

# Redistricting in Georgia: A 20-Year History

**Town Hall – June 21, 2021**



**PRINCETON  
GERRYMANDERING  
PROJECT**

Fixing bugs in democracy



# We Are Asking For Three Big Changes



## 1. Listen

- Draw maps using community input
- Communities provide clear definitions
- Legislature responds to each defined community

## 2. Show your work

- More public and transparent process
- April 19 letter to Duncan, Ralston, committees signed by 20 organizations
- Requests waiver of secrecy
- Fifteen specific changes for public access

## 3. Check your work

- Commit to meeting independent, non-partisan benchmarks for districts





Hannah Wheelen



Sara Hodges



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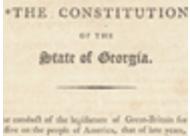


# Decennial Redistricting Process in Georgia



Public Listening Sessions

Redistricting Guidelines



**PRIVATE**

General Assembly draws maps



Senate

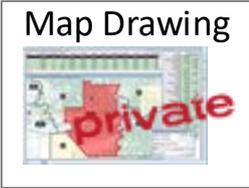


House

+

Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Office (LCRO) & outside consultants

Map Drawing



GA Special Session



Floor votes (Gentleman's Agreement)



Governor signs



**APPROVED**



# Public Participation Is Discouraged



- Public meetings are often scheduled at the last minute
- District maps often aren't released before public meetings
- Bills consist of a listing of census tracts or other incomprehensible unit →
- Legislator communications with LCRO are legally privileged and confidential
- General Assembly is not subject to Open Records or Open Meetings Act
- Public comment, oversight, and participation are discouraged

## Text of actual redistricting bill

15	*District 034
16	Cobb County
17	VTD: 067BG01 - BIG SHANTY 01
18	VTD: 067BK01 - BAKER 01
19	030226:
20	1019 1022 1023
21	030227: *
22	1001
23	VTD: 067CH02 - CHEATHAM HILL 02
24	VTD: 067EL01 - ELIZABETH 01
25	030506:
26	1088 1090 1091 1093 1094 1095 1096 1098 1102 1103 1107 1123

# Few Legally-Binding Redistricting Criteria



- Federal District population must be **APPROXIMATELY EQUAL**  
**VOTING RIGHTS ACT** must be followed
- Georgia Districts must be **CONTIGUOUS**

General Assembly 2011 **non-binding** guidelines considered:

**COMPACTNESS**

**COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST**

**EXISTING POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS**

**AVOID PAIRING INCUMBENTS**

**COMMITTEES MAY CONSIDER OTHER FACTORS**

# Legislators Draw Their Own Maps



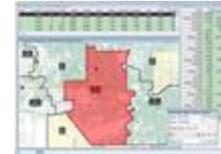
Legislators control the process

Each chamber draws its own maps

Chambers have "*Gentlemen's Agreement*" to approve each other's map

Politicians choose their own constituents with little oversight and vague rules

State House



State Senate



**APPROVED**

# Mid-decade Redistricting Protects Incumbents



The Georgia General Assembly can redraw districts at every session; very few other states allow mid-decade redistricting without a court order

Mid-decade redistricting (2000 - 2021):

- 15 bills brought to the floor; 6 passed
- 97 proposed alterations; 64 districts changed

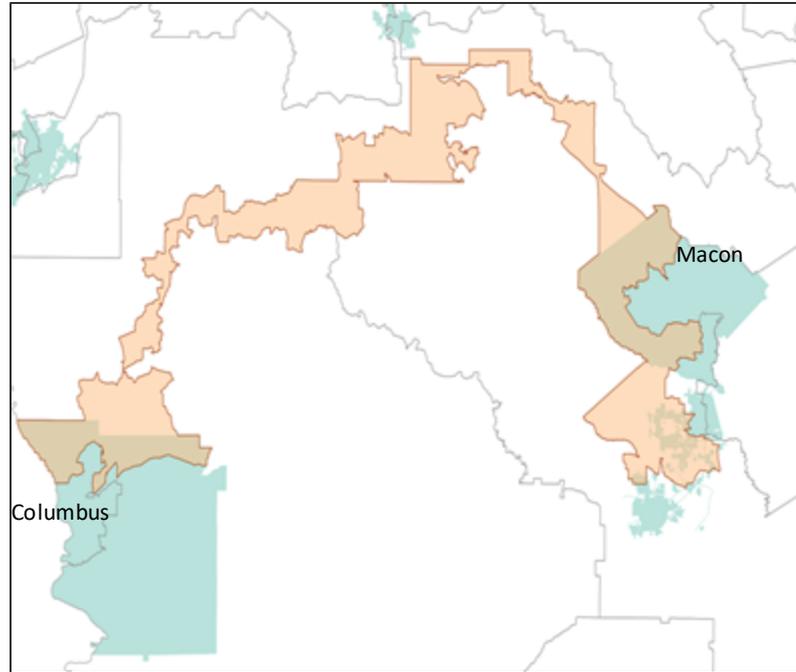
*"...objective was to make these districts ... better for these incumbents to get reelected."*

- Deposition of Gina Wright,  
Executive Director of LCRO

# Gerrymandered Maps Can Be Difficult To Detect



Historically, gerrymandered maps had extremely contrived boundaries



State Senate District 16, 2002

Now gerrymandered districts are hard to detect by looking at a map; detection today requires a more technical set of analysis tools

# Fair Districts GA / Princeton Gerrymandering Project Partnership



Purpose: Provide independent, non-partisan benchmarks / fairness tests

Phase 1: complete

20-year history

- Last 2 redistricting cycles
- Mid-cycle redistricting

Phase 2: begins August/September

Based on 2020 census

- Benchmarks / fairness tests
- Evaluation of proposed maps

	Partisan balance	Minority representation
State House	?	?
State Senate	?	?
Congress	?	?

# Key Questions For 20-year History Analysis



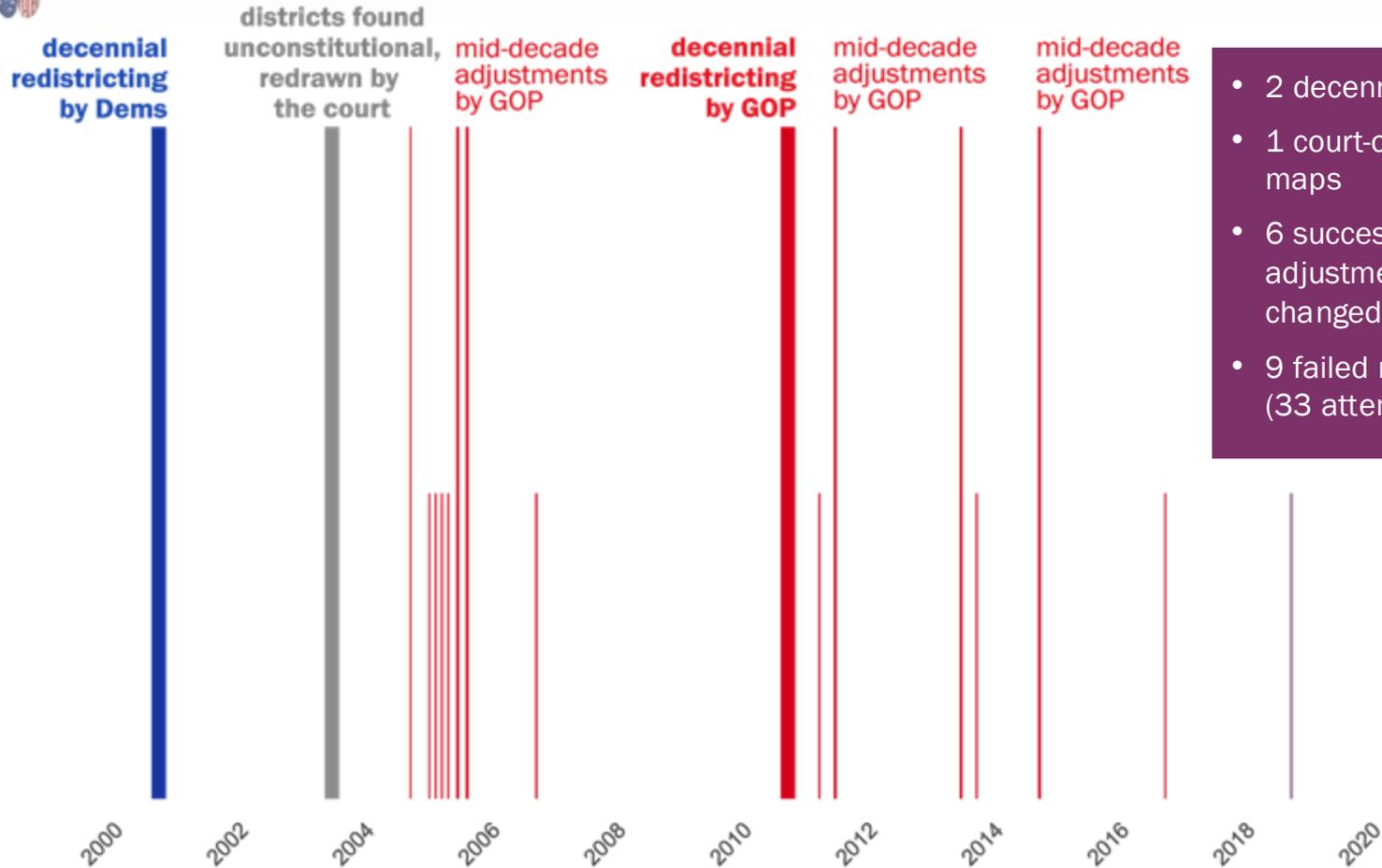
## Partisan fairness

- How well does the legislature represent voters' preferences?
- Do maps reflect voters' preferences?
- Do maps reflect their communities?
- Would maps drawn without partisan influence better reflect voters' preferences and communities?

## Minority representation

- Do maps provide adequate minority representation?

# Twenty Years of Decennial and Mid-decade Redistricting



- 2 decennial redistricting cycles
- 1 court-ordered adjustment of maps
- 6 successful mid-decade adjustments (64 districts changed)
- 9 failed mid-decade adjustments (33 attempted changes)

# Partisan Analysis 2000 – 2020



Analyzed General Assembly and statewide election results for 20 years

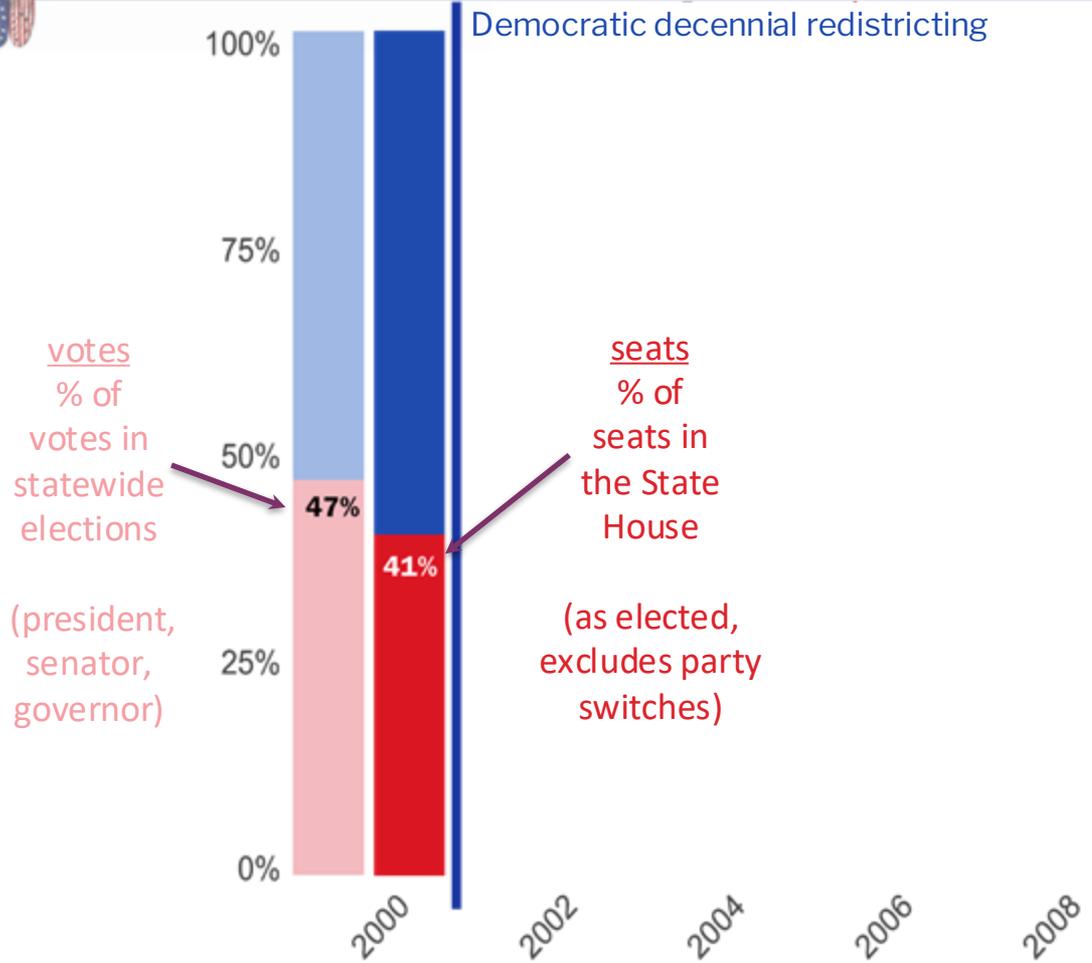
- every district map change
- statewide election results

Representation should respond to changes in voting patterns

more votes ↑ = more seats ↑

fewer votes ↓ = fewer seats ↓

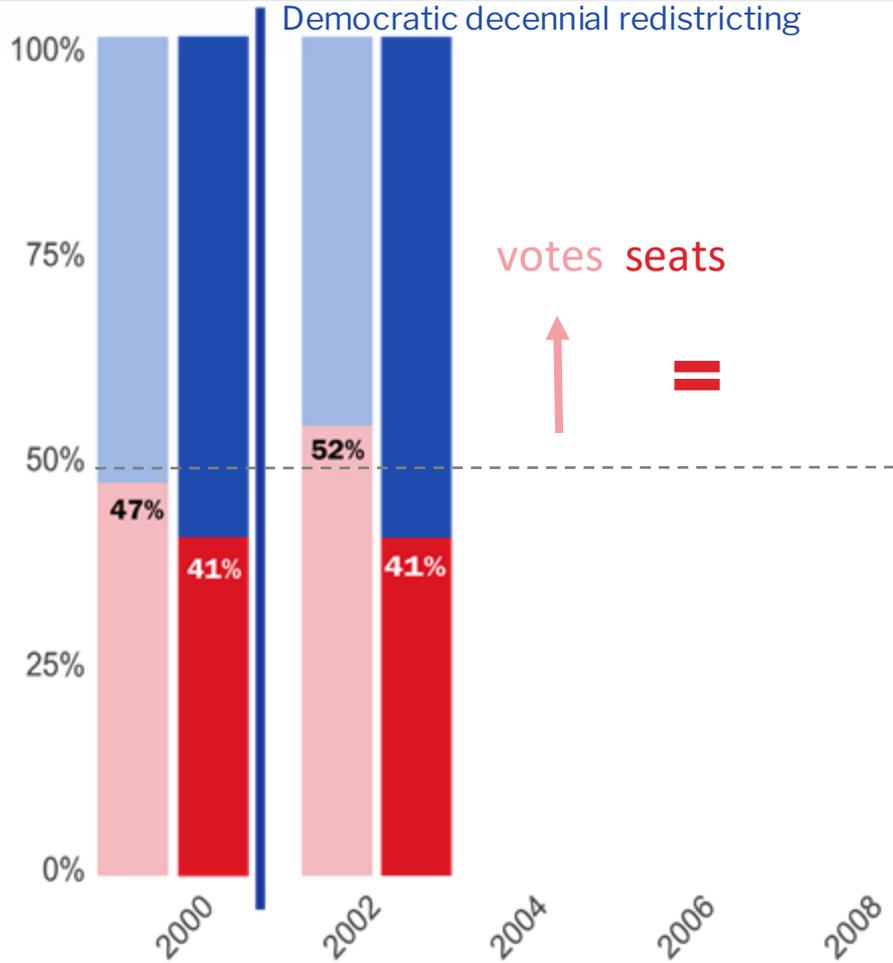
# State House Detailed Look at Partisan Gerrymandering



Principle:  
More votes =  
More seats  
  
Fewer votes =  
Fewer seats

Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

# State House After Decennial Redistricting by Democrats

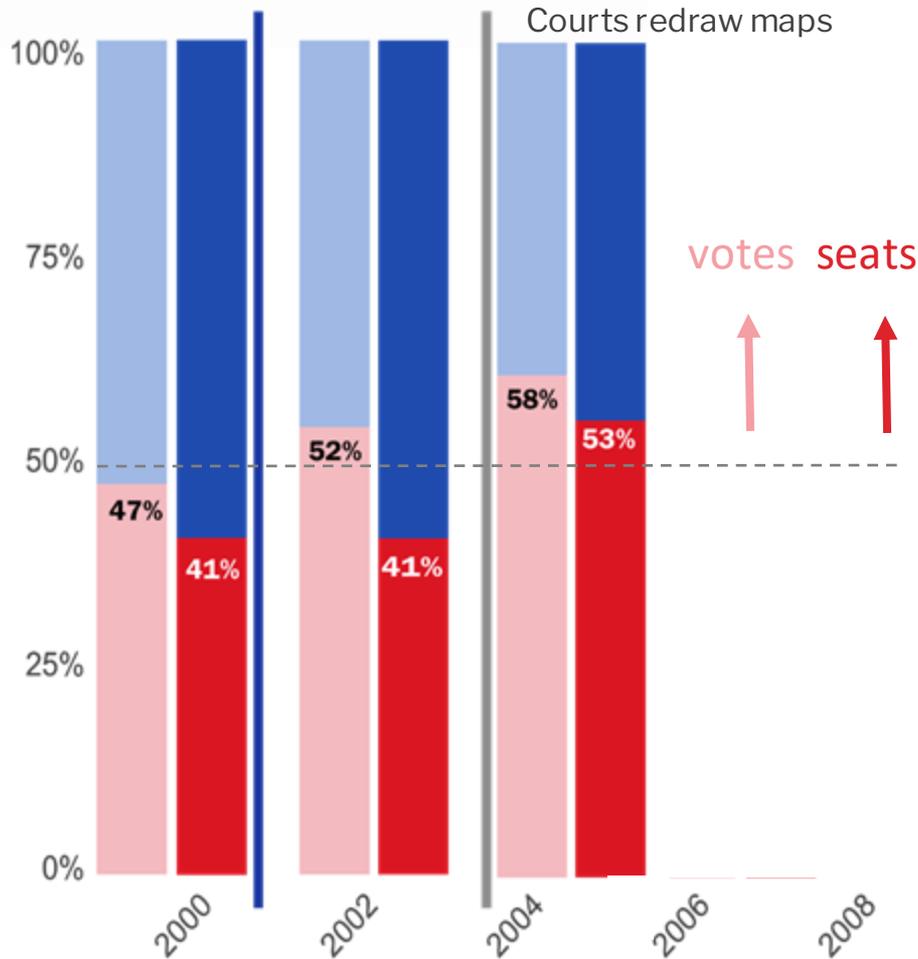


Principle:  
More votes =  
More seats  
  
Fewer votes =  
Fewer seats

2002: GOP won majority of statewide vote, but didn't gain any seats.

Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

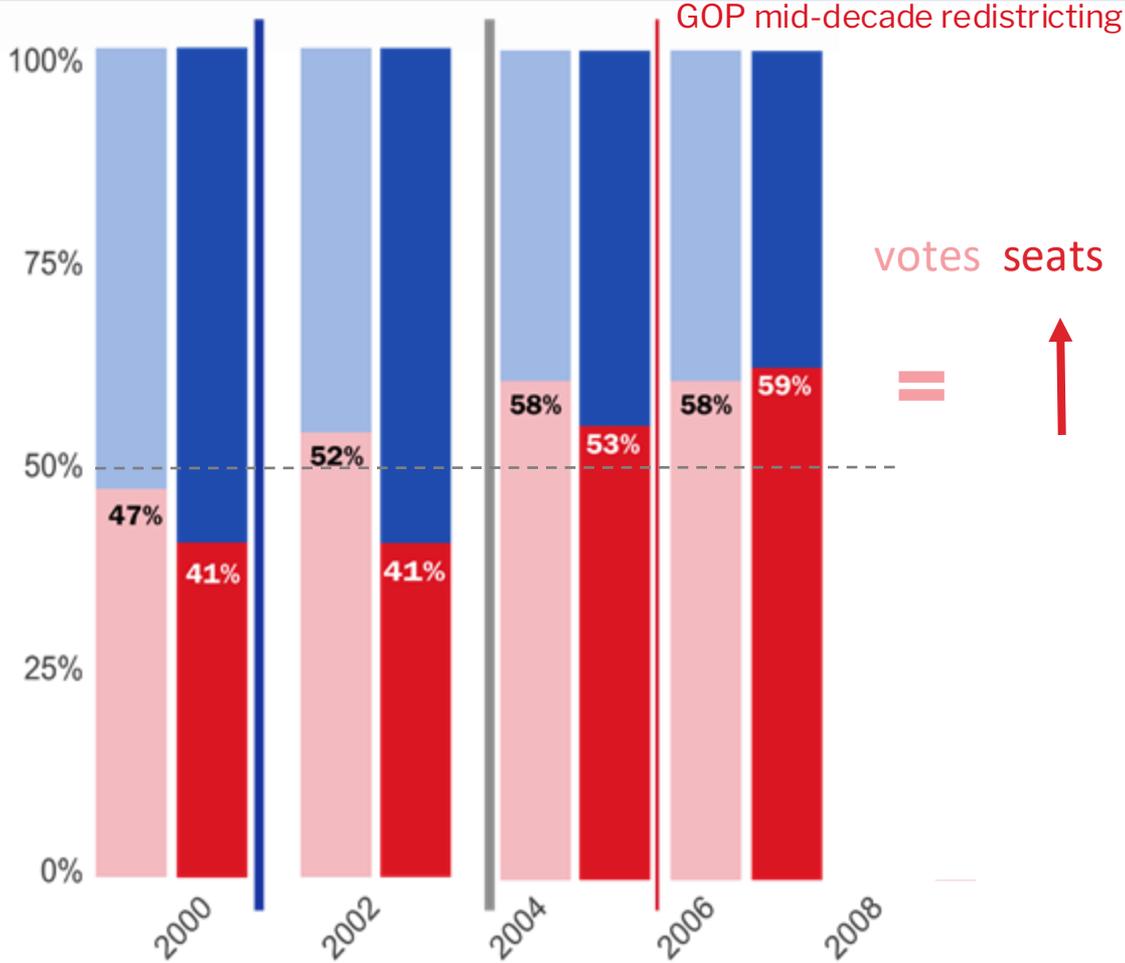
# State House After Court Redrew District Map



Principle:  
More votes =  
More seats  
  
Fewer votes =  
Fewer seats

2004: GOP won majority of seats as court-drawn maps restore the balance.

# State House After Mid-Decade Redistricting by GOP



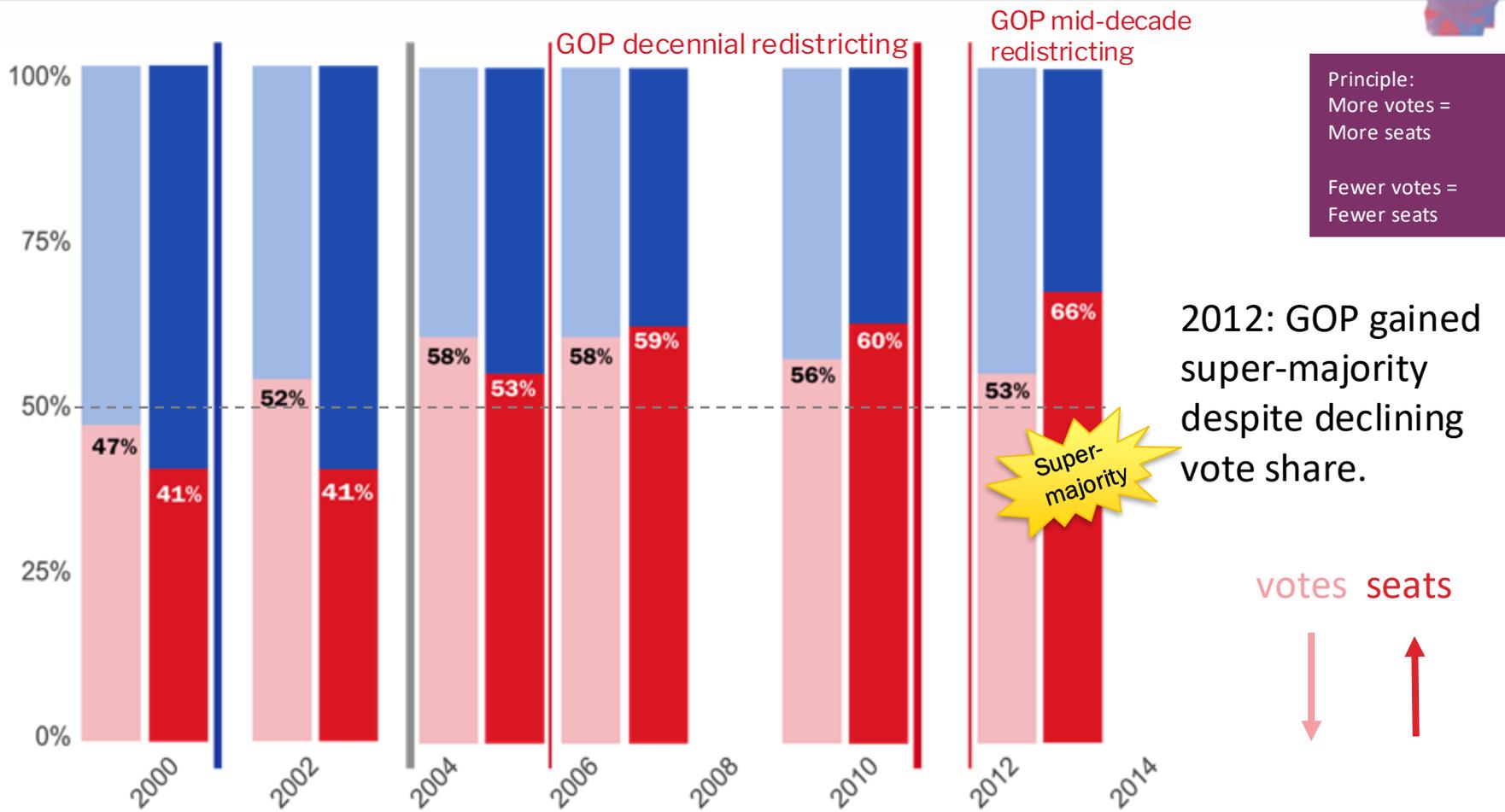
Principle:  
More votes =  
More seats  
  
Fewer votes =  
Fewer seats

votes = seats  
↑

2006: GOP gained 10 seats with same vote share.

Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

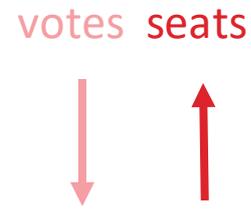
# State House After Decennial Redistricting by GOP



Principle:  
 More votes =  
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 Fewer votes =  
 Fewer seats

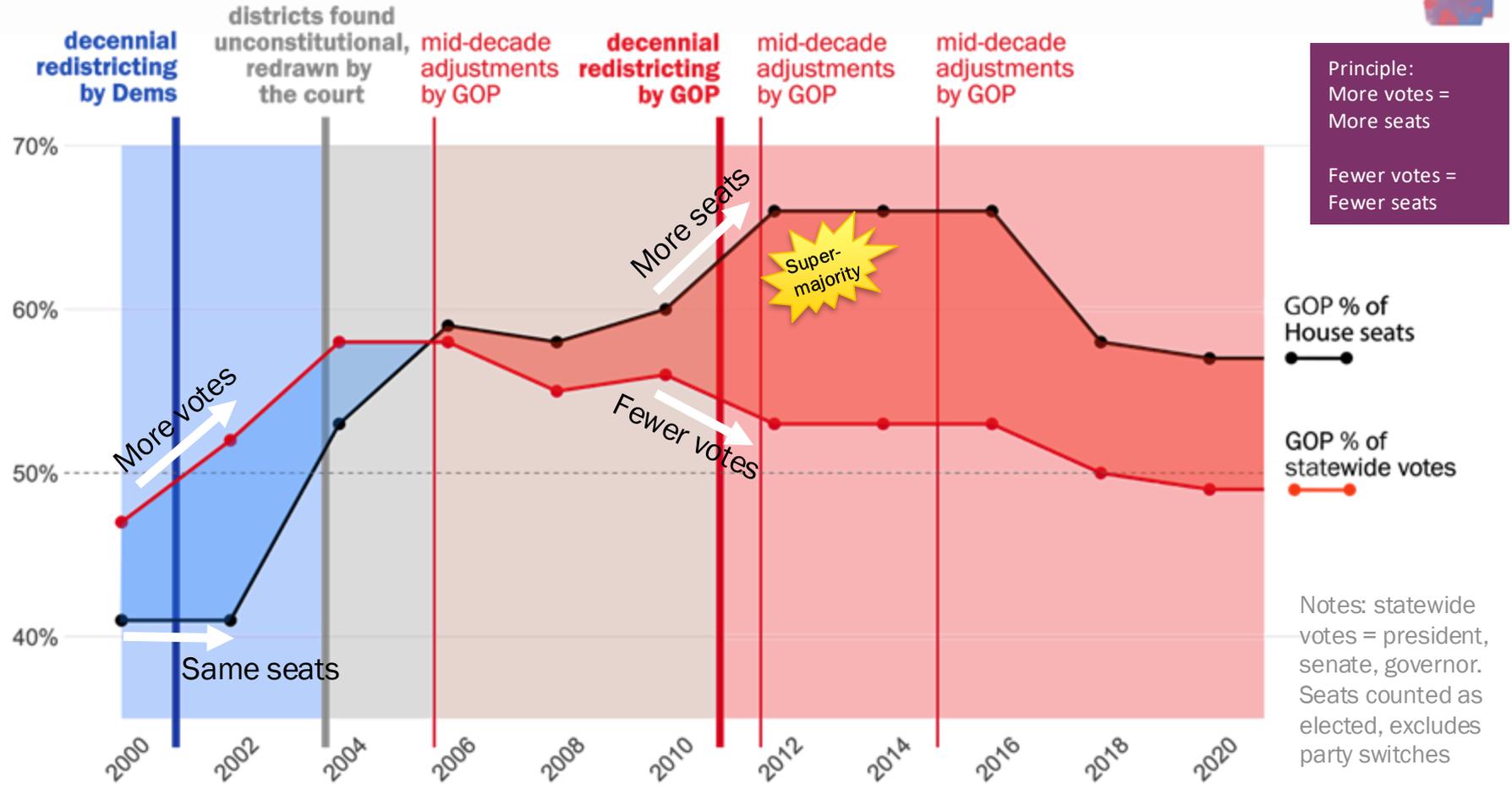
2012: GOP gained super-majority despite declining vote share.

Super-majority



Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

# State House: Gerrymandering Sustains Partisan Advantage



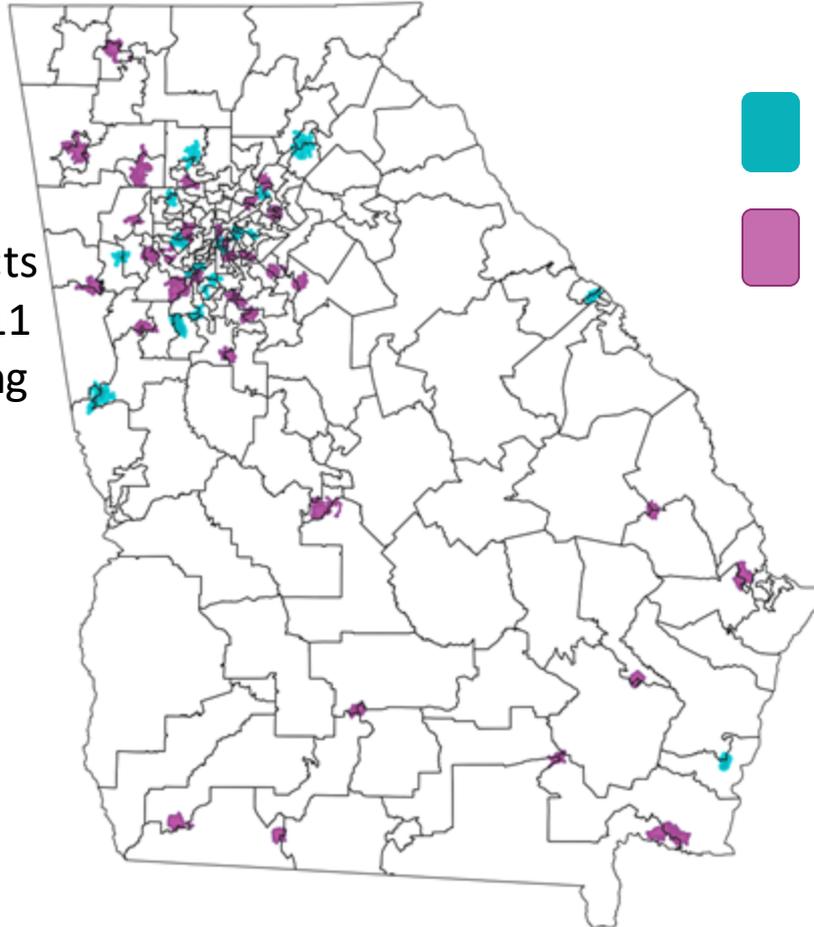
Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

# The 2011/12 State House Map Cracked Small Cities



The number of small cities cracked into multiple districts increased by 44% in the 2011 decennial House redistricting

**Two-thirds** of small cities are cracked into multiple House districts

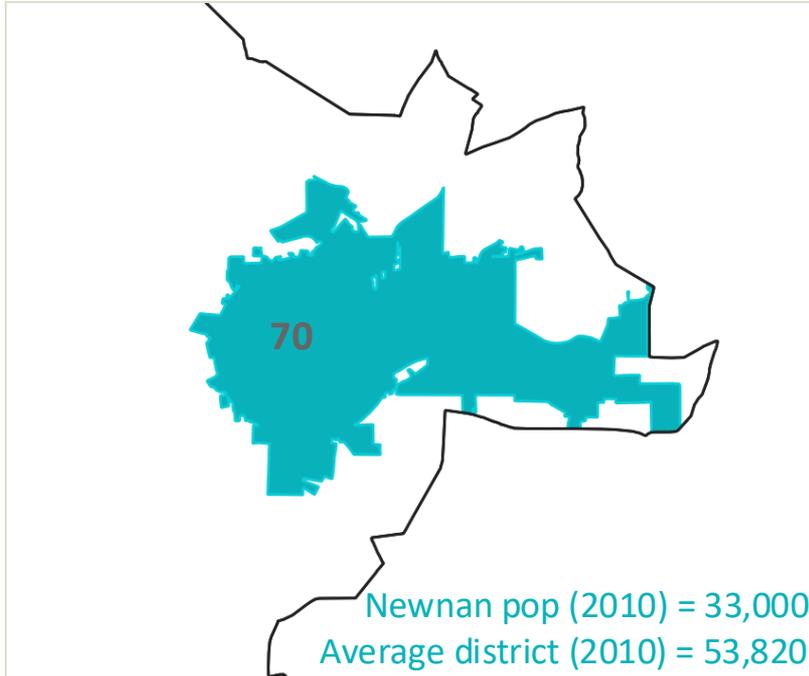


Source: FDGA analysis

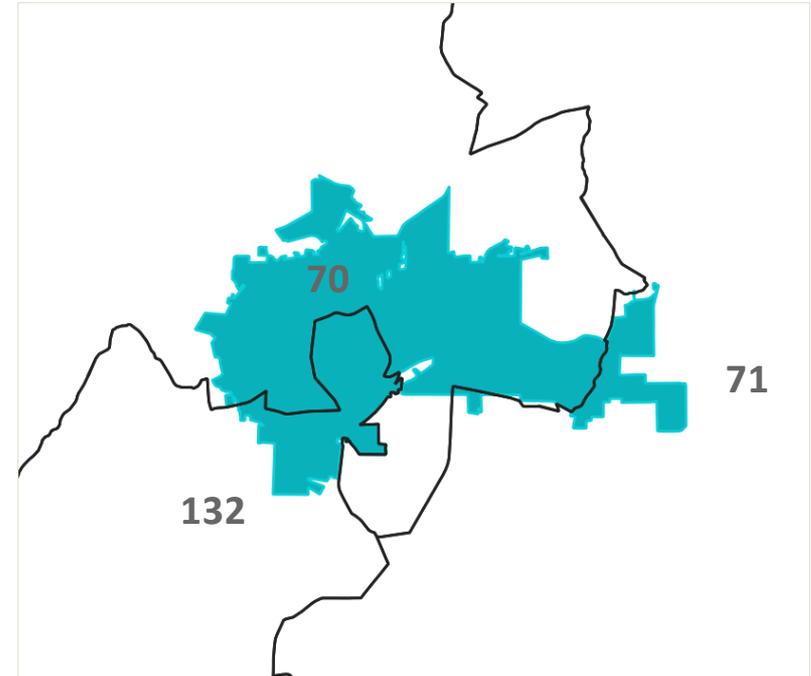
# Newnan Cracked into 3 House Districts



2010—before redistricting



2011—after redistricting

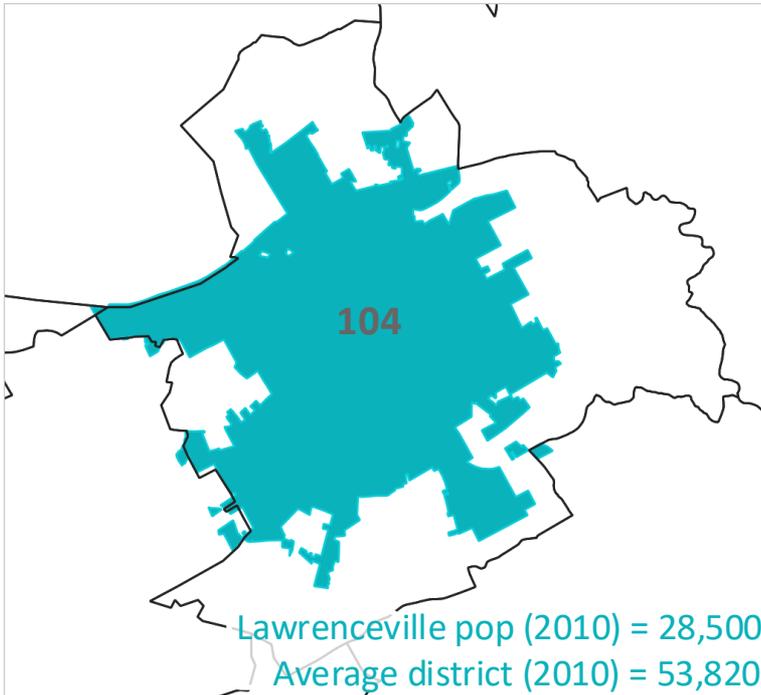


Source: FDGA analysis

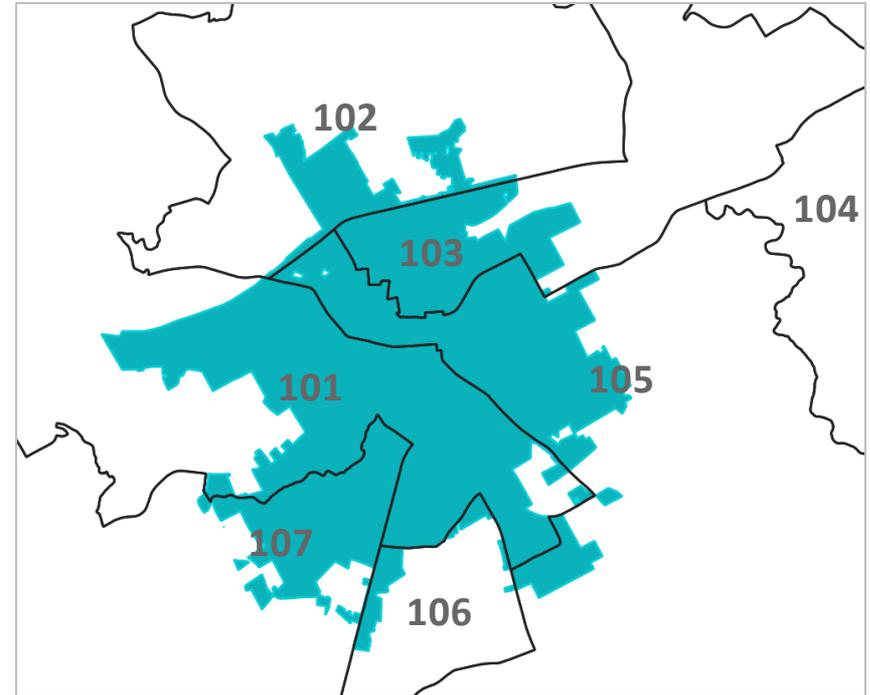
# Lawrenceville Cracked into 6 House Districts



2010—before redistricting

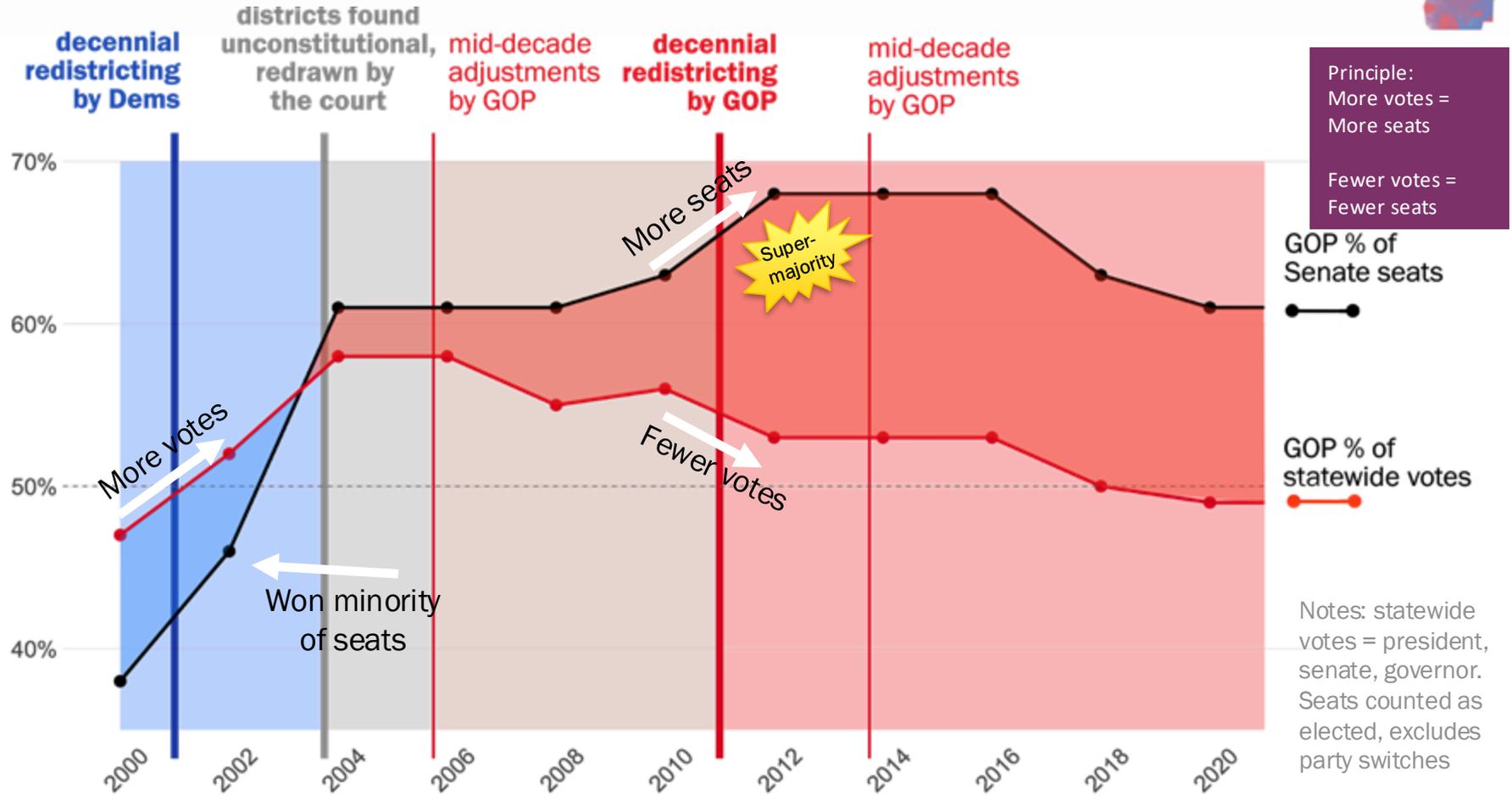


2011—after redistricting



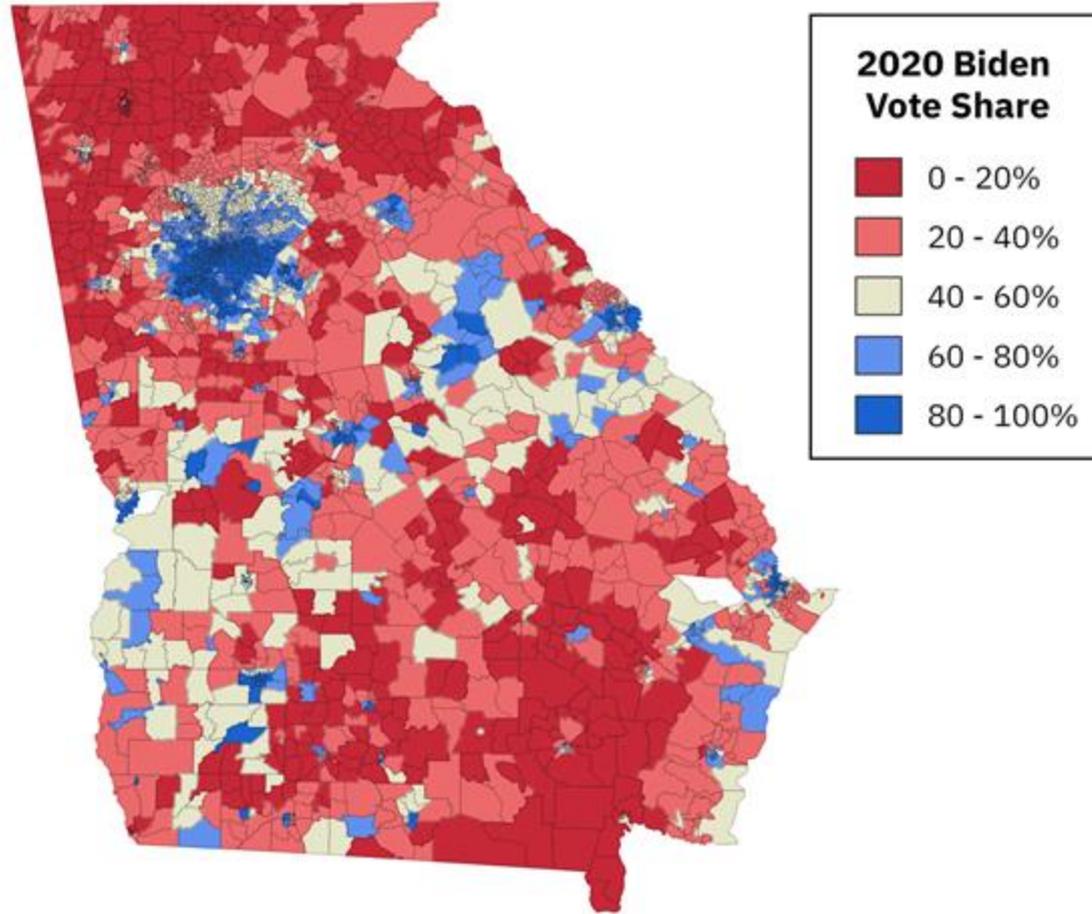
Source: FDGA analysis

# State Senate - Gerrymandering Sustains Partisan Advantage



Source: FDGA analysis of GA Secy. of State election data

# Are the maps fair?



Source: The Voting and Election Science Team (VEST)

# State Senate: Fairness Benchmarks Using Randomly Drawn Maps



Princeton Gerrymandering Project simulation

- Create 500,000 Senate maps at random based on 2010 census
- Comply with laws and traditional redistricting criteria
- Maintain current number of VRA-compliant districts



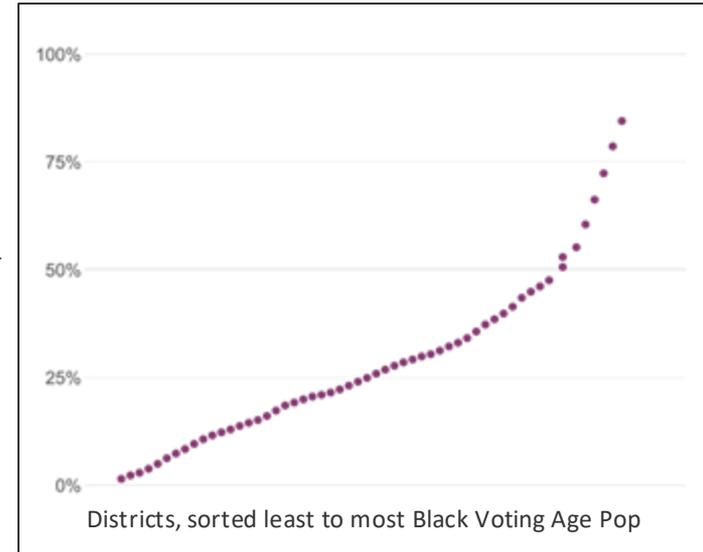
# State Senate: Minority Representation



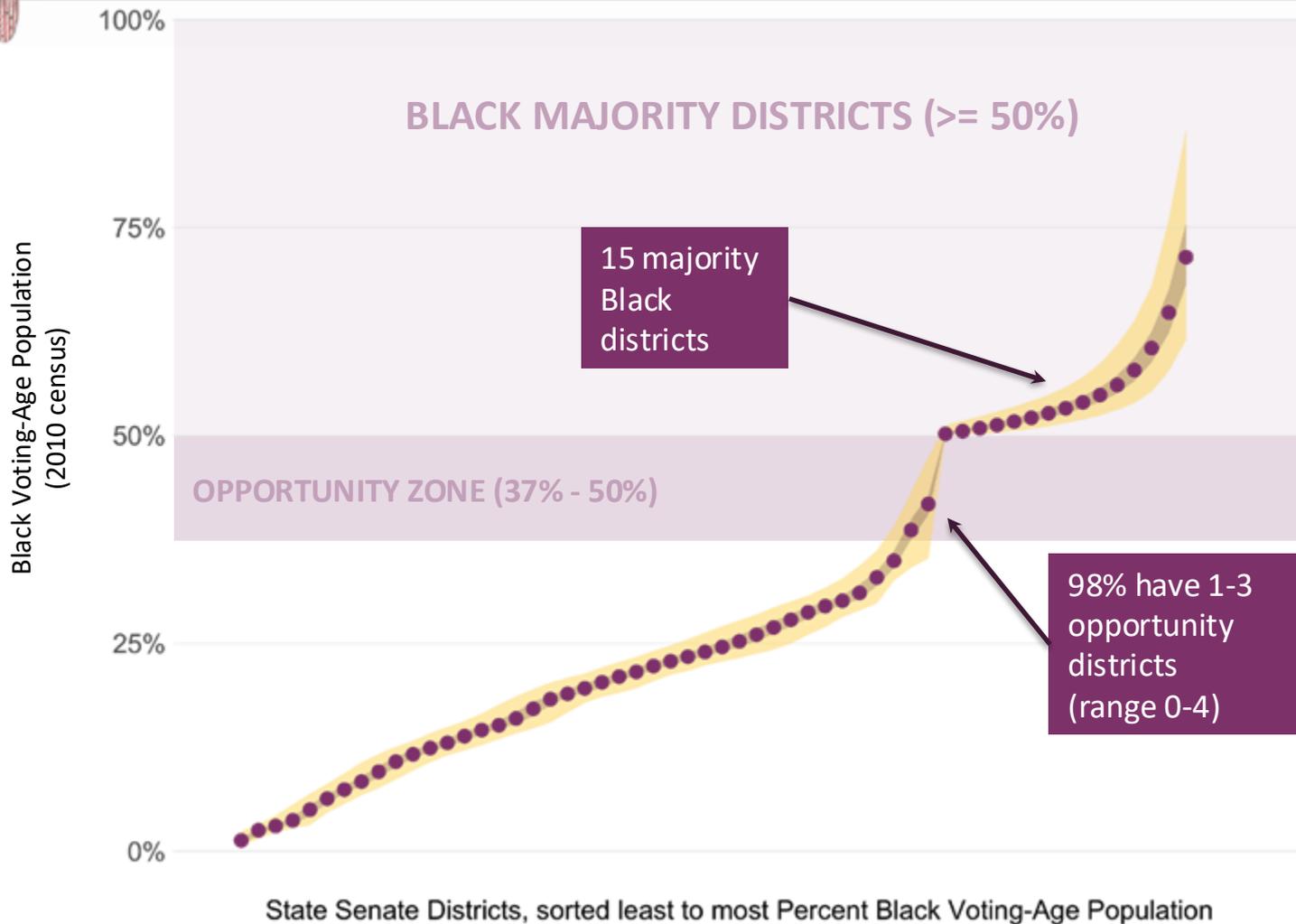
For each of 500,000 simulated maps...

...calculate percent Black Voting Age Population (2010) for each of 56 districts.

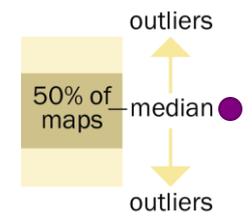
Percent Black Voting Age Population (2010) per district



# State Senate: Simulated Maps Expected Results



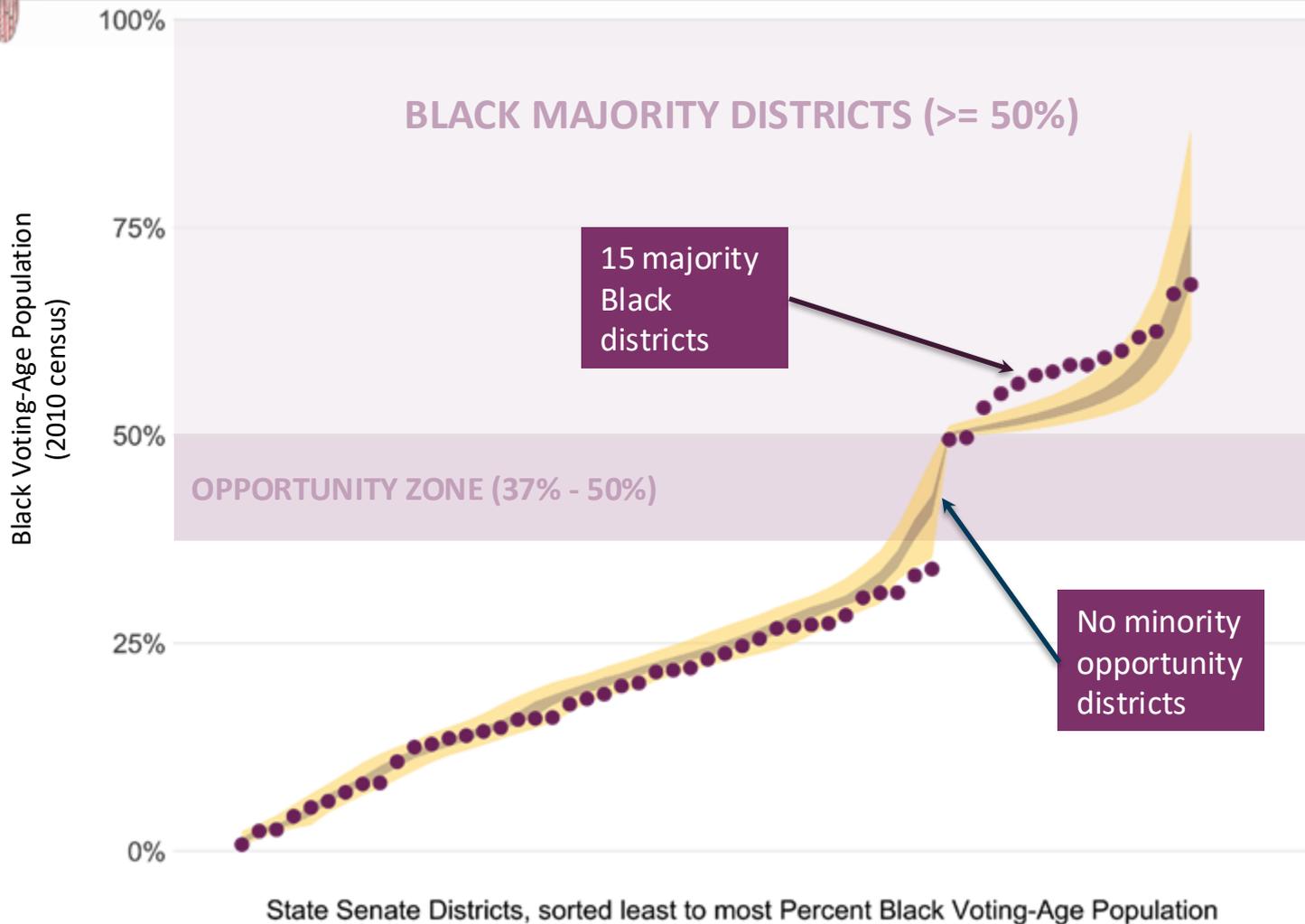
Range of Black Voting Age Population of 500,000 simulated maps



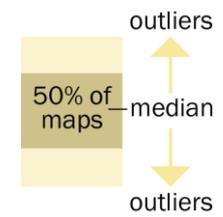
Each dot is a district with the 2010 Black Voting Age Population we would expect to see

Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census

# State Senate: Enacted Map Results



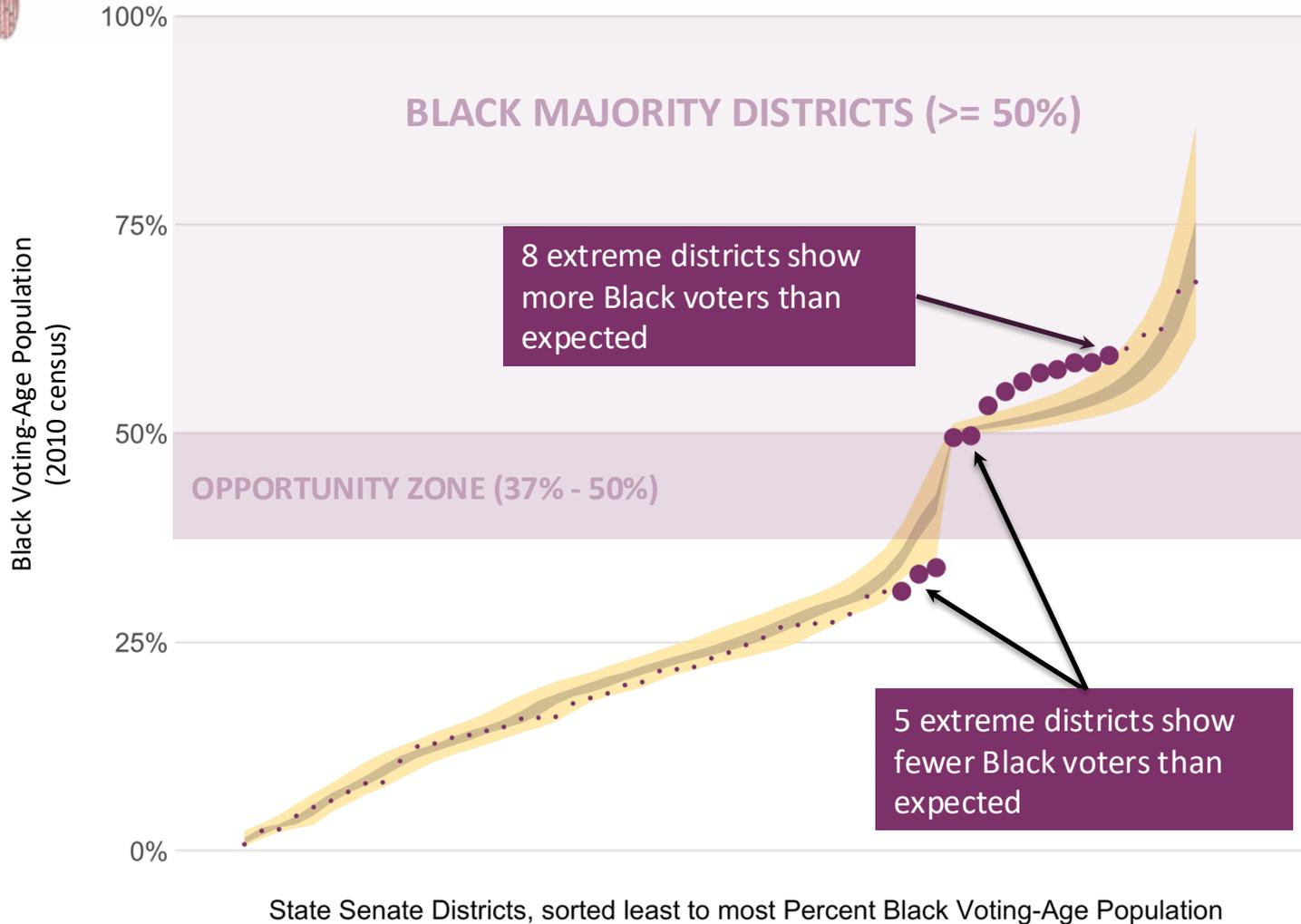
Range of Black Voting Age Population of 500,000 simulated maps



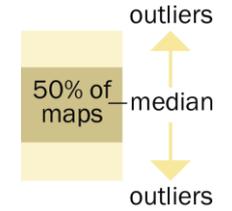
Each dot is one district's actual 2010 Black Voting Age Population

Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census

# State Senate: 13 Extreme Districts



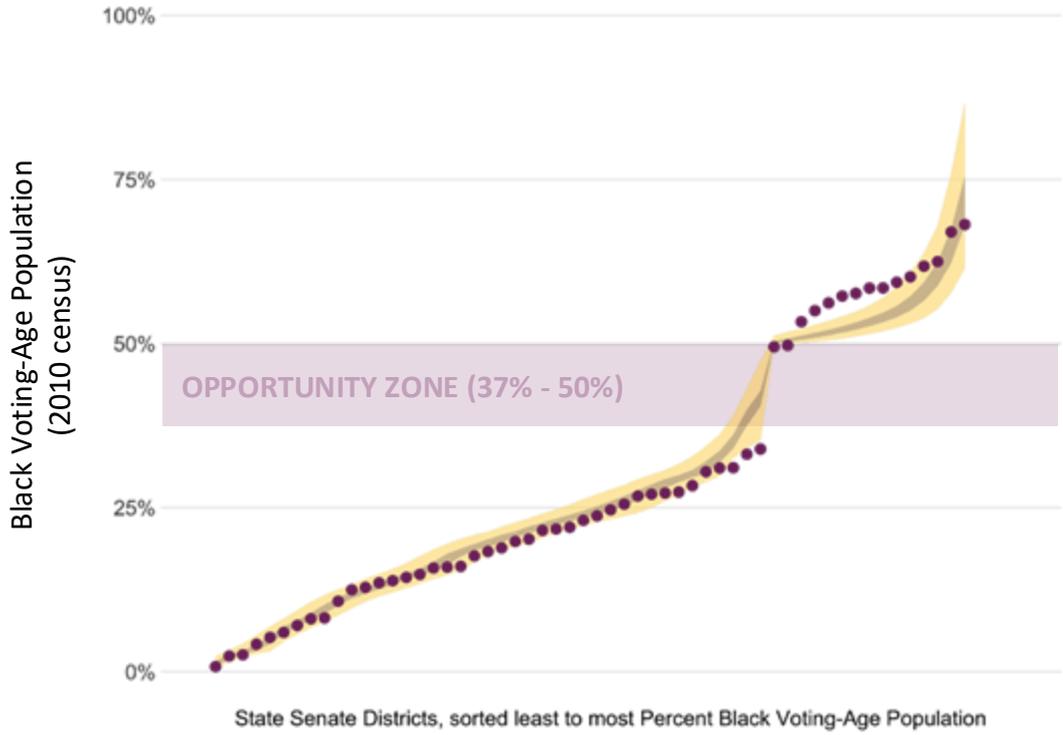
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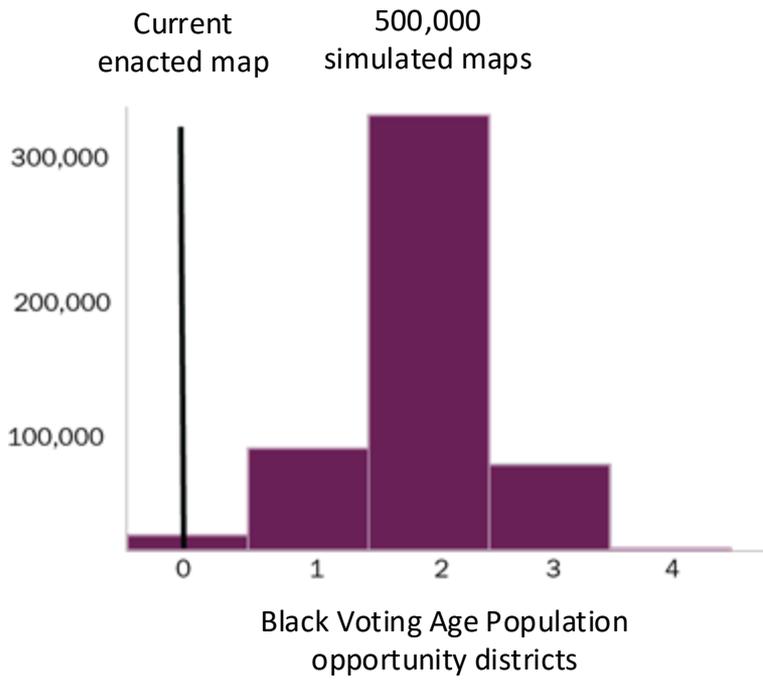
Each dot is one district's actual 2010 Black Voting Age Population

Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census

# State Senate: No Opportunity Districts

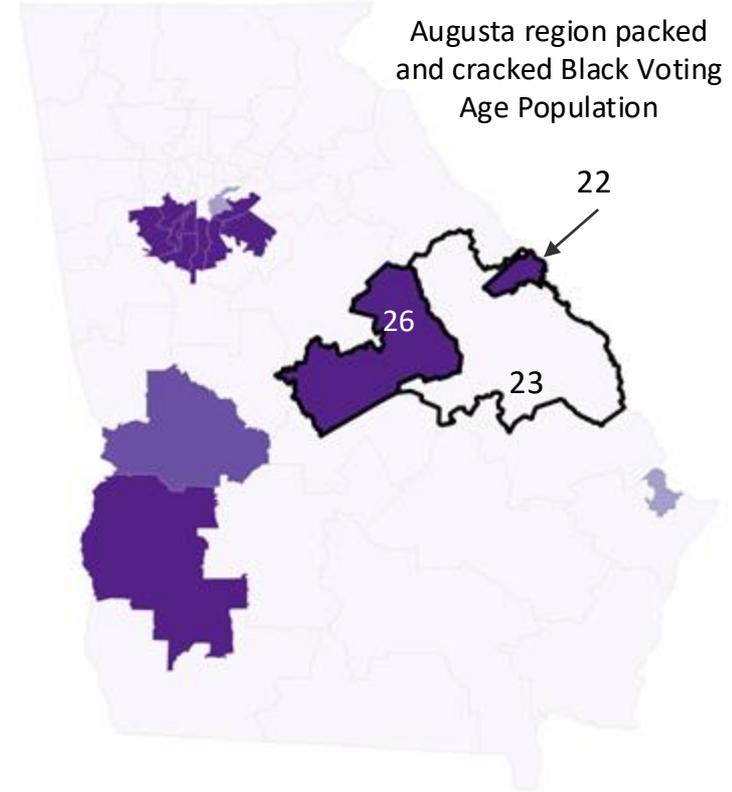
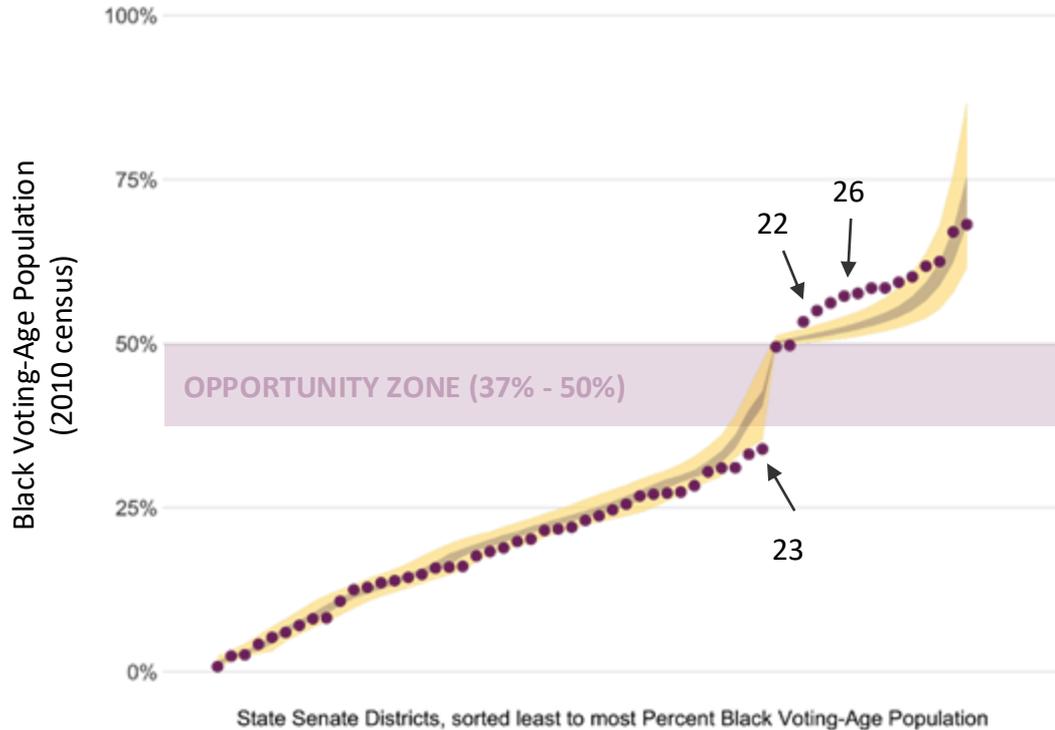


98% of simulated maps have more opportunity districts

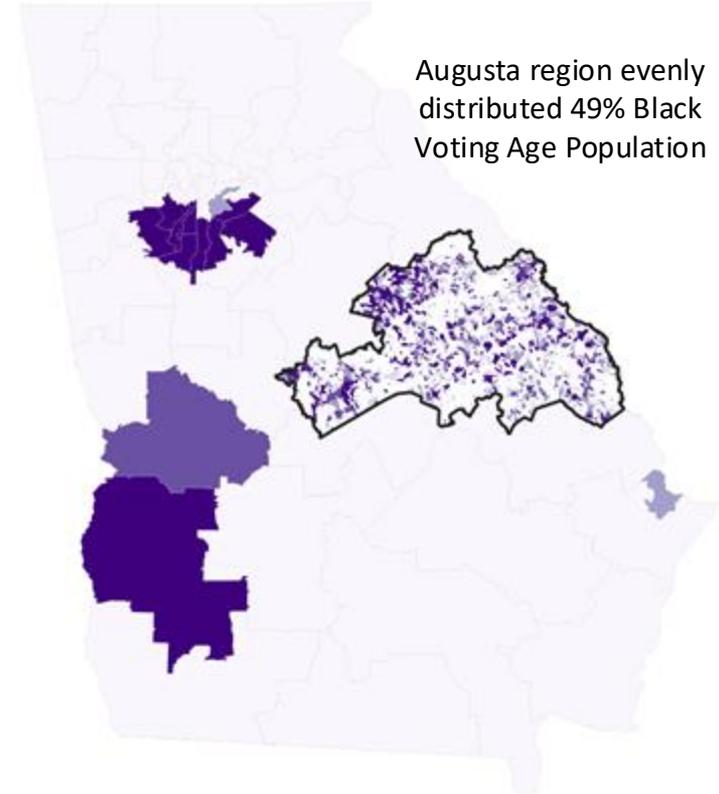
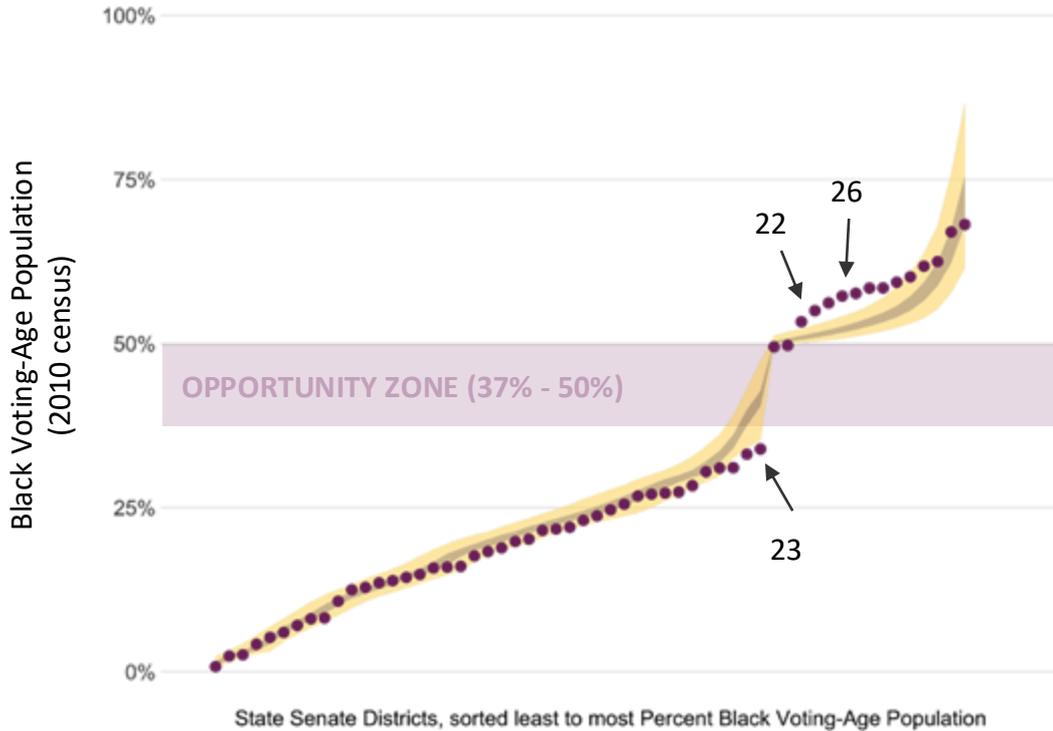


Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census

# State Senate: Minority Packing and Cracking



# State Senate: Minority Packing and Cracking



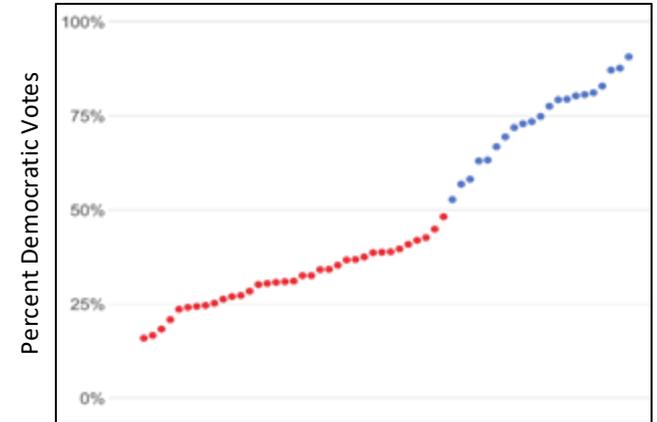
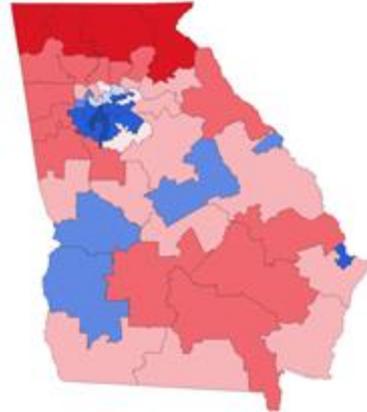
# State Senate: Fairness Benchmarks – Partisan Representation



For each of 500,000 simulated maps...

...estimate State Senate election results from 2016 presidential vote by precinct.

Simulated state Senate results

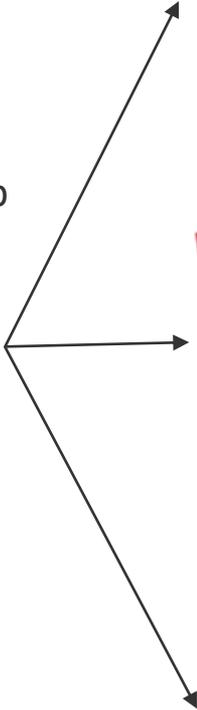


Least Democratic -----> Most Democratic

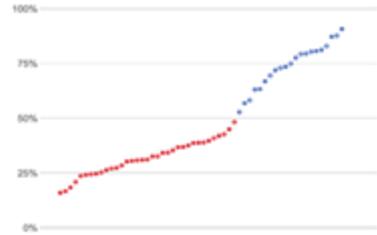
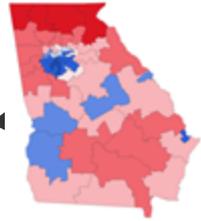
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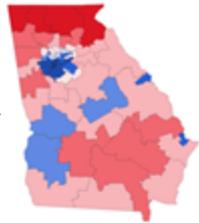
For each map



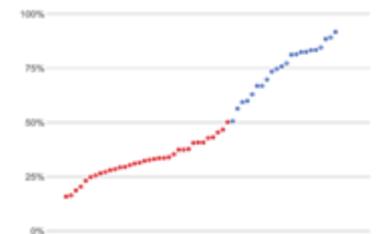
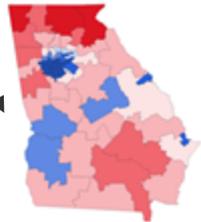
### President 2016



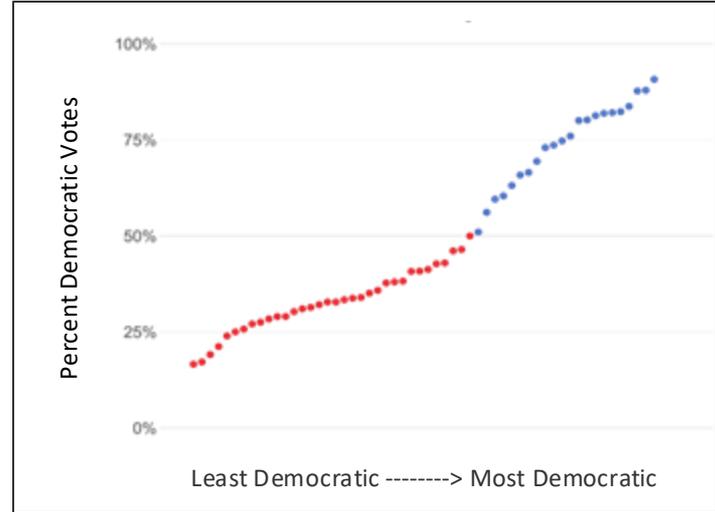
### Governor 2018



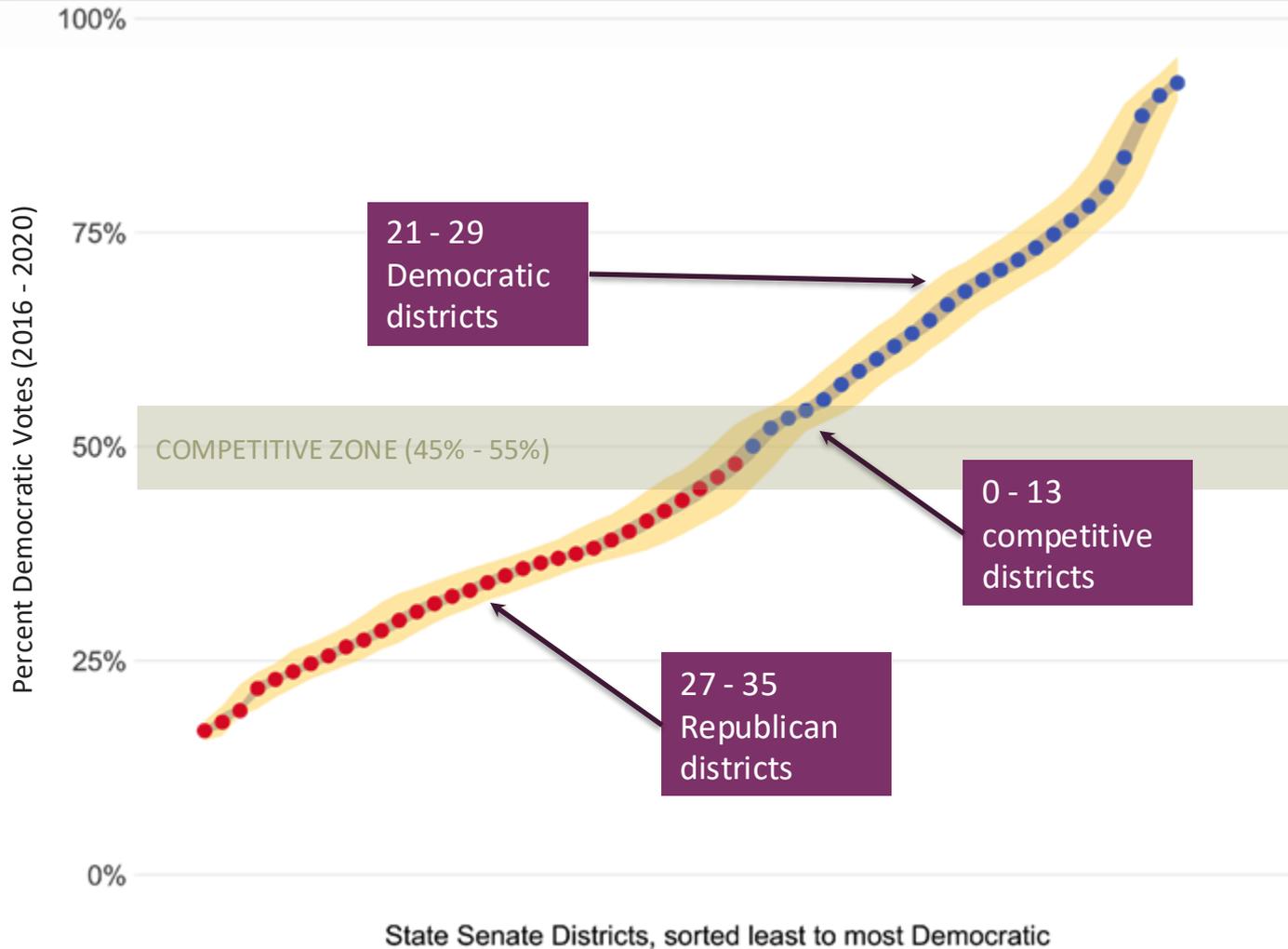
### President 2020



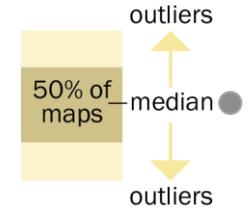
Outcome: average of three recent elections (2016-2020)



# State Senate: Simulated Maps Expected Results



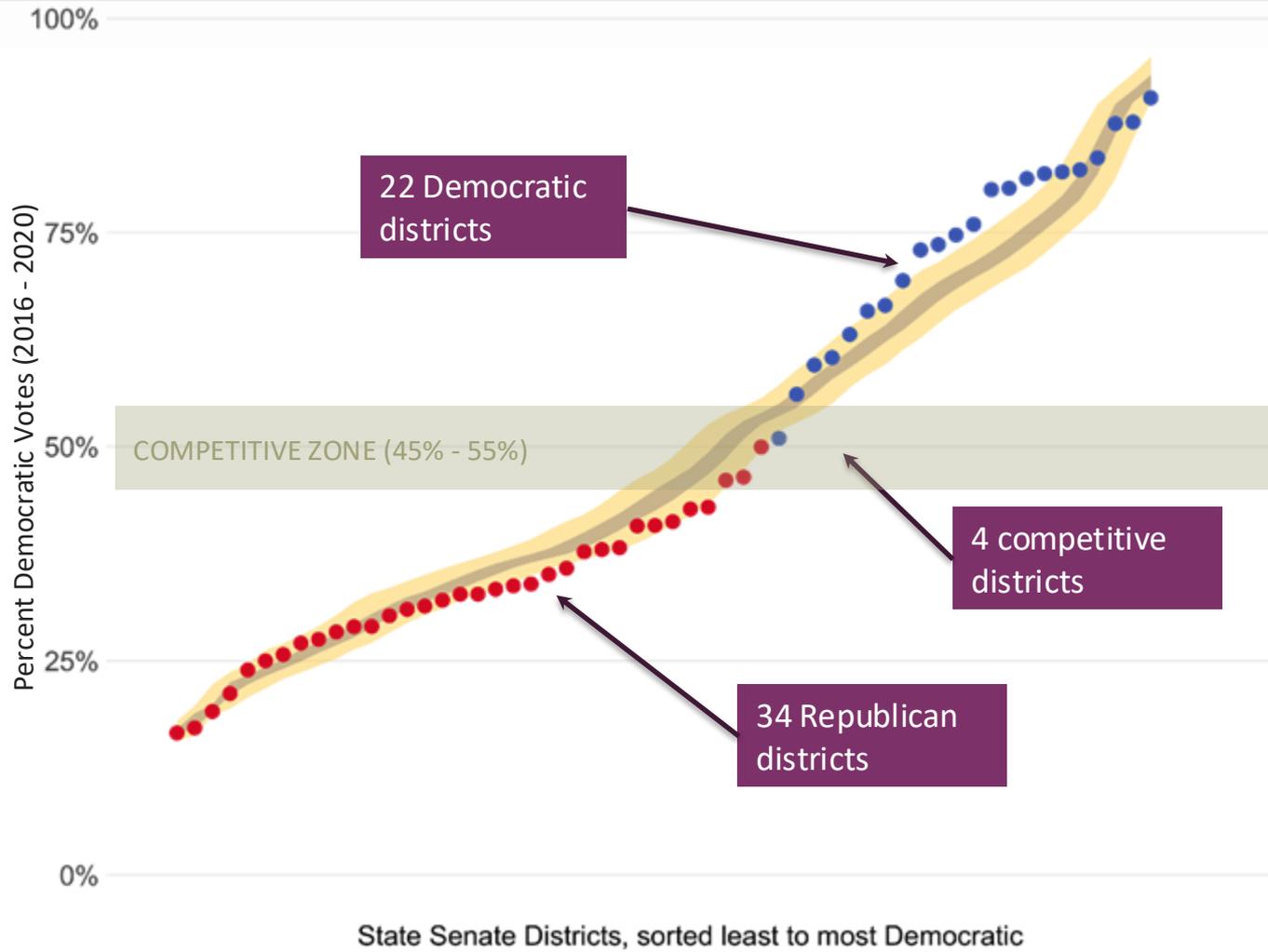
Range of estimated Democratic voters for 500,000 simulated maps



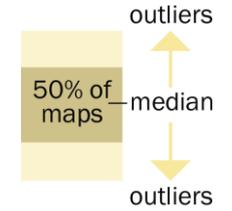
Each dot is a district with the percent of Democratic voters we would expect to see

Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census and 2016-18-20 SoS election data

# State Senate: Enacted Map Results



Range of estimated Democratic voters for 500,000 simulated maps

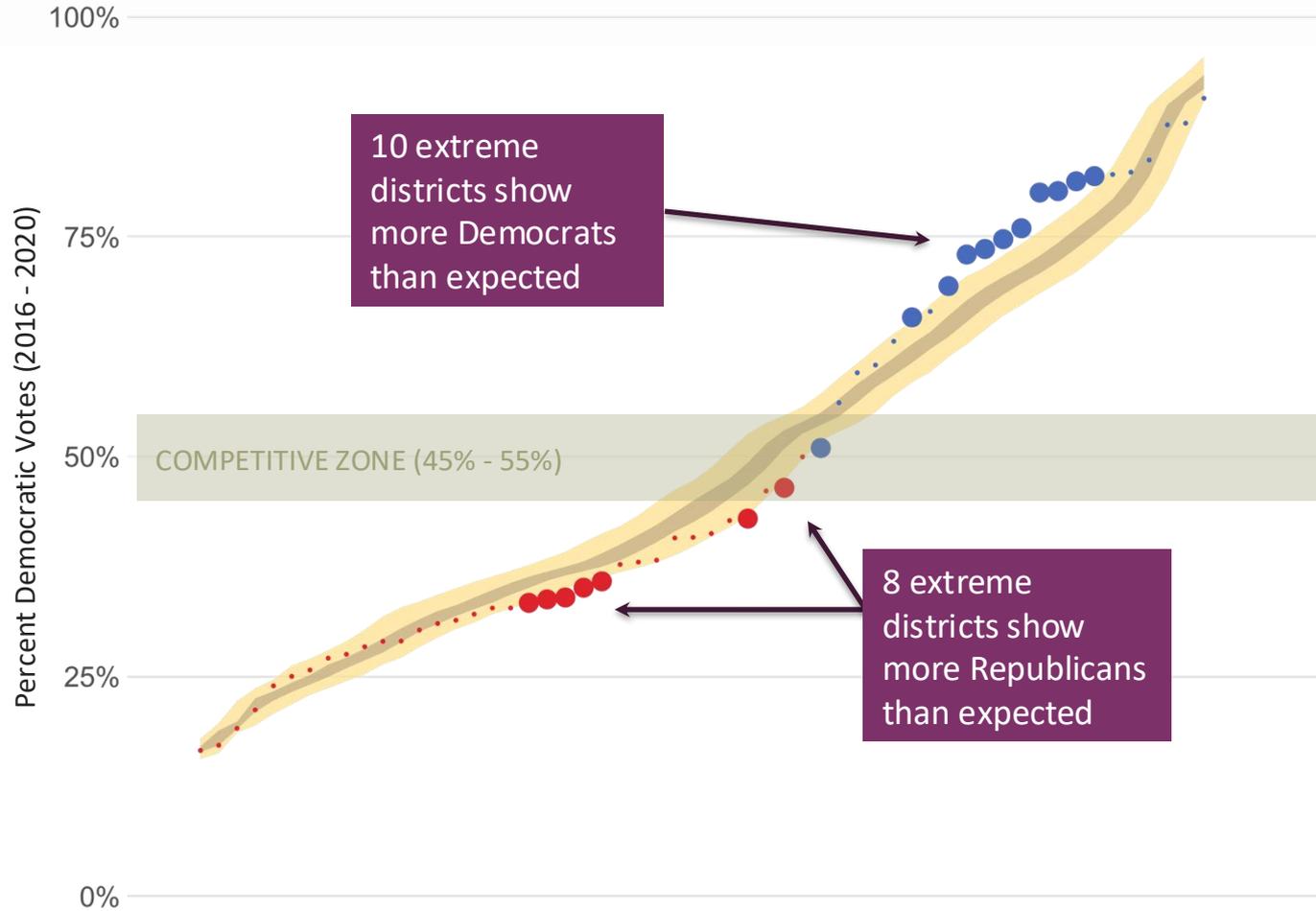


Each dot is one district's actual percent of Democratic voters

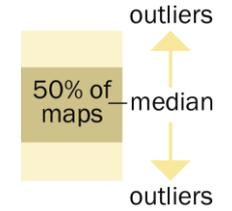
Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census and 2016-18-20 SoS election data

State Senate Districts, sorted least to most Democratic

# State Senate: Enacted Map Results



Range of estimated Democratic voters for 500,000 simulated maps



Each dot is one district's actual percent of Democratic voters

Source: PGP simulation using 2010 census and 2016-18-20 SoS election data

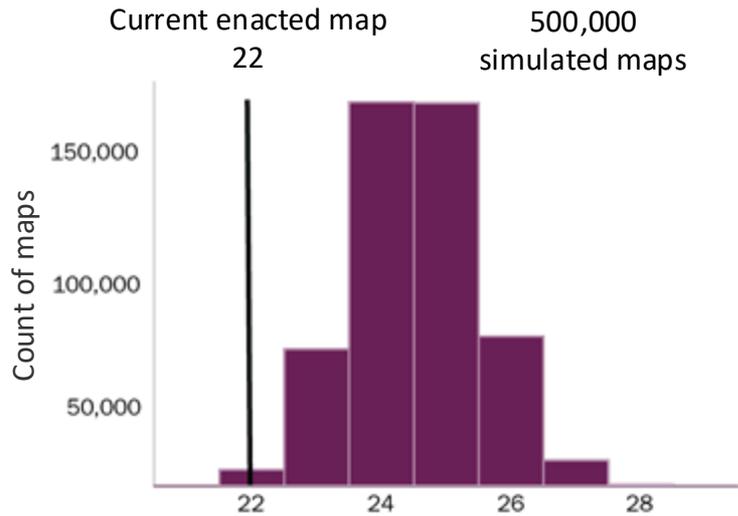
State Senate Districts, sorted least to most Democratic

# State Senate: Fewer Democratic and Competitive Seats

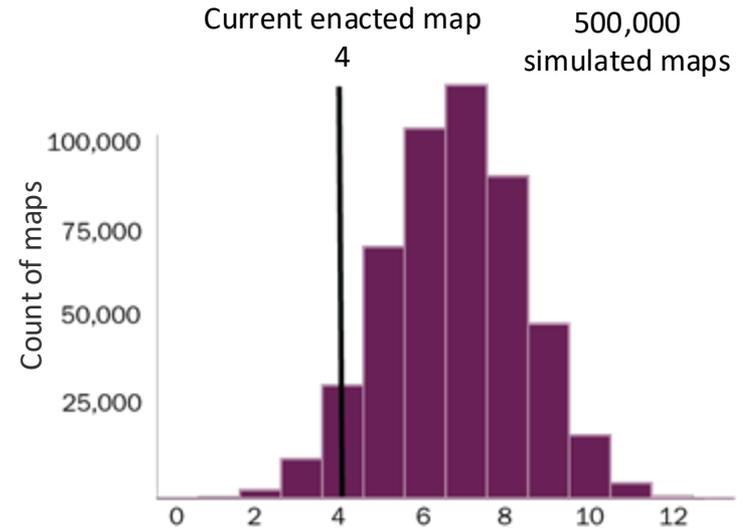


Democratic districts:  
98% of simulated maps have 1-6 more than enacted map

Competitive districts:  
91% of simulated maps have 1-9 more than enacted map



Estimated Democratic districts  
applying an average of three elections  
(2016-2020)



Estimated competitive districts  
applying an average of three elections  
(2016-2020)

# Gerrymandering Contributes to Political Polarization



## Uncompetitive elections mean unresponsive politicians

Opposition candidates don't run

Elections are decided in the primary

People don't turn out to vote

Worst case-scenario: uncontested elections

## Uncontested elections limit voter choice

50% of state Senate elections were uncontested (28)

52% of state House elections were uncontested (94)

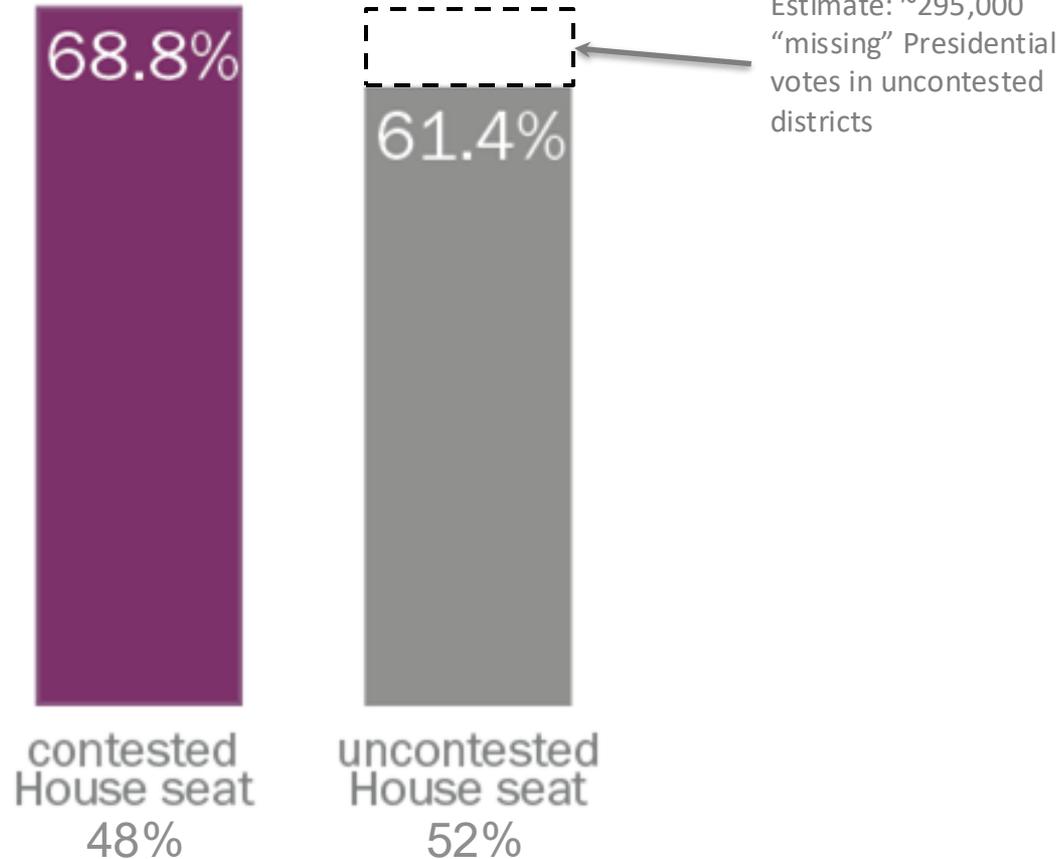
- National average is 35%

# Uncontested Elections Reduce Voter Turnout



## Voter turnout, 2020 Presidential election

Average voter turnout for President was **7.4 percentage-points lower** in uncontested House districts



# Summary of Phase 1 Findings



	Benchmarks / Fairness tests (compared to unbiased maps)			Observations
	Partisan balance	Competitive districts	Minority representation	
<b>State House</b>	<p><b>X</b></p> <p>1-7 fewer Dem districts than 83% of unbiased maps</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>23 competitive districts, more than 81% of unbiased maps</p>	<p>✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 47 Black majority districts (as expected)</li> <li>• 8 opportunity districts (more than expected)</li> </ul>	<p>Decennial gerrymandering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dems – 2001</li> <li>• Reps – 2011</li> </ul> <p>Extensive mid-decade redistricting</p> <p>2/3 of small cities split</p> <p>Black voter packing and cracking</p>
<b>State Senate</b>	<p><b>X</b></p> <p>1-6 fewer Dem districts than 98% of unbiased maps</p>	<p><b>X</b></p> <p>1-9 fewer competitive districts than 91% of unbiased maps</p>	<p><b>X</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 Black majority districts (as expected)</li> <li>• Missing 1-3 opportunity districts compared to 98% of unbiased maps</li> </ul>	<p>Decennial gerrymandering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dems – 2001</li> <li>• Reps – 2011</li> </ul> <p>Extensive mid-decade redistricting</p> <p>Black voter packing and cracking eliminates opportunity districts</p>
<b>Congress</b>	<p>✓</p> <p>Balanced as of 2016-2020</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>2 competitive districts, 78% have 1-2</p>	<p>✓</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Black majority districts (as expected)</li> <li>• Slight chance to create 1 opportunity district</li> </ul>	<p>Mid-decade redistricting</p> <p>Demographic shift has increased competitiveness of 2011 map</p>

# FDGA / PGP Producing Benchmarks for 2021 Maps



	Benchmarks / Fairness tests (range of values based on final 2020 census data)		
	Partisan balance	Competitive districts	Minority representation
<b>State House</b>	Republicans: W-X districts Democrats: Y-Z districts	X-Y competitive districts	W-X Majority-minority districts Y-Z opportunity districts
<b>State Senate</b>	Republicans: W-X districts Democrats: Y-Z districts	X-Y competitive districts	W-X Majority-minority districts Y-Z opportunity districts
<b>Congress</b>	Republicans: W-X districts Democrats: Y-Z districts	X-Y competitive districts	W-X Majority-minority districts Y-Z opportunity districts

Benchmarks pending release of full 2020 census data

- Use August 16th release if possible
- Full redistricting data released Sept. 30

Evaluation of maps pending release by legislature

# The Benefits of Independent Benchmarks



- Transparency – check by independent experts
- Restores public trust and confidence in the process
- Demonstrates compliance with Voting Rights Act
- May help avoid litigation
- Fairer districts

# It's Your Turn to Speak!



## Public hearings – watch & testify

- June 15 – kickoff – replay on General Assembly website
- June 28 – Atlanta - Georgia State Capitol, Room 341
- June 29 – Cumming - South Forsyth High School
- June 30 – Dalton - Dalton State College
- July 6 - Athens
- July 7 - Augusta
- July 26 - Brunswick
- July 27 - Albany
- July 28 - Columbus
- July 29 - Macon
- July 30 - Virtual

## Testimony toolkit

[www.FairDistrictsGA.org](http://www.FairDistrictsGA.org) - Your redistricting resource

Next Town Hall: Monday July 26, 7PM



Community input must shape redistricting in Georgia. Learn how to tell your story at redistricting public input meetings!

Tuesday, June 22nd  
5pm to 7pm  
Register @  
[bit.ly/TellYourStory0622](http://bit.ly/TellYourStory0622)

**This is a nonpartisan event**





# Questions?



Princeton  
Gerrymandering Project



# Redistricting in Georgia: A 20-Year History

## Appendix



**Princeton  
Gerrymandering  
Project**

