’s Sandhills region pack a Fayetteville #UniteNC Town Hall hosted by Common Cause NC. Provided by Common Cause NC.

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Indeed, an evaluation by the Equity Research Institute at University of Southern California's Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, the independent evaluator of FRR's work, showed strong engagement among state and local groups working on redistricting and related issues:

“FRR’s support of state-based convenors paired with technical assistance allowed for many more local and grassroots organizations to get involved in redistricting. As a result, there was an expanded presence of grassroots communities in the redistricting process—submitting community-of-interest maps, mobilizing to public hearings, providing public testimony, and calling and emailing legislators—as reported by interviewees, documented in evaluations, and covered in media outlets.”¹⁸

According to Javier Valdés, FRR co-chair and U.S. director of civic engagement and government with the Ford Foundation, “Because of FRR we now have a more cohesive ecosystem of groups thinking deeply about democracy issues and bringing a racial justice lens to this work.”

5

Expanded support for litigation:

FRR’s support for litigation has provided national and state-based groups with dedicated resources to challenge unfair and discriminatory maps.

“Litigation has always been underfunded and underappreciated by philanthropy as a critical piece of the puzzle on redistricting and other democracy issues,” said Erica Teasley Linnick, vice president of NEO Philanthropy and director of the State Infrastructure Fund (SIF),



“FRR’s ability to support groups working locally and statewide and to help coordinate their work was key.”

—Pam Allen, Senior Program Officer,
Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund

¹⁸ USC Equity Research Institute, “An Assessment of the Fair Representation in Redistricting Initiative: Key Themes Emerging from Interviews,” October 18, 2022.

which supports several national litigation groups working collaboratively on redistricting and other democracy issues. FRR, in coordination with SIF, supported many of the collaborative members' work on redistricting cases.

Linnick continued, "But I think there is a growing number of funders who realize we have to invest in these groups to make sure someone is minding the store and calling people out for illegal gerrymandering that results in people not having a fair and equal voice. FRR provided a vehicle for doing that."

In places like Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas, the hard work of FRR anchor grantees to monitor redistricting processes and outcomes, gather community testimonies, and identify communities of interest supported federal and state court litigation to challenge illegal racial gerrymanders by elected officials. Working closely with national voting rights groups, state and local groups won significant victories before federal district courts and state supreme courts.

Even the U.S. Supreme Court, which had been considered hostile to redistricting claims brought under the Voting Rights Act, ruled in June 2023 against a racial gerrymander undertaken by legislative leaders in Alabama in a case brought by FRR grantees. The Court affirmed a lower court's decision that the maps had unfairly denied Black voters a reasonable chance to elect a second representative of their choice. This decision has impacted other cases across the country relying on the Voting Rights Act.

In a separate 2023 case, the Supreme Court rejected a challenge from North Carolina lawmakers that would have given state legislatures unchecked power to set election rules and advance gerrymandered districts without any oversight or involvement from state courts.

In addition to these cases, there is significant ongoing litigation challenging maps drawn during the 2021-22 redistricting cycle. The Brennan Center for Justice, which tracks redistricting litigation, reports that as of June 2023, a total of 74 cases were filed challenging congressional and legislative maps in

27 states as racially discriminatory and/or partisan gerrymanders. Of these cases, 45 remained pending at either the trial or appellate levels.

"This redistricting cycle shows the power and importance of ongoing investments in litigation," said Linnick. "We had some important wins, but the Supreme Court and other courts are by no means done with this issue, and litigation groups need continuing support so they can stay in the fight."¹⁹

6 **An improved model for social change:** In the past, litigation was the primary redistricting activity supported by philanthropy. Nevertheless, litigators and legal groups still struggled to attract the resources they needed to pursue the full complement of cases that could have the broadest impact nationally and in the states. FRR's approach was to reimagine redistricting as a community-based, civic engagement activity led by state-based organizers. The idea was that these grassroots efforts would be carried out in consultation with litigators to make sure that on-the-ground groups would have the information and the resources they would need if they had to go to court to defend or advance their work.

Gary Bass referred to this model of combining grassroots organizing and civic education with litigation support as "a powerful one-two punch." "First, we saw a measurable increase in community engagement in the redistricting process, drawing a lot more public attention to map-drawing and related activities," he said. "And at the same time, we also saw the power of having litigators at the ready if the process proved to be unfair."

In an August 2023 article in *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Evan Milligan, a plaintiff in the Alabama Supreme Court case (mentioned above), and Janai Nelson, the head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, which was one of the litigators in the Alabama case, highlighted the importance of FRR and other funders supporting

¹⁹ Sure enough, as Linnick suggested, following the Supreme Court's June 2023 ruling, the Alabama legislature did not redraw its maps to create a second majority-Black district. As a result, the issue remained before the federal courts. It's a potent reminder that even when it seems an issue is decided, it may not be.

community organizing and litigation. As they wrote, "Through sustained investment in state and local redistricting efforts, and the protection of voting rights, philanthropy can help forge a future where opportunity is accessible to all, regardless of background or ZIP code. ... True transformative change takes time and smart, long-term investments."²⁰



Evan Milligan, plaintiff in *Allen v. Milligan*, at an event in Washington, DC while the Supreme Court prepares to hear oral arguments in his case. Provided by Alabama Values.

²⁰ <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/in-a-landmark-voting-case-philanthropy-and-nonprofits-were-crucial-players-now-we-need-to-do-more>

FRR Grantee Wins



Organizers at an event for “Power On The Line,” an organizing and public education campaign. Provided by Alabama Values.

ALABAMA

Groups in Alabama, led by Alabama Forward, launched a large-scale public education and organizing campaign called “Power on the Line” to help shape the narrative around racial gerrymandering as the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear oral arguments on the Alabama redistricting case, *Merrill v. Milligan*. The campaign centered around a call for fair maps and equitable representation and drew the support and active participation of allied organizations across the South, including from Louisiana, Georgia, and North Carolina, culminating in a series of “Democracy Day” events in Washington, DC. Centering the narratives of the individual plaintiffs in the litigation, the campaign attracted coverage in major national newspapers and national television news outlets. In June 2023, the high court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, striking down the racially gerrymandered map put forth by the Alabama legislature.

LOUISIANA

In Louisiana, the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice partnered with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice to train over 1,000 community leaders across the state on redistricting principles and requirements of the Voting Rights Act and how to determine communities of interest. They also hired three fellows to work with community leaders in targeted geographic areas to run trainings and support community mapping, and engaged an expert consultant to develop congressional and state legislative map proposals using sophisticated data analysis. These efforts ultimately persuaded the governor to support the coalition’s demands and helped lay the groundwork for litigation when the state legislature undermined their priorities. The partners embarked on similar activities focused on a number of priority local jurisdictions, successfully increasing Black representation.

FRR Grantee Wins

ARIZONA

In Arizona, the state's main civic engagement table coordinated by One Arizona launched a sophisticated public education campaign, together with the support of Progress Arizona, both to educate and engage communities in the redistricting process and to draw attention to the Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission's neglect of communities with diverse population concentrations and the failure to provide language access at public hearings. Ultimately, this effort pressured the commission to establish additional hearings in these communities, translate its materials into Spanish, and offer simultaneous language interpretation, resulting in a more inclusive process.

NEW MEXICO

In New Mexico, the FRR-supported People's Power, People's Maps campaign negotiated shared coalition-based "unity maps," reflecting the diverse interests of rural, Native, and communities of color, and then mobilized hundreds of community members to testify in support of the maps at redistricting hearings across the state. The campaign's map proposals were ultimately adopted by the state's Citizen Redistricting Committee, an advisory body, and sent to the state legislature, which incorporated the map proposals into new district lines at both the congressional and state legislative levels. It was a tremendous victory for a community-based coalition that operated under a new redistricting process for the first time.

PENNSYLVANIA

In Pennsylvania, FRR grantee Pennsylvania Voice and its partners led community trainings and mapping sessions in seven targeted counties with growing communities of color across the state. This work yielded more than 700 maps identifying communities of interest that the groups aggregated to develop proposed legislative maps. Those maps, in turn, ultimately shaped the official maps approved by Pennsylvania's Legislative Reapportionment Commission. The new maps survived a court challenge (thanks in part to Pennsylvania Voice's participation in the defense of the maps) and are widely believed to be significantly fairer than the state's prior maps.

FRR Grantee Wins

MONTANA

In Montana, the last state in the country to approve state legislative maps in the 2021–22 cycle, Montana Voices supported table partners to train community members on redistricting, develop a communications strategy on the redistricting process (including messaging, digital communications, and media approaches), and advocate with the Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission. Montana Voices and its partners were particularly pleased that state legislative maps maintained the state’s Indigenous majority districts, which was the top goal of the coalition. In addition, advocates worked with commissioners to address prison gerrymandering during the 2021–22 cycle. They also led public education and advocacy efforts to require the state Department of Corrections to improve collecting and reporting of data on incarcerated people in order to better address prison gerrymandering in the next cycle.

GEORGIA

In Georgia, the state’s Georgia Redistricting Alliance, comprised of over 15 diverse Asian, Black, Latino, and other community-based groups and coordinated by ProGeorgia, led a coordinated campaign together with Common Cause Georgia to get local jurisdictions in the state to pass model resolutions calling for a fair and transparent redistricting process and outlining a set of 10 principles for government accountability.

The resolution was passed by at least three jurisdictions, in a clear assertion of “home rule” authority over local redistricting interests, a major issue of contention under the state’s peculiar law requiring state legislative approval even for local county and school board maps.



Karuna Ramachandran, Redistricting Director for ProGeorgia (bottom row, right), with other organizers from the Georgia Redistricting Alliance. Provided by ProGeorgia.

Grantee Perspectives: How Philanthropy Helped—and What It Can Do Better

FRR supported organizers and advocates across the country in their efforts to make redistricting a fairer, more community-driven process in their states. Two of the statewide tables receiving FRR's support were the Ohio Organizing Collaborative and ProGeorgia.

In interviews for this case study, leaders of the two groups reflected on how philanthropy helped them and their statewide partners achieve their goals for the 2021–22 redistricting process, and what's needed now.

Karuna Ramachandran is Redistricting Director for ProGeorgia; **Prentiss Haney** is Co-Executive Director of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative.

Tell us a little bit about how your groups got involved in redistricting in this cycle?



Ramachandran: Our focus in Georgia was on creating space for Black and Brown communities to be part of a process that really has never centered communities of color. We focused on training people and groups to develop fairer maps and show up at the 14 hearings that happened around the state and be powerful advocates for their communities.

Haney: Gerrymandering in Ohio has created a rigged political system, so our focus was pretty much the same. We created the [Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission](#) to show elected officials that it's possible to get everyday residents engaged in drawing maps and creating fairer districts, and that meant we were prepared to go to court when elected leaders created some really unfair and illegal maps.



What did your engagement with FRR and philanthropy look like?

Haney: This was unlike any experience I have had with philanthropy. FRR actively reached out to our organization to encourage us to get involved in redistricting. There was a deliberate strategy at FRR to engage with key power-building groups in the states and provide the support and resources we needed to engage on this issue in a powerful way. I really appreciated that.



Ramachandran: FRR took an interest in our work because of our focus on communities of color and people-centered social change. Getting dedicated funding from FRR to work on redistricting was key. It meant we could build up our capacity and do trainings and data analysis and communications. We also were able to support our partners to integrate redistricting into their ongoing work in really powerful ways.

What are some of the headline results of your work?



Ramachandran: We worked with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice to create CROWD Academies (Community Redistricting Organizations Working for Democracy) that trained groups across the state to be redistricting advocates. FRR's investments also meant we could send mapping fellows across the state to help with local mapping. In the end, the maps from the legislature were pretty poor as expected, but the organizing work we did has set us up for ongoing litigation to improve representation for people of color across the state.

Haney: The Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission really drew a line in the sand for fair maps. And when politicians passed illegal maps, we were prepared because of the commission's work to challenge those maps, which have now been ruled unconstitutional a total of five times by the state supreme court. Ohio may not have great maps, but they are fairer than they were and we've been able to elevate the issue in a way where politicians now know people are watching.



Any suggestions for FRR and philanthropy about how to invest in redistricting and other democracy issues more effectively?

Haney: People can't act like redistricting is something that happens just every 10 years. There is critical work throughout the decade on lawsuits, reforms and redraws that shape the final maps and influence the process. Funding the power organizations in the states that are working across issues is the way to win—and that means supporting them year in and year out.



Ramachandran: My call to action for funders is to form longstanding relationships with the folks on the ground that are working on redistricting and all these other democracy issues. If you are in conversation with them, you will know more about what they need to pivot fluidly from working on redistricting to voting to census and back again. Long-term, multiyear, flexible funding is the key.

POSTSCRIPT

Since the interview with Prentiss Haney was conducted, a bipartisan coalition in Ohio launched a new campaign, "Citizens Not Politicians," for a constitutional amendment that would establish a new independent redistricting commission. The language of the amendment was specifically informed by the work of the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission led by the Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC, an organization funded by FRR). OOC is hoping to see this reform approved by voters in fall 2024.

For more information, go to <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2023/08/15/proposed-ohio-constitutional-amendment-seeks-to-end-gerrymandering-after-legislature-defied-courts/>

FUNDER PROFILE

The Heinz Endowments Pittsburgh, PA

Pennsylvania has historically been a heavily gerrymandered state. As a result, the legislature hasn't fully or fairly represented the growing diversity of Pennsylvanians, and issues with broad public support often see little action or attention in the state capital of Harrisburg.

At the Heinz Endowments in Pittsburgh, the board and staff increasingly saw this dynamic as a huge barrier to progress on the grantmaker's program priorities, including public health, the environment, and economic and social equity.

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS

HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT

VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT

"There really was an inability in most districts to have competitive elections, and not only does that diminish voter choice but it creates little incentive for lawmakers to change anything," said Kathleen Keating, program officer for learning with the foundation.

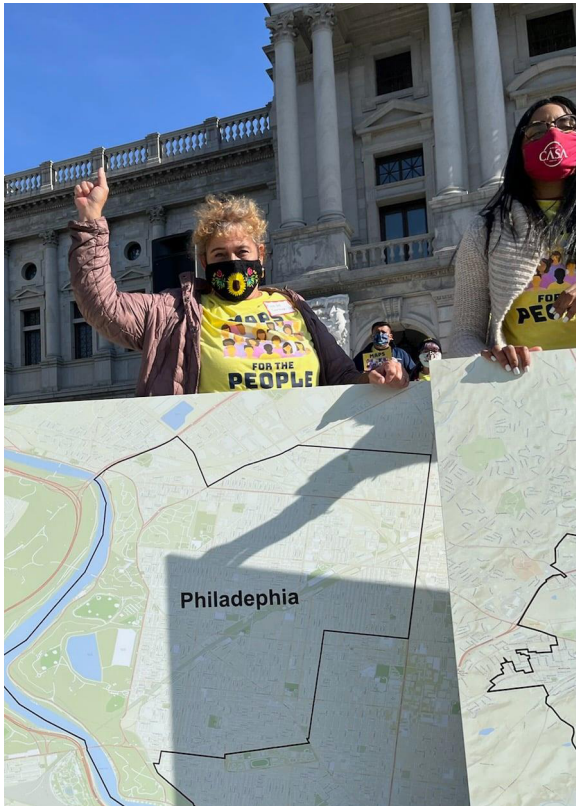
In the run-up to the 2020 census, the Heinz Endowments launched a Democracy and Civic Participation Initiative to help drive more support to organizations working to ensure a fair and accurate 2020 census count. Getting involved in redistricting was the "next, natural step" in this work, according to the Endowments' program director for sustainability, Matt Barron.

"Redistricting was beginning to bubble up in our conversations with grassroots groups, and our work on the census helped us connect the dots and show how these groups need ongoing support to protect democracy and fair representation in Pennsylvania," Barron said.

The Heinz Endowments ended up supporting the pooled fund at FRR, while also making about 40 direct grants for redistricting work to a mix of existing and new grantees across the state. The grants supported litigation, organizing, and public education on

redistricting, as well as efforts to mobilize Pennsylvanians to show up at public hearings of the Pennsylvania Legislative Reapportionment Commission to make a case for fairer maps. For the 2021–22 cycle, the commission was composed of party leaders from the state legislature, plus an independent member appointed by the state supreme court.

The Heinz Endowments' investments, combined with FRR's support for litigation and other activities undertaken by Pennsylvania groups, helped pave the way for the fairest Pennsylvania legislative maps in decades. "Our system is still fundamentally broken because of the lack of reforms, but the outcome was still good," Barron said, citing successful legal challenges to the commission's maps that resulted in fairer maps. Barron added that expanded public participation in redistricting in Pennsylvania has helped lift up the need for reforms. *(For more information, see the "Gerrymandering in Pennsylvania" infographic on page 13.)*



Provided by Pennsylvania Voice.

“There were no public meetings in the last redistricting cycle; this time we had four with hundreds of people submitting testimony and people speaking for hours.”



—Matt Barron, Program Director for Sustainability,
The Heinz Endowments

FUNDER PROFILE

Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Winston-Salem, NC

In 2014, the North Carolina governor signed what was referred to as a “monster bill” restricting voting rights by reducing early voting and requiring voter identification, among other actions with a disproportionate effect on communities of color and other marginalized groups. This happened shortly after a 2011 redistricting cycle that affirmed the state’s longtime status as ground zero for extreme gerrymandering.

In response to these developments, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation stepped up its investments in efforts to strengthen democracy in the state through civic engagement, policy change and other activities. “As a funder committed to equity and opportunity for all North Carolinians, we felt we had to get more involved in these issues because people’s rights and representation were on the line, and they still are,” said Sorien Schmidt, senior program officer with the foundation.

Z. Smith Reynolds
FOUNDATION

With the approach of the 2020 census and the 2021-22 redistricting cycle, the funder doubled down on its support for democracy and civic engagement groups and networks. Z. Smith Reynolds grantees engaged in census and redistricting work included Democracy North Carolina, the North Carolina Black Alliance, Blueprint North Carolina, NC Counts, and others. “We have a very sophisticated democracy ecosystem in North Carolina with statewide tables and really strong community-based organizations,” Schmidt said.

Z. Smith Reynolds did not contribute to the FRR pooled fund because of the foundation’s exclusive focus on North Carolina. Nevertheless, Schmidt was deeply involved in conversations with the FRR staff and funders about redistricting efforts in the state and how FRR funding could help. “Having that table allowed me to have pointed conversations with national and regional funders about the great things our grantees were doing,” said Schmidt.

Schmidt added that the national funder tables on census and redistricting both directed significant resources from national funders to the work of North Carolina groups working on those issues. These funds came on top of investments from Z. Smith Reynolds, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, and other state and regional sources.

After the North Carolina legislature again approved gerrymandered redistricting maps in 2021, many of the Z. Smith Reynolds and FRR grantees brought suit, and the state supreme court ruled the maps unconstitutional, forcing the legislature to redraw both state and congressional maps. Following additional actions by the legislature and a change in the composition of the state supreme court because of the 2022 elections, North Carolina appears destined to return to heavily gerrymandered districts.²¹

“Our experience shows that redistricting and democracy are issues you need to invest in year in and year out, because the work never ends,” said Schmidt. She added that Z. Smith Reynolds generally provides multiyear general operating support to its core democracy grantees.



A #UniteNC Town Hall hosted by Common Cause NC in Hillsborough, NC. Provided by Common Cause NC.

21 Before the 2022 election, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear a case on whether the state courts in North Carolina have the authority to constrain state legislatures in drawing congressional lines. On June 27, 2023, the Supreme Court rejected the “independent state legislature theory,” saying that state constitutions and courts can hold state legislatures accountable—and that federal court review would only be available for exceptional situations.

FUNDER PROFILE

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Princeton, NJ

Over the past several years, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) began to hear growing concern from grantees and partners in the field that state legislatures around the country were a key barrier to progress on the health issues at the center of the foundation's agenda. "Again and again, we kept hearing that the ability of people, communities, and nonprofits to champion policies that reflected their values and their needs was being thwarted," said Giridhar Mallya, senior policy officer with the foundation.



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

For the foundation and its partners, one reason this was happening became clear: racial and partisan gerrymandering was creating unrepresentative state legislatures that had little incentive to heed community voices on healthcare and other issues. This was especially true for communities of color whose interests were disproportionately neglected in state redistricting processes.

The realization that its priorities were deeply affected by redistricting was a key factor in RWJF's decision to get involved in the 2021–22 redistricting cycle. The foundation had been a part of the national funder collaborative working on the 2020 U.S. Census, in part due to its understanding that reliable and accurate census data is critical for health research. Shifting to work on redistricting felt like a natural next step, Mallya said. Furthermore, the foundation appreciated that FRR provided a "one-stop" vehicle for connecting with other funders and assuring that RWJF's funding was going where it would have the greatest effect in assuring a fairer process.

RWJF's support for FRR and redistricting is centered in its policy department, which Mallya describes as a cross-cutting team that works across programs on the full range of policy issues affecting progress toward the foundation's vision of "building a culture of health" for the United States. Participating in FRR, he said, supported him and his

colleagues to be “much more fluent on redistricting and equity issues.” “FRR helped us make the case internally and externally that redistricting is important work, and that it is integrally connected to everything else we want to achieve,” he said.

RWJF continues to support FRR’s work even as the 2021–22 redistricting cycle slows down. Mallya said the foundation’s leadership and staff have a new appreciation for the importance of staying involved in the issue of redistricting both during and in between mapping cycles. The key to getting more funders involved in redistricting, he adds, is to stress the message that sparked RWJF to engage in the first place.



A staff member from One Voice and Gulfport, Mississippi Councilwoman Ella Hines following adoption of new ward maps for the city of Gulfport. Provided by One Voice.

“I think the more we talk about the issues funders care about, the better. Because virtually every policy issue you can think of is affected for better or worse by redistricting, and we need more funders to see that.”



–Girdhar Mallya, Senior Policy Officer,
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

FUNDER PROFILE

The Joyce Foundation Chicago, IL

For the Joyce Foundation, investing in redistricting is a longstanding priority. As a policy-focused funder committed to advancing racial equity and economic mobility in six Midwestern states, the foundation has a stand-alone Democracy program with “fair representation” as one of its pillars. That’s why Democracy Program Director Carrie Davis was so pleased to see a diverse group of funders coming together under the FRR umbrella to work on the 2021–22 redistricting cycle.



“We want to see the issue of fair redistricting take hold nationally as well as in our states, and we see FRR as a crucial part of making that happen,” Davis said.

Historically, Joyce’s work on redistricting was focused on supporting litigation to defend and enforce fair maps. Joyce, for example, was a key funder of a lawsuit challenging partisan gerrymandering in Wisconsin in the aftermath of the 2011 redistricting cycle.

For the 2021–22 cycle, Davis said the Joyce Foundation appreciated how FRR mobilized funders to focus not just on litigation but on organizing and other activities aimed at encouraging more people and communities, especially communities of color, to become active participants in the redistricting process.

During the 2011 redistricting cycle, Davis said the foundation regularly heard from grantees that they needed more resources for “on-the-ground” work including community outreach, public education, and public engagement. “Redistricting can be a really wonky topic, so it takes resources and training and communications support to help groups make people understand that this is important work and they need to be involved,” Davis said.

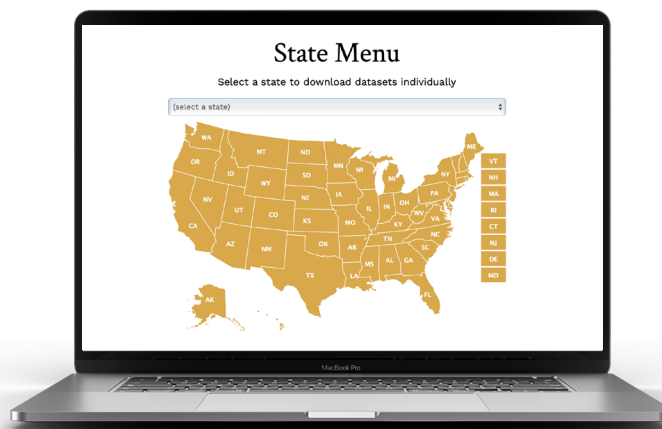
Davis believes FRR’s support for the Redistricting Data Hub was a critical contribution (see page 33 for more). “For state and community groups, it was prohibitively expensive in past cycles to have access to good data and mapping tools,” Davis said. “This time FRR made a deliberate effort to democratize the data and mapping and put everything online so folks didn’t have to purchase it themselves.”



“For state and community groups, it was prohibitively expensive in past cycles to have access to good data and mapping tools. This time FRR made a deliberate effort to democratize the data and mapping and put everything online so folks didn’t have to purchase it themselves.”

—Carrie Davis, Democracy Program Director, The Joyce Foundation

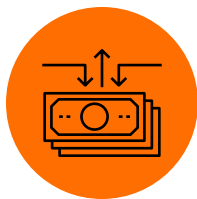
The Joyce Foundation continues to support FRR as a means of sustaining philanthropy’s commitment and attention to redistricting. “Philanthropy needs to recognize the knowledge and expertise and voices of folks at the state level and enable and support them to articulate what they need,” Davis said. “That was a big substantive change from the last go-round, and it showed that FRR understood how redistricting provided an opportunity to rethink how we do philanthropy.”



Screenshot from <https://redistrictingdatahub.org>.

Lessons Learned: Key Takeaways for Philanthropy's Ongoing Work

Funders interviewed for this case study lifted up a number of important takeaways from the 2021–22 redistricting process that FRR—and philanthropy more broadly—can apply in ongoing work on redistricting and other democracy issues.



Start early—and keep investing throughout the decade. One key lesson from the 2021–22 redistricting cycle is that redistricting is a multi-year, multi-cycle process; philanthropy and its grantees cannot wait until the end of the decade to engage. This is “evergreen” and ongoing work. Many funders also emphasized the importance of providing multi-year general operating support to groups so they can stay involved in the full range of democracy issues.

“Investing in redistricting is a long-term structural play aimed at changing the rules and unlocking the possibilities of representation and power for people and communities nationwide. It means embodying the work within the people so they can shape decisions that affect their lives—and that requires robust and continuing support.”



—Bonnie Kwon, Policy Officer, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

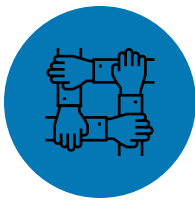


Connect redistricting, census. Funders regularly commented that they and their grantees should be more strategic about connecting their census and redistricting work—for example, by supporting groups to do redistricting education and outreach at the same time that they are working on census outreach.

“We need to be more explicit about educating people about redistricting while engaged in census work. New Jersey is a top state for immigrants, and we spent a lot of time educating those communities about the census. With redistricting we had to start all over again. Finding a way to integrate the two issues would have been better.”



—Kiki Jamieson, President, The Fund for New Jersey



Engage grassroots groups more directly. FRR's structure relied on its national staff to engage with field groups and state and local funders to identify issues and needs across the states. Some funders expressed an interest in more direct engagement between philanthropy and nonprofits, while others said they trusted and appreciated that the staff was leading the way.

“I would love to see a field advisory committee helping to set the regranting strategy for an initiative like this. I know the staff were in constant contact with field groups, but I would like to see more visible engagement of the field.”



—Giridhar Mallya, Senior Policy Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Keep the community together. One of the principal takeaways from FRR's work is that funder collaboration pays off; through pooled funding and aligned strategies, grantmakers achieved far more than they could have done working independently or alone. FRR invested substantial time and resources in convenings, funder briefings, and other activities that created a cadre of committed and engaged funders and partner nonprofits. Many funders stressed how the

community should stay together in some form so they can sustain those relationships, continue to fund core activities through the decade, and keep tabs on the latest redistricting developments and news (see page 62 for more on FRR's ongoing work).

“I see a lot of people at these meetings who really enjoy being together and learning from each other. It's a lot easier and more effective to keep this community connected than to have to recreate it somewhere down the line.”



—Cathy Duvall, FRR Manager and CEO/Founder, Democracy Ascent Advisors



Make a more powerful case for philanthropic engagement. While recognizing that FRR did a good job rallying funders to support an issue many have avoided in the past, some funders said that they and their colleagues could make a more powerful case for redistricting as a cross-cutting priority for funders. An important focus for the future: bringing in more “issue-based” funders via stepped-up information and appeals about how gerrymandering can stall progress on topics from healthcare and education to reproductive health and criminal justice.

“If we care about gun violence or clean water or public health or public education, the place where it all starts is redistricting. When legislatures are not representative of the people, then democracy is not working and things don't get done. Philanthropy needs to understand what's at stake and invest accordingly.”



—Erica Teasley Linnick, Vice President, NEO Philanthropy, and Director, State Infrastructure Fund



Keep racial equity front and center. There was deep appreciation and respect among funders for FRR's focus on supporting communities of color to have more voice and influence in the redistricting process. Going forward, some suggested that FRR place even greater emphasis on racial equity in its work and funder outreach—in part as a way to clarify for funders and other audiences the nonpartisan nature of this work. A related priority is lifting up how the work of achieving fairer maps builds power for populations and groups that traditionally have been closed out of elections and civic life.

“We need more funders to come together around the vision that communities of color should have equal opportunities to be represented and to participate in civic life. It’s a broad vision of civic engagement that includes redistricting, voting, census and everything else. We need to keep marginalized communities at the very center of it.”



—Sorien Schmidt, Senior Program Officer, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation



Members of Building Freedom Ohio, a power-building organization for formerly incarcerated Ohioans, pose as a group during a community event in Cleveland. Courtesy Ohio Organizing Collaborative.

REDISTRICTING TIMELINE: 2023–2033



Looking Ahead: FRR's Current and Future Work

The 2021–22 redistricting cycle demonstrated that FRR's approach—investing in state and local groups serving communities of color, and ensuring that those communities have the resources and support they need to engage fully in redistricting—can deliver results. Now, FRR is determined to keep the work going and to defend and expand fair representation for communities of color through the 2031 redistricting cycle and beyond.

In 2022, FRR developed a renewed Plan of Action for the years 2023 to 2028. The plan's focus: helping state organizations that FRR partnered with during the previous redistricting cycle as they see urgent work from the previous cycle through to its conclusion, while also transitioning to the work of advancing new reforms and preparing for the next cycle.

The **Plan of Action** includes three components as follows:



OBJECTIVE 1:

Secure fairer maps through ongoing redistricting work

FRR will support communities of color to achieve the best possible outcomes for fair maps from the 2021–22 redistricting cycle through pending federal and state court litigation, unfinished local redistricting, and redrawing of district maps by court mandates or state lawmakers.



OBJECTIVE 2:

Advance policy research, reforms, and advocacy to improve redistricting

FRR will support research, planning, coordination, and other activities to help groups promote affirmative policies that will strengthen the redistricting process and contribute to fairer outcomes for historically underrepresented communities. FRR also will support groups to oppose proposals that would further marginalize underrepresented populations.



OBJECTIVE 3:

Provide technical assistance and other support to groups working on redistricting

FRR will build on previous grantmaking to support hubs and networks at the national and regional levels that can directly provide state and local groups led by people of color, and rooted in communities of color, with the tools, analysis, technical assistance, learning, and training necessary to execute successful redistricting campaigns in their states, and to continue helping groups as they prepare for future campaigns.

Emerging Issues in Redistricting

At the same time that FRR's funders are advancing their Plan of Action for 2023-28, they also are hearing from grantees in the states that they want help and support to address emerging issues and to explore cutting-edge reforms with potentially far-reaching impacts for communities of color. According to FRR Manager Cathy Duvall, the following are a few of the issues on grantees' radar for the years ahead:



Anneshia Hardy, Executive Director of Alabama Values. Provided by Alabama Values.

Prison Gerrymandering

When most U.S. states create district maps, incarcerated individuals are counted in the location where they are incarcerated rather than in their home communities. This is called prison gerrymandering, and it results in distorted district maps that reduce representation in Black and Brown communities across the nation. At a time of mass incarceration when people of color are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, some states are taking action to count incarcerated people (most of whom will be released in three years) in their home communities. Advocates say that more states should follow suit and tackle prison gerrymandering as part of the broader effort to reduce systemic racism.

Alternative Voting Models

In the face of extreme polarization and racial gerrymandering, many advocates are lifting up voting and electoral reforms as additional solutions to ensuring fair representation for communities of color. Even as they continue to push for redistricting reforms and community engagement in the process, advocates also are calling for changes including proportional representation (where the number of seats a party wins is proportional to its support among voters); and the creation of more voting districts at the local, state and federal level to ensure broader representation for communities of color.

Independent Redistricting Commissions

In states where redistricting is still controlled by lawmakers, advocates are calling for the creation of independent commissions to draw districts with input from the public. During the 2021–22 redistricting cycle, according to a Brennan Center for Justice [analysis](#), 26 states passed maps “on a wholly or mostly party-line basis.” The Brennan Center concluded that redistricting bodies that were “insulated from partisan interests” produced maps with relatively more competitive seats than those where map-drawing was controlled or dominated by partisan interests.

State Voting Rights Acts

Despite a recent Supreme Court decision upholding the use of the Voting Rights Act to protect the voting rights of people of color, federal protections for fair representation have weakened in recent years due to other Supreme Court decisions and congressional inaction. In response, advocates have led the fight for state voting rights acts to prohibit racial discrimination in elections and protect the right to vote in many states. So far, California, Washington, Oregon, Virginia, New York, Michigan and Connecticut have [passed these laws](#), and other states like Maryland and New Jersey are considering them.

As FRR continues its investments in fair redistricting, it is working with grantees to explore opportunities for implementing these and other reforms that could help increase representation and power for communities of color across the nation.

Exclusion of Non-Citizens and Non-Voting-Age Residents in Redistricting

The 2016 Supreme Court decision, *Evenwel v. Abbott*, left open the possibility for states to exclude non-citizens or non-voting age populations when determining how district lines are drawn. This is despite the constitutional requirement that districts should be based on a count of *all* residents, regardless of age, immigration status, or eligibility to vote. Although the ruling was explicitly in favor of basing representation on total population, not just the voting-eligible population, the ruling sidestepped whether states are required to do so. This has opened the door for states to exclude immigrants who are not citizens from redistricting equations.

Fair Representation in Redistricting Co-Chairs



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Executive Director Emeritus
The Bauman Foundation



Javier Valdés
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-

Appendix 1: Interviewees

The author and Fair Representation in Redistricting send many thanks to the following individuals for participating in interviews for this case study:

- **Pam Allen**, Senior Program Officer, Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund
 - **Matt Barron**, Program Director, Sustainability, The Heinz Endowments
 - **Gary Bass**, Executive Director Emeritus, The Bauman Foundation, and FRR Co-chair
 - **Angela Cheng**, Senior Program Officer, The JPB Foundation
 - **Carrie Davis**, Democracy Program Director, Joyce Foundation
 - **Leslie Dorosin**, Executive Director, Grove Foundation
 - **Cathy Duvall**, FRR Manager and CEO/Founder, Democracy Ascent Advisors
 - **Daniella Flores**, Program Officer, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund
 - **Ethan Hamblin**, Senior Network Officer, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
 - **Prentiss Haney**, Co-Executive Director, Ohio Organizing Collaborative
 - **Kiki Jamieson**, President, The Fund for New Jersey
 - **Sara Kay**, Chief Executive Officer, Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust
 - **Kathleen Keating**, Program Officer for Learning, The Heinz Endowments
 - **Bonnie Kwon**, Policy Officer, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
 - **Erica Teasley Linnick**, Vice President, NEO Philanthropy, and Director, State Infrastructure Fund
 - **Giridhar Mallya**, Senior Policy Officer, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 - **John Mitterholzer**, Program Director for Climate and Environmental Justice, George Gund Foundation
 - **Karen Narasaki**, FRR Senior Consultant
 - **Karuna Ramachandran**, Redistricting Director, ProGeorgia
 - **Sorien Schmidt**, Senior Program Officer, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation
 - **Javier Valdés**, U.S. Director of Civic Engagement and Government, Ford Foundation, and FRR Co-chair
 - **Sue Van**, President and CEO, Wallace H. Coulter Foundation
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Appendix 2: The Redistricting Advisory Committee

Fair Representation in Redistricting (FRR) has an advisory committee of funders who help guide its work and investments. During the 2021–22 redistricting cycle, the members of the Redistricting Advisory Committee (RAC) included:

- **Annie E. Casey Foundation**
 - **Bernard & Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust**
 - **California Community Foundation**
 - **Democracy Fund**
 - **Ford Foundation**
 - **George Gund Foundation**
 - **Grove Foundation**
 - **The Joyce Foundation**
 - **The JPB Foundation**
 - **Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation**
 - **New York Community Trust**
 - **Open Society Foundations**
 - **Resilient Democracy Fund**
 - **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**
 - **Rockefeller Brothers Fund**
 - **State Infrastructure Fund**
 - **W.K. Kellogg Foundation**
 - **Wallace H. Coulter Foundation**
 - **Wellspring Philanthropic Fund**
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Resources

Additional resources on redistricting, including resources for funders, are available at Fair Representation in Redistricting's website, at <https://www.FairRedistricting.org>.

About the Author

William H. Woodwell, Jr. is a writer and consultant with extensive experience working with philanthropy on issues of democracy, immigration, health, education and more. He authored the national evaluation, *Philanthropy and the 2020 U.S. Census: Stories and Lessons from an Unprecedented Funder Collaborative* (Democracy Funders Collaborative Census Subgroup, 2021). See the full report here:

<https://funderscommittee.org/philathropy-and-the-2020-census-report/>



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