



DOES GEORGIA HAVE COMPETITIVE ELECTIONS?

AND WHAT WOULD CHANGE IF IT DID?

**Fair Districts GA Town Hall
September 30, 2024**

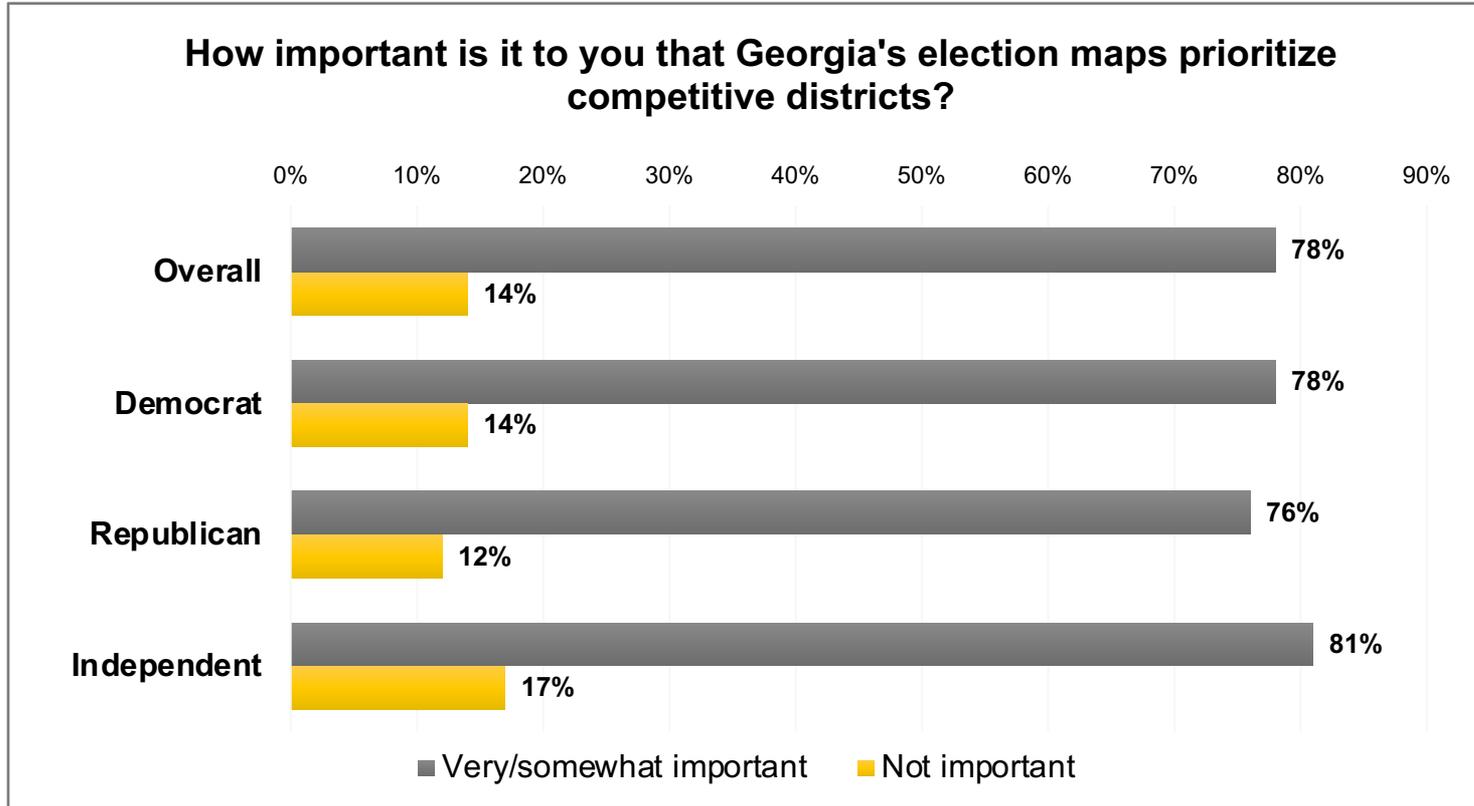
Imagine Georgia With Competitive Elections

- Election outcomes would change with voter preferences
- Major statewide races would be very close
- Control of General Assembly would be subject to change every time
- Elections would be decided in November, not in primaries
- More moderate legislators would appeal to wider spectrum of voters
- Your vote would always matter

Is this possible?



Georgia voters overwhelmingly want competitive districts



Sources: July 2022 GA Redistricting Poll (ACLU, LWV, CC, FDGA)

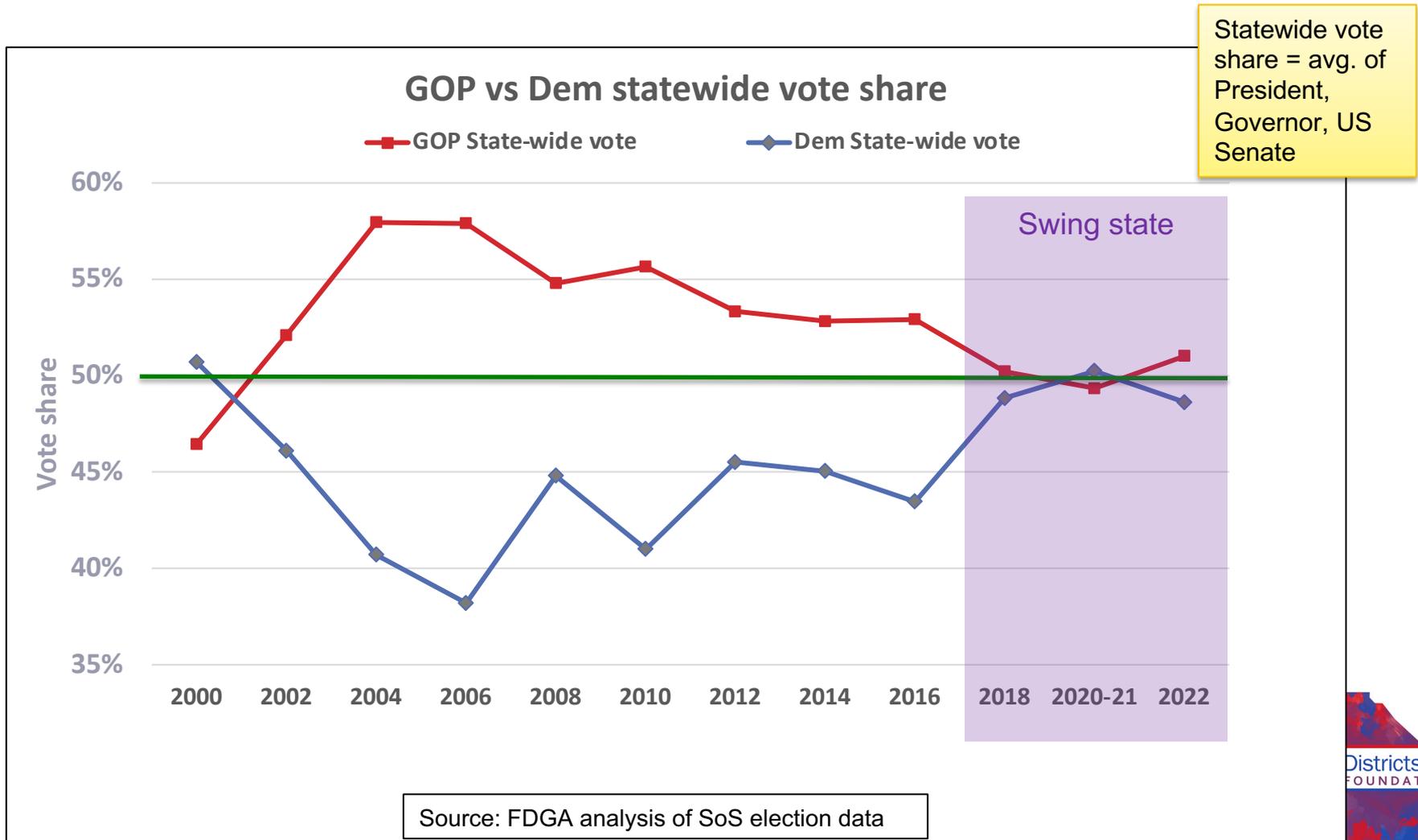
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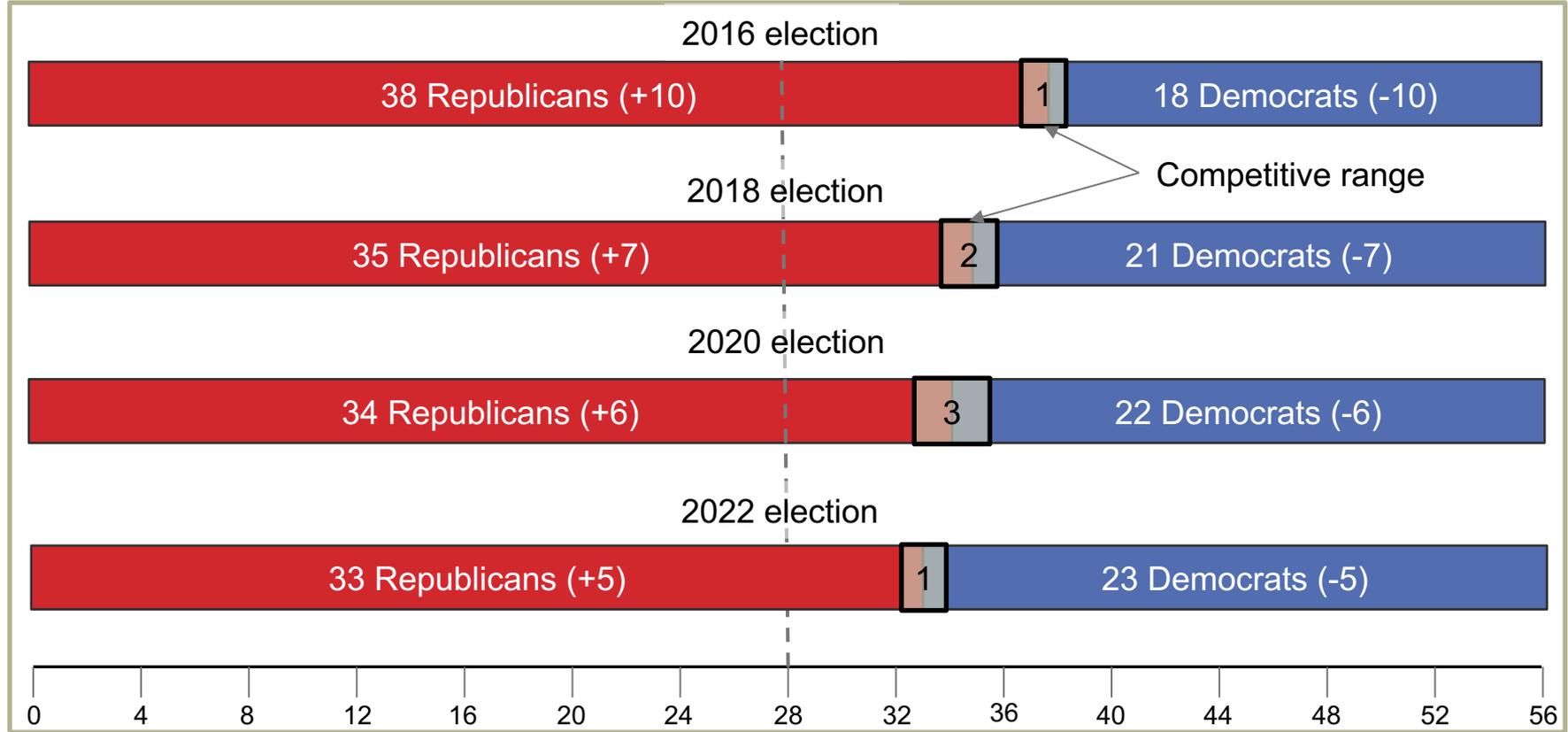
Defining Contested and Competitive Races

- Contested race:
 - Generally: At least 2 candidates
 - In this presentation: At least 2 candidates in November general election
- Competitive race:
 - Margin of victory $\leq 7\%$
 - Vote totals: winner $\leq 53.5\%$, loser $\geq 46.5\%$

Georgia is a competitive, swing state for statewide races.



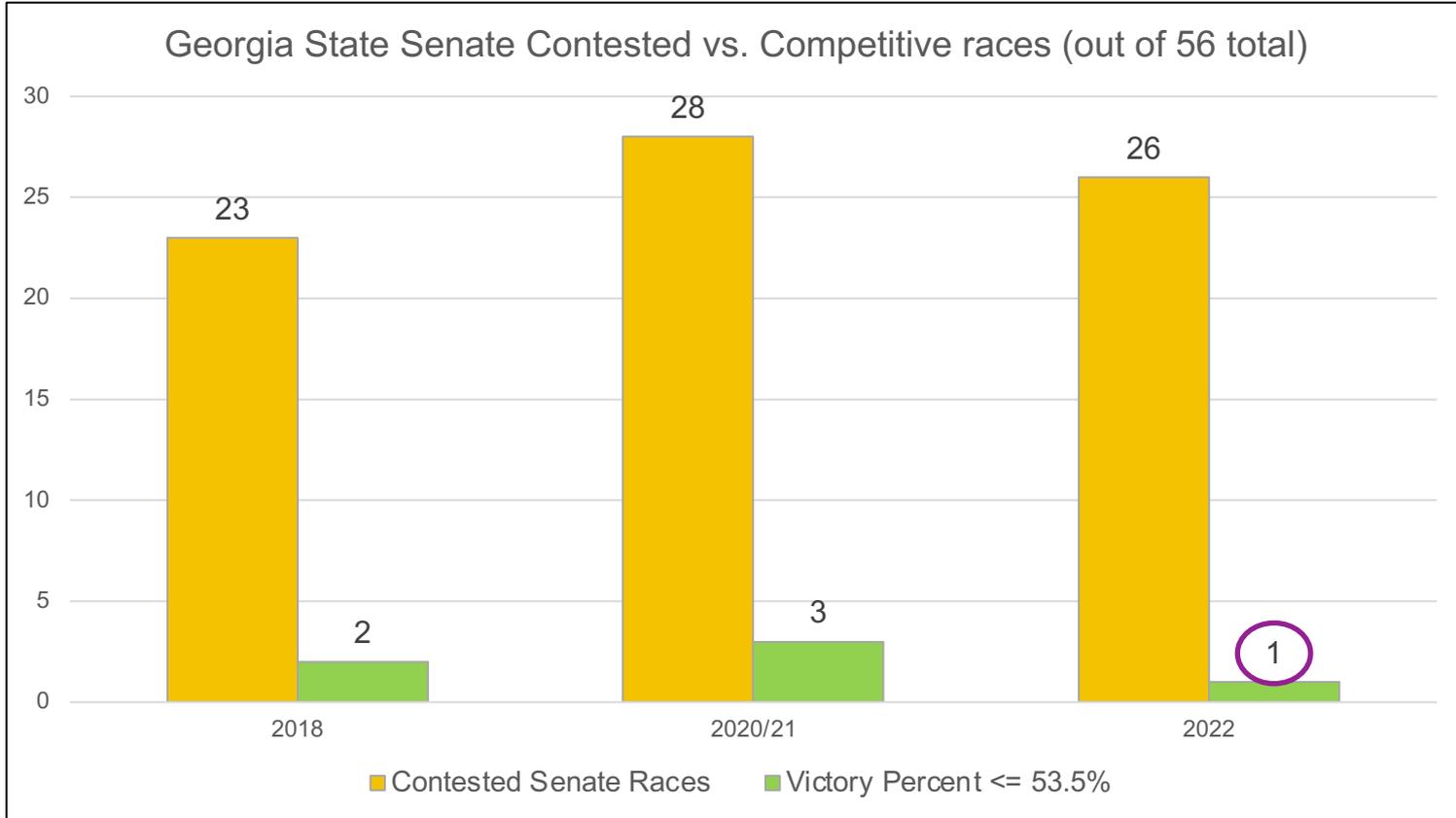
GA Senate partisan gap narrowing, but not enough to swing the election



Source: FDGA analysis of Sec of State voting data 2016-22.
Note: Excludes vacancies and legislators who switch parties after election.



Paradox: Fewer Senate competitive races despite narrowing partisan gap and more contested races

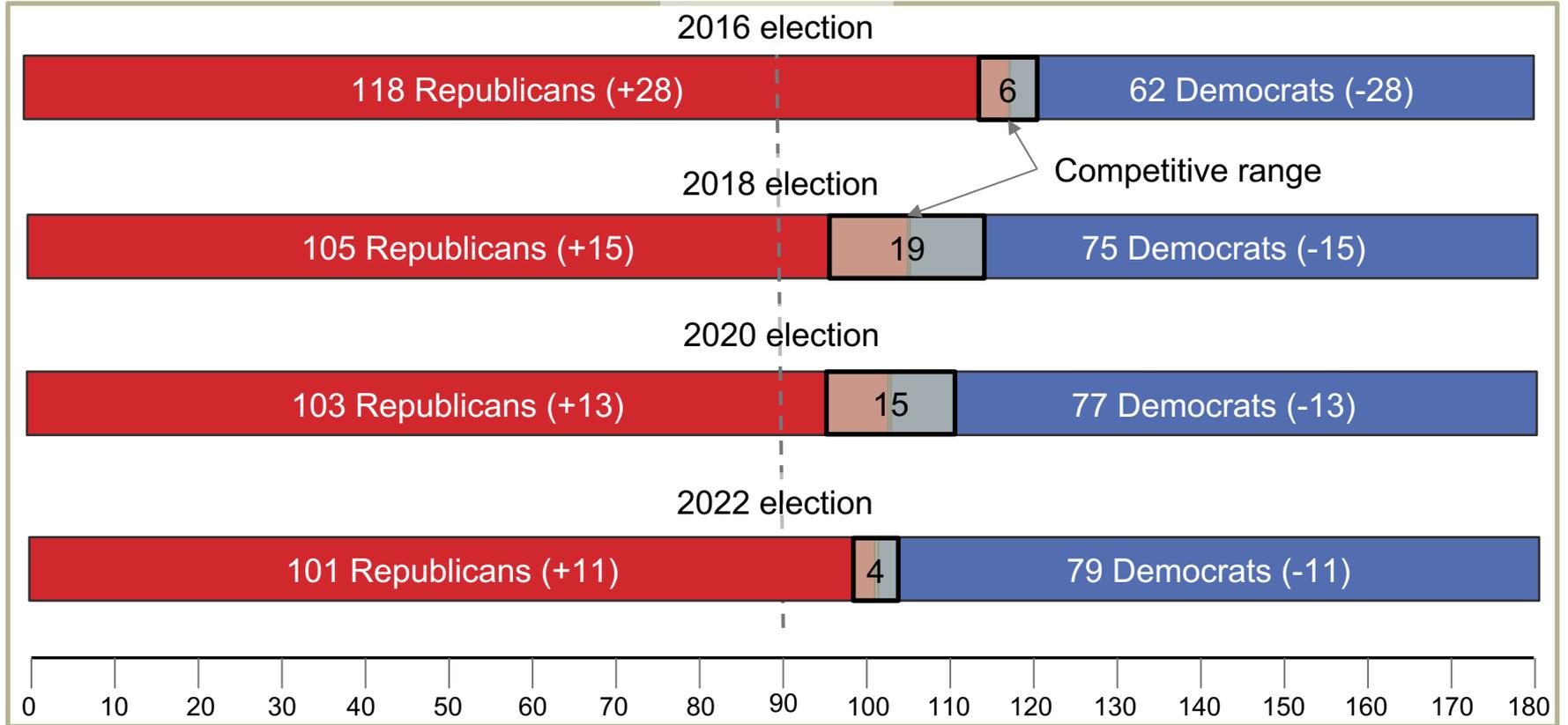


Source: FDGA analysis of SoS election data

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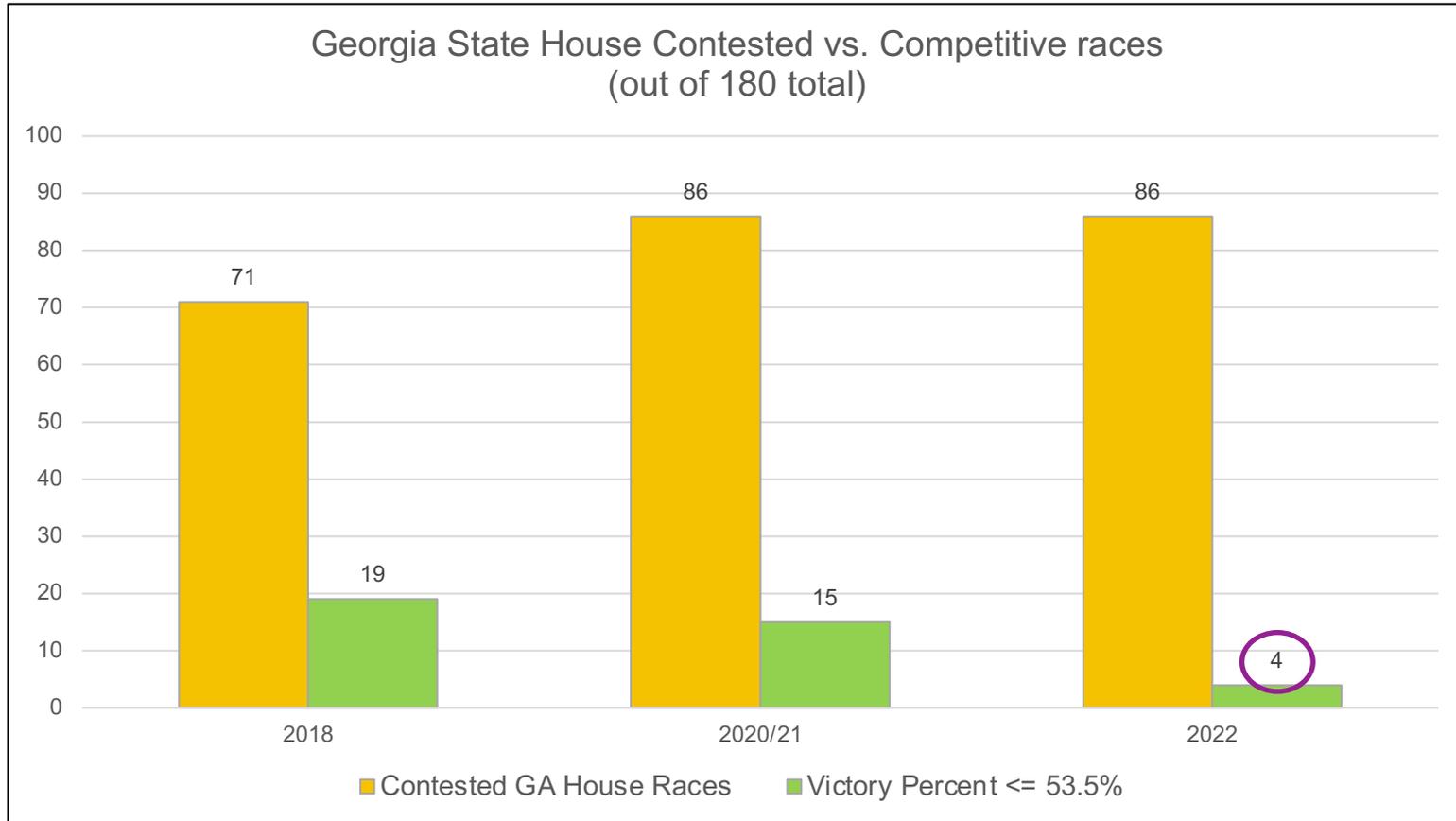
GA House partisan gap narrowing, but not enough to swing the election



Source: FDGA analysis of Sec of State voting data 2016-22.
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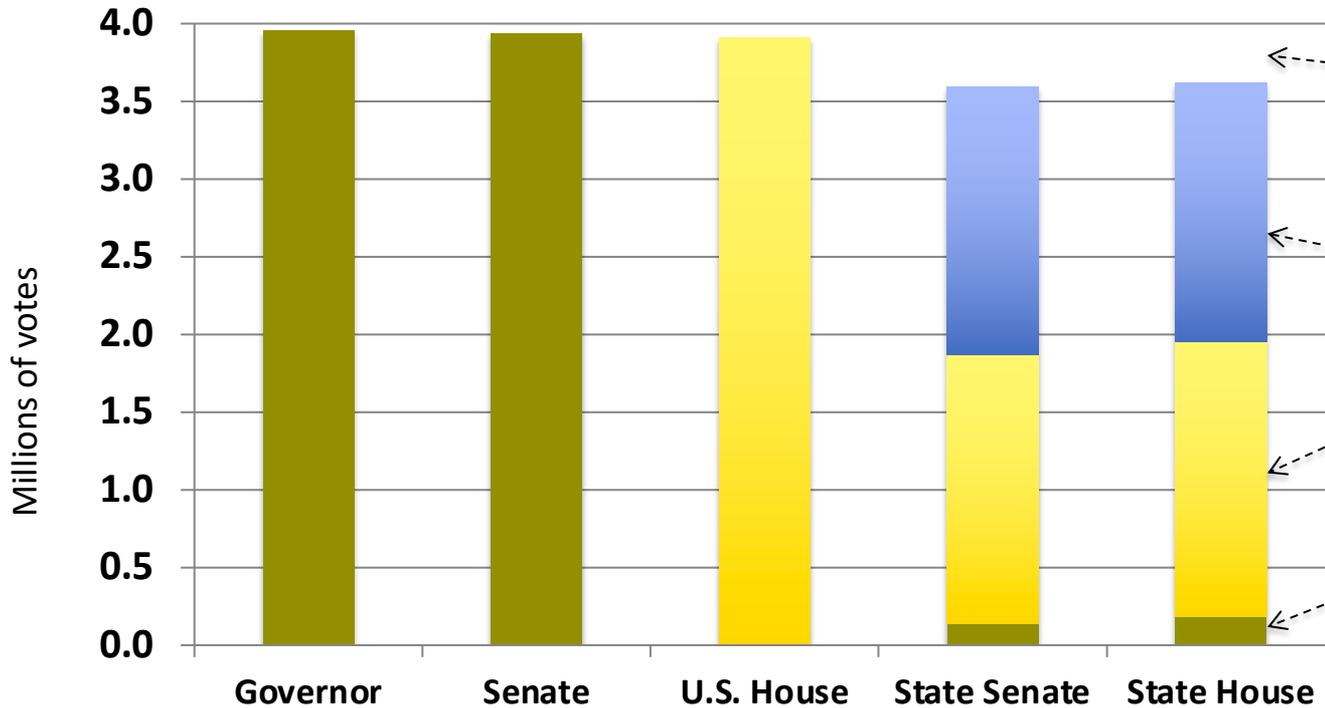


Paradox: Fewer House competitive races despite narrowing partisan gap and more contested races



Voters had very little real choice in General Assembly races in 2022

November 8, 2022 votes cast



Uncontested races
 GA Senate: 30 = 54%
 GA House: 94 = 52%

No vote cast in state house race: 334,000 fewer than governor's race (8%)

42% of votes cast in uncontested races

45% of votes cast in non-competitive races

5% of votes cast in competitive (<53.5%) races

■ Competitive (<=53.5%) races
 ■ Non-competitive races
■ Uncontested races



Source: FDGA analysis of SoS election data

Statewide vs. District-level elections

- Statewide elections are already competitive
 - Driven by demographic change and voter preferences
- Factors affecting district-level elections
 - Voter self-sorting by geography
 - Design of the map
 - Local voter preferences and turnout



About the 2023 Remedial Maps

- Congress, State House, State Senate maps redrawn under Federal court order
- Purpose: Add Black majority districts to comply with Voting Rights Act
- Legislature added required districts but included unnecessary partisan changes to “even the score”

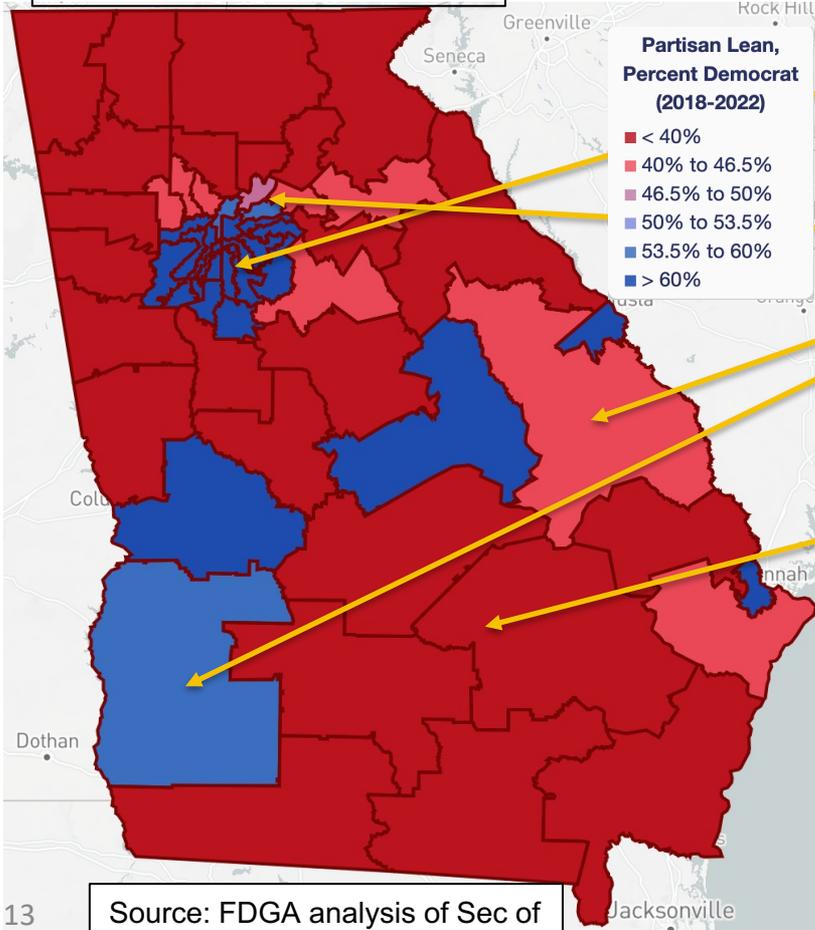
"This map is designed to maintain the existing partisan balance."

– Senator Bill Cowsert, Committee Secretary, in redistricting hearings
November-December 2023



Georgia voters sort themselves by political preference

New State Senate map enacted for 2024 election (district lean)



High Democratic concentration → No Republican districts

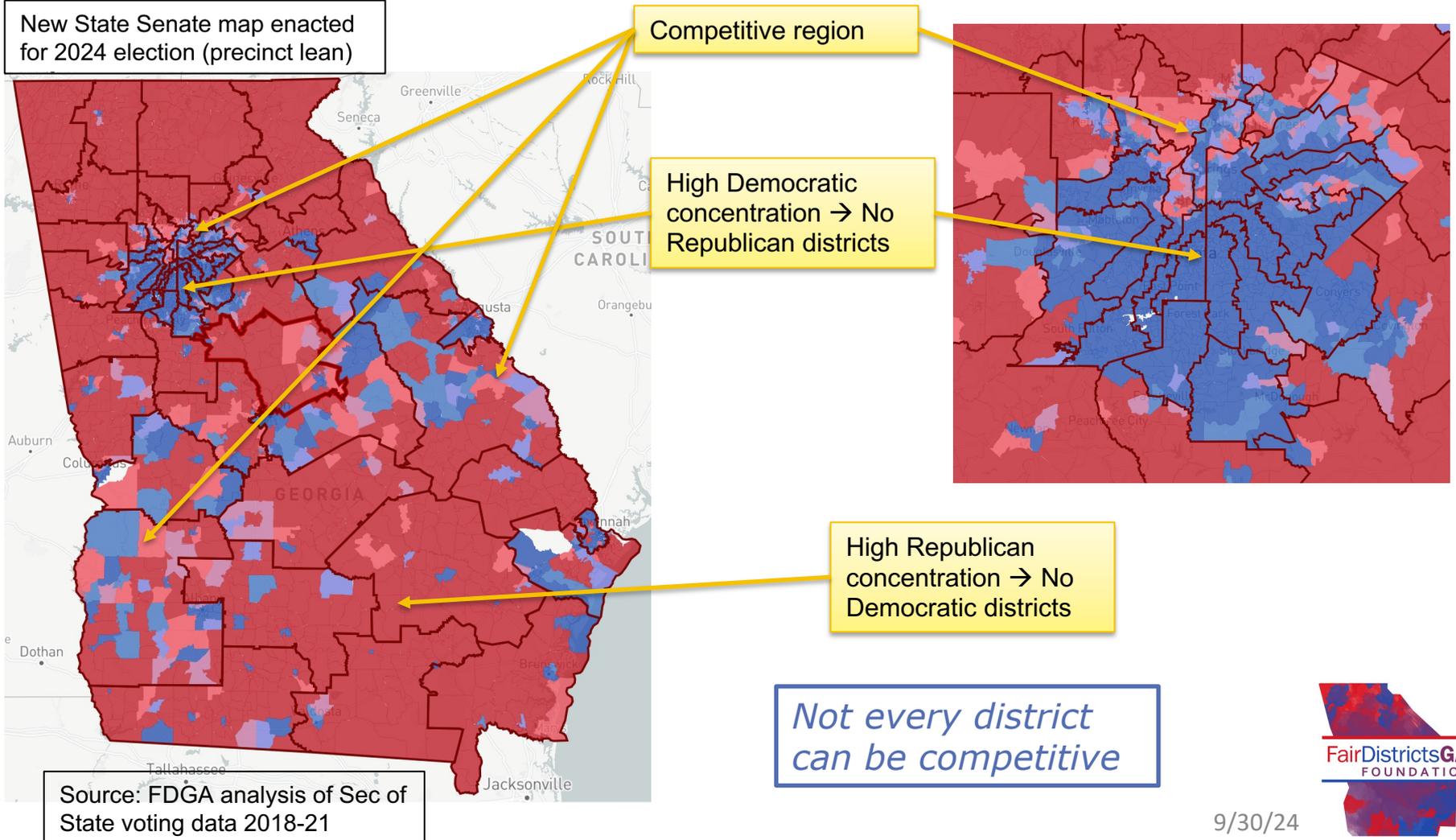
Competitive region

High Republican concentration → No Democratic districts

Not every district can be competitive

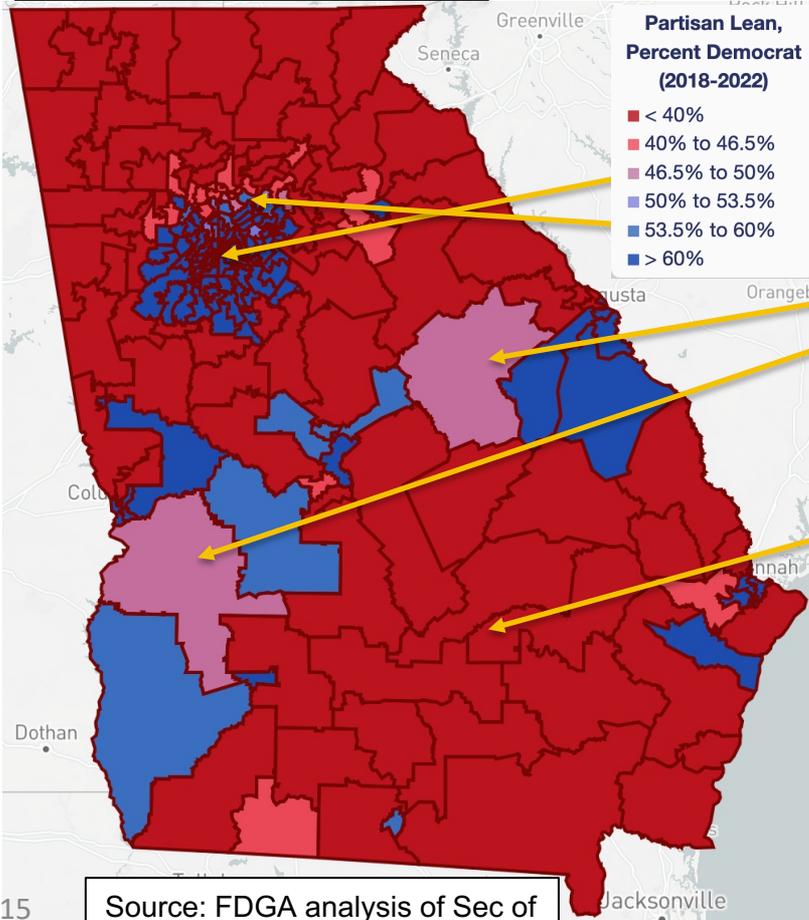
Source: FDGA analysis of Sec of State voting data 2018-22

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Competitive regions

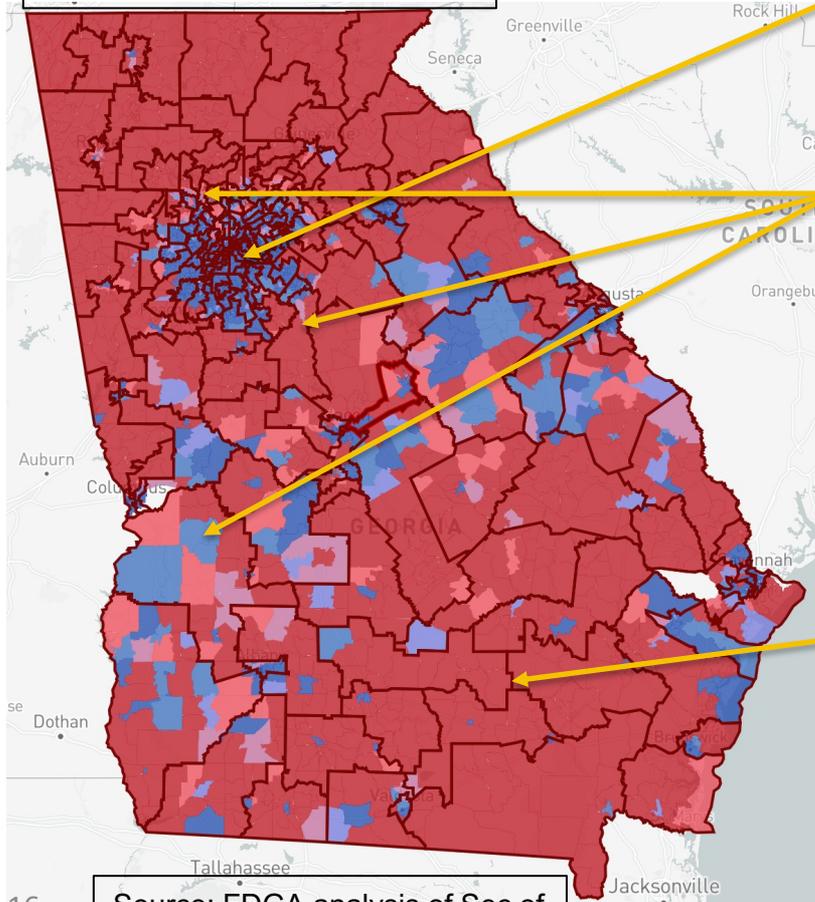
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Georgia voters sort themselves by political preference

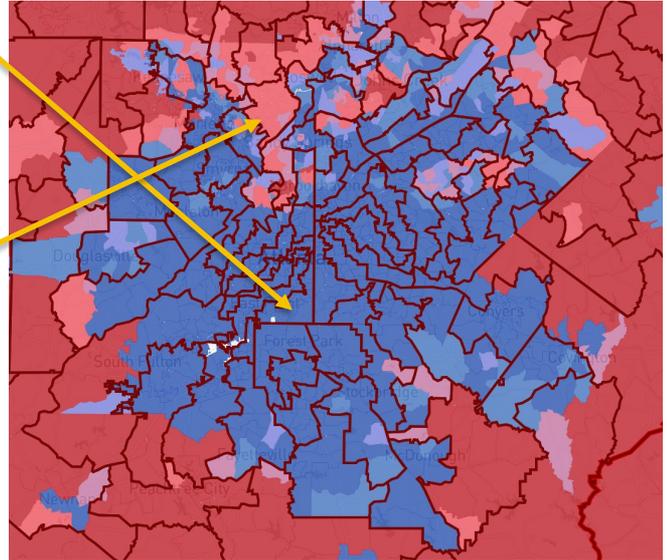
New State House map enacted for 2024 election (precinct lean)



High Democratic concentration → No Republican districts

Competitive regions

High Republican concentration → No Democratic districts



Not every district can be competitive

Source: FDGA analysis of Sec of State voting data 2018-21



Could Georgia's maps be fairer and more competitive?

- Could the maps be fairer to both parties?
- Is there enough competitive territory to create more competitive districts?
- Would there be enough competitive districts to put the General Assembly chambers in play?



What is a fair map?

- Fair Districts GA believes that maps should
 - Reflect the natural political preferences of voters distributed across the state
 - Encourage competition
 - Reflect Georgia's diversity by providing sufficient minority-majority districts, complying with the Voting Rights Act
 - Honor communities of interest



One-million-map simulation for Georgia Senate reveals fair maps should have 1-3 district Republican advantage

Natural Democratic distribution:

Natural Republican distribution:

0 → -4

0 → +4

>98% of simulated maps would have produced
24 - 28
Democratic districts in 2018-21 elections

>98% of simulated maps would have produced
28 - 32
GOP districts in 2018-21 elections

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56

“A” grade 25-27
-1 to -3

“A” grade 29-31
+1 to +3

28 seats = even split

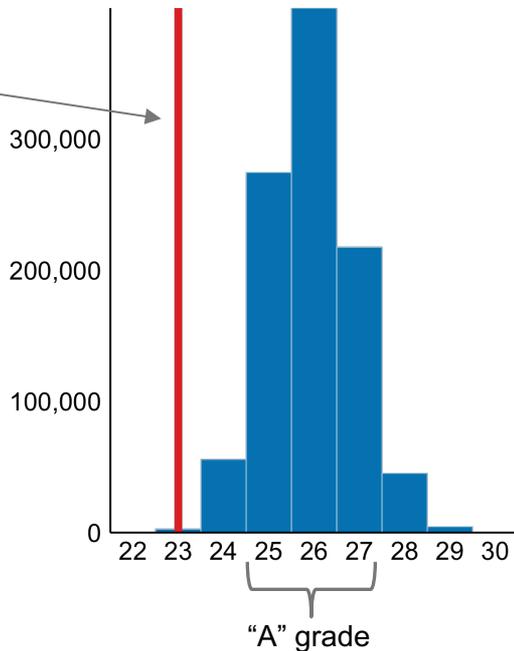
Source: Princeton Gerrymandering Project 1M map simulation using 2018-21 election data



One-million-map simulation for Georgia Senate reveals fair maps should also have 2-6 competitive districts.

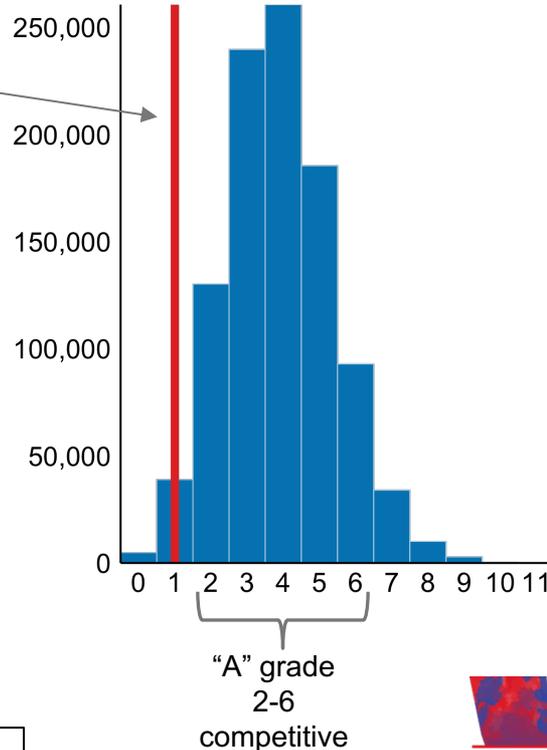
Range of Democratic seats

Enacted map
2021
Grade: F



Range of competitive seats

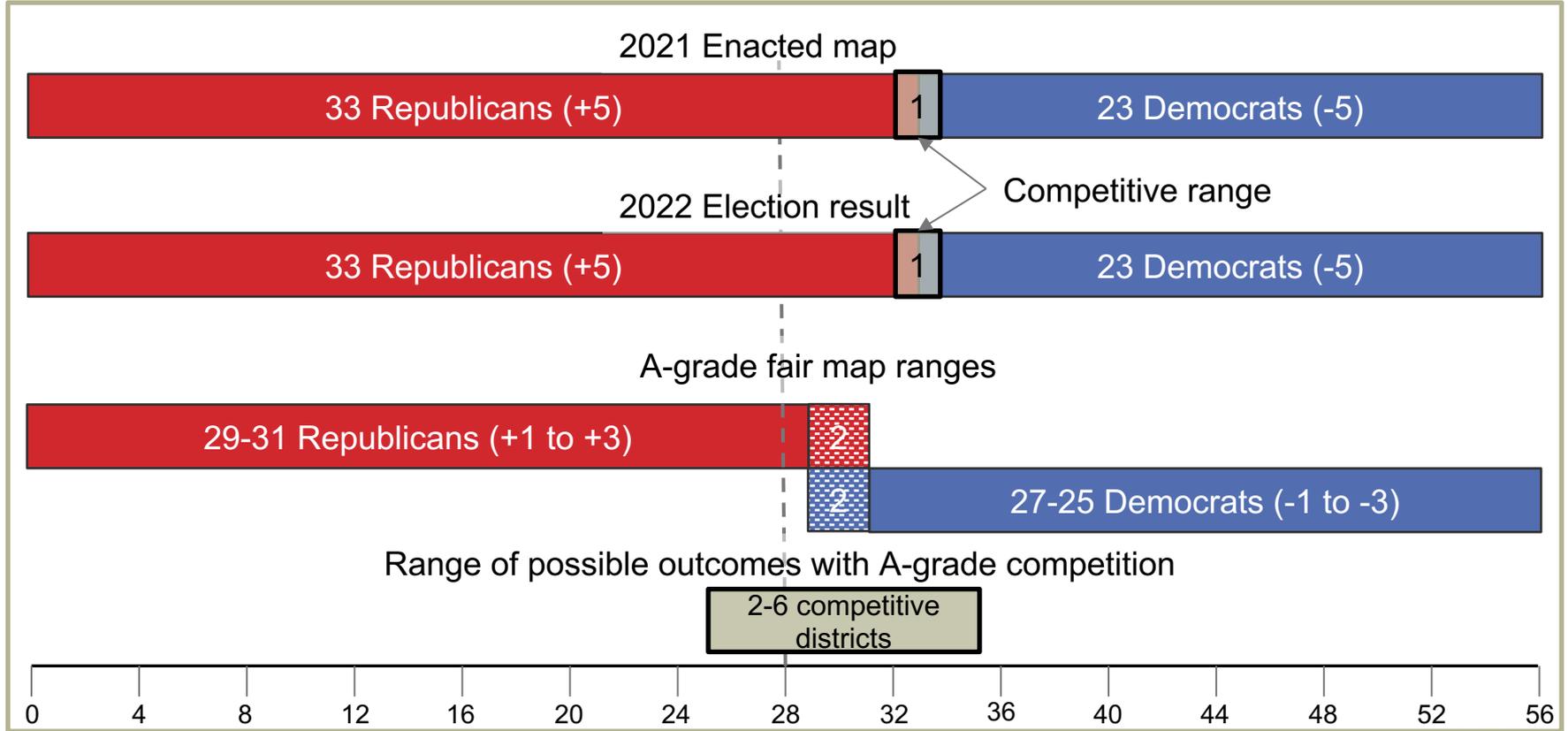
Enacted map
2021
Grade: F



Source: Princeton Gerrymandering Project 1M map simulation, using 2018-20-21 statewide races as partisan index



Fairer State Senate map with 2-6 competitive districts puts the chamber in play

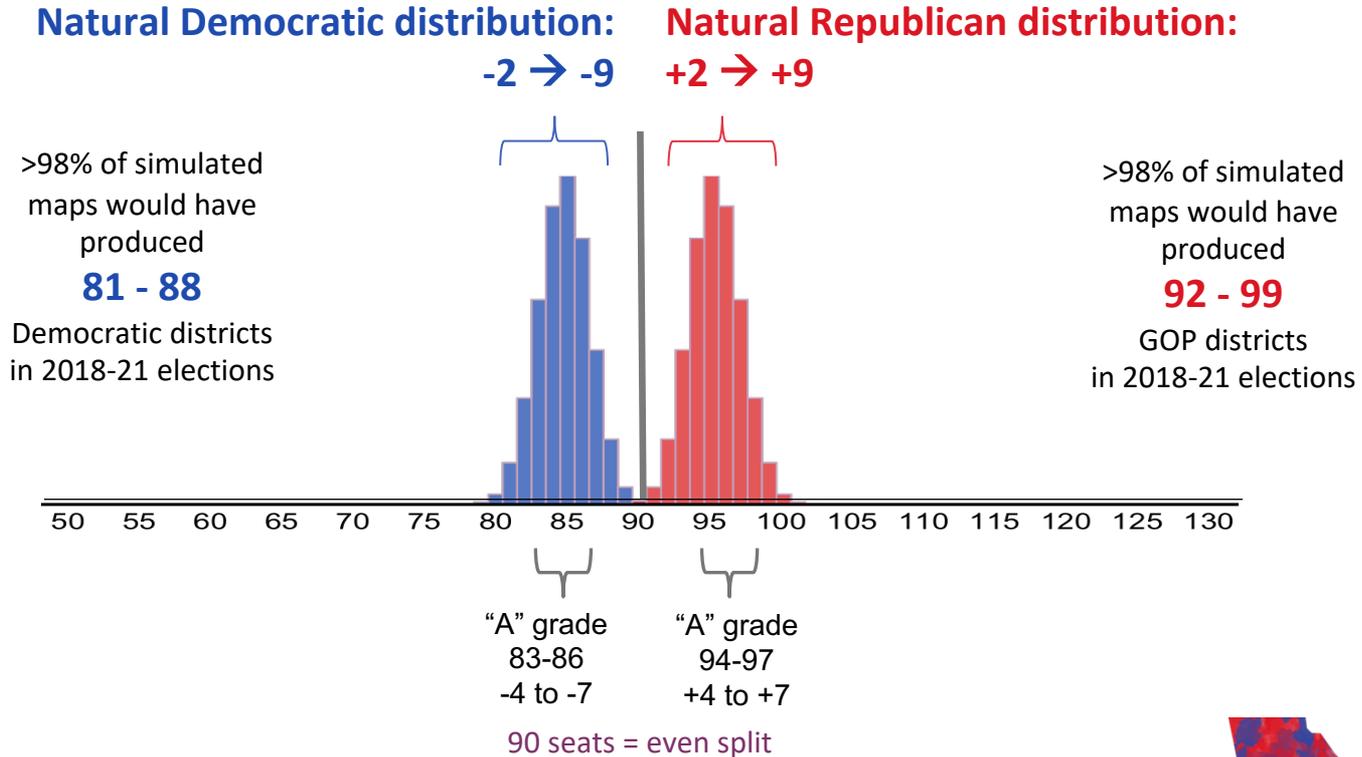


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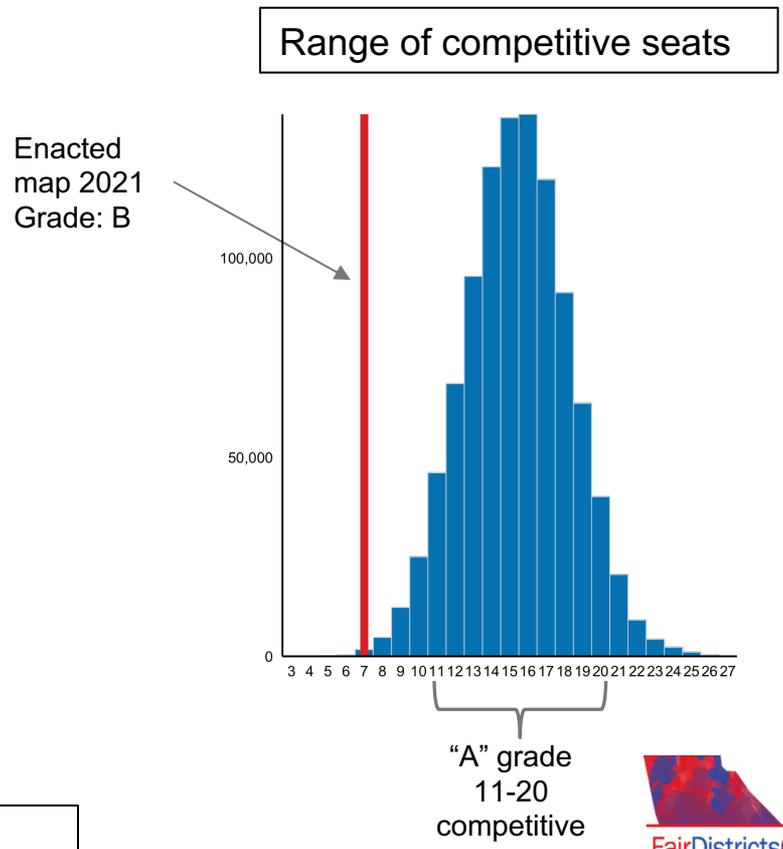
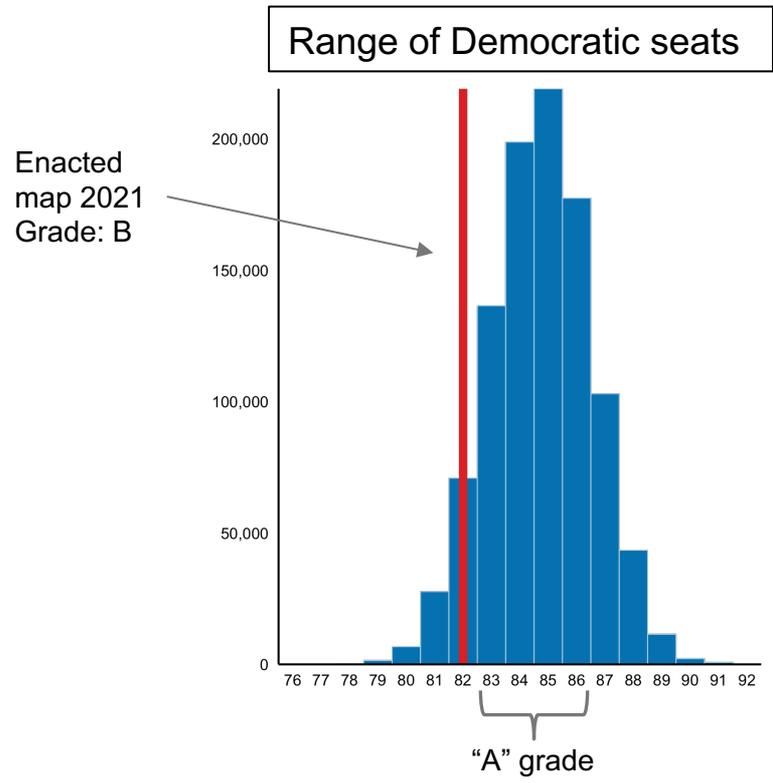
One-million-map simulation for Georgia House reveals fair maps should have 4-7 district Republican advantage



Source: Princeton Gerrymandering Project 1M map simulation using 2018-21 election data



One-million-map simulation for Georgia House reveals fair maps should also have 11-20 competitive districts.

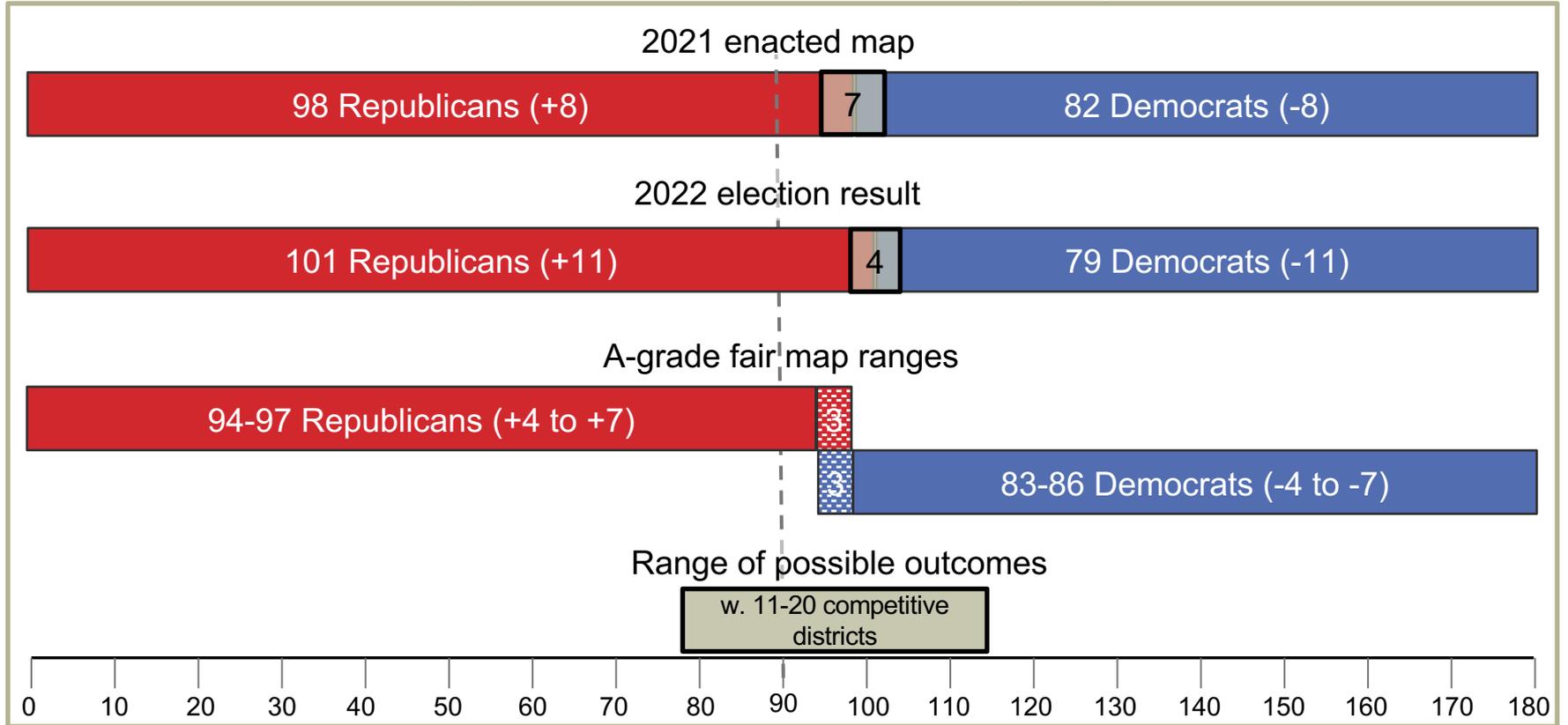


Source: Princeton Gerrymandering Project 1M map simulation, using 2018-20-21 statewide races as partisan index



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Fairer State House map with 11-20 competitive districts puts the chamber in play



Source: Princeton Gerrymandering Project 1M map simulation using 2018-21 election data
 Note: Excludes vacancies and legislators who switch parties after election.

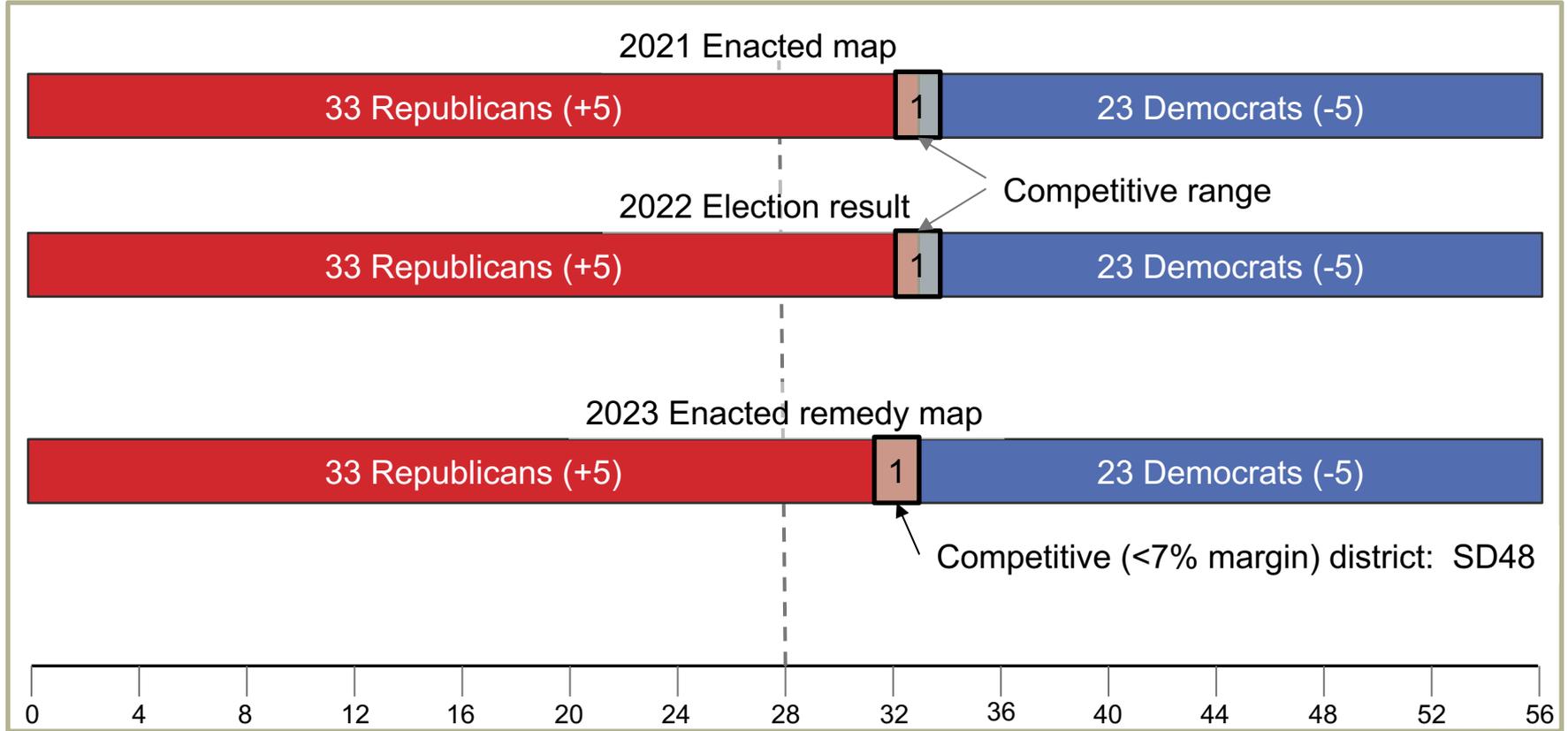


Looking Ahead

- Are the 2023 maps more competitive?
- What is the outlook for November's election?



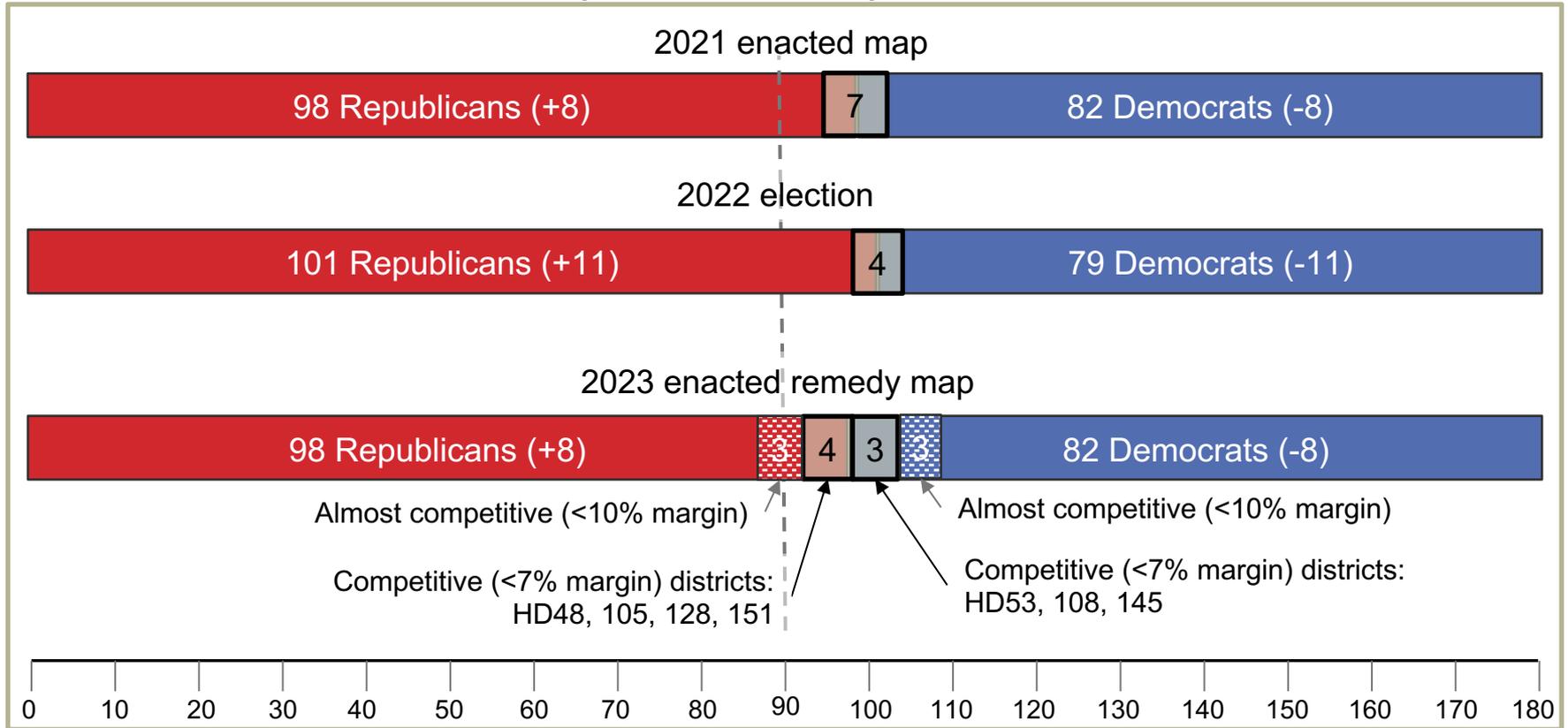
State Senate Map enacted in 2023 does not improve competition



Source: FDGA analysis of 2018-22 election results and enacted maps



State House Map enacted in 2023 is not designed to improve competition

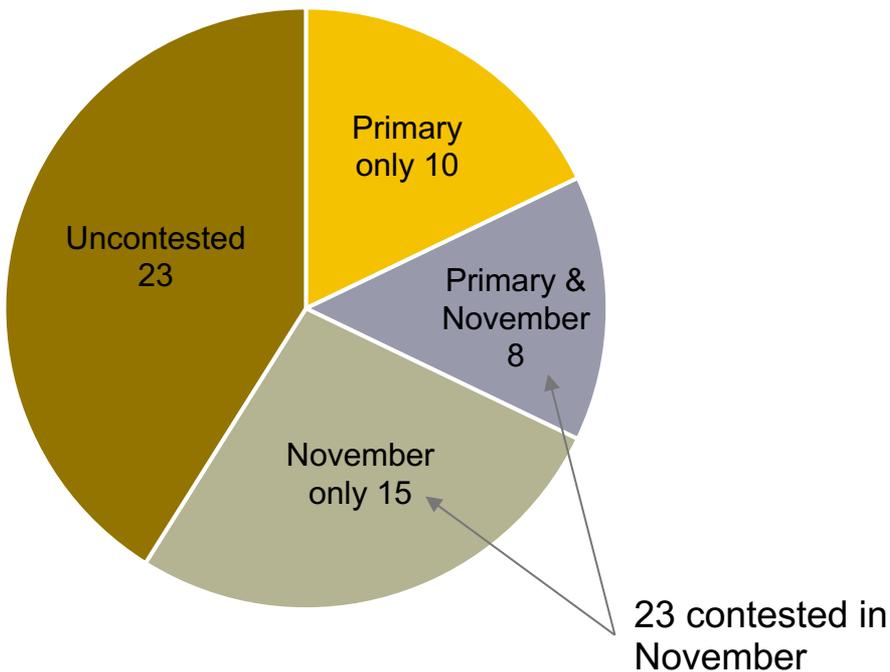


Source: Princeton Gerrymandering Project 1M map simulation using 2018-22 election data
 Note: Excludes vacancies and legislators who switch parties after election.

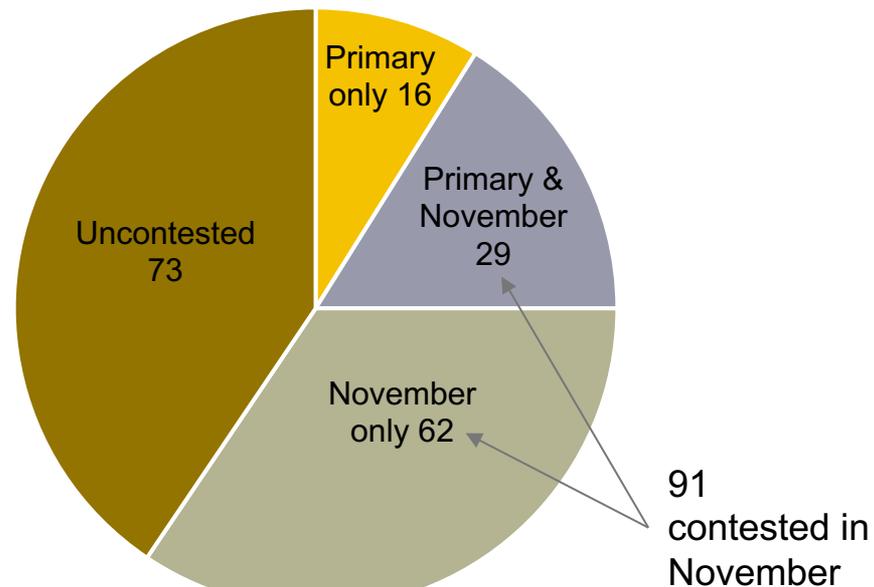


General Assembly Contests - 2024

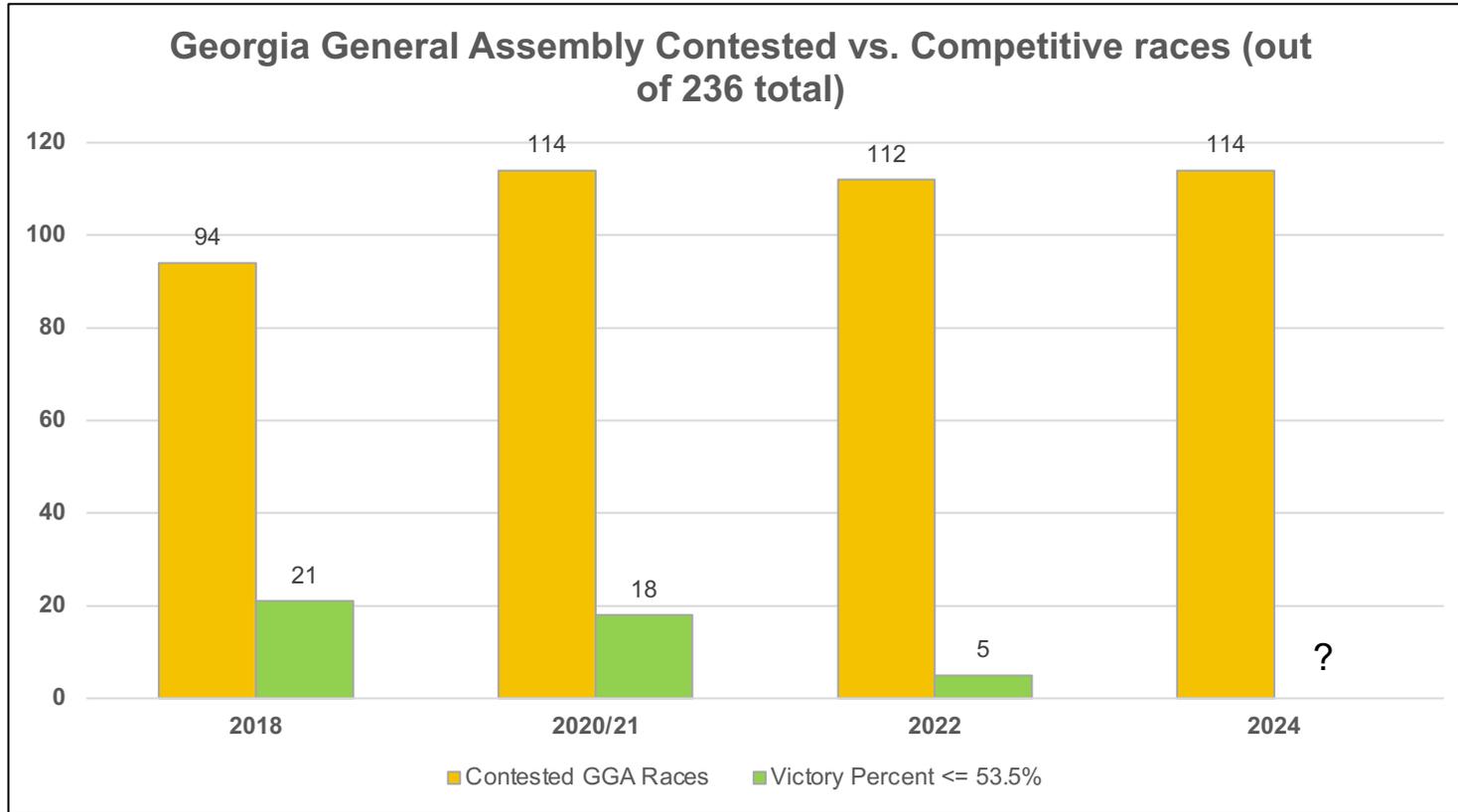
State Senate Contests (56)



State House Contests (180)



Contested races in General Assembly similar to last 2 elections at 48%



A word on Georgia's Congressional map

2018-20 Swing state w. narrowing partisan gap

- GA06 and GA07 became competitive and changed hands in 2018 and 2020
- 2021-22 delegation was 8R – 6D

2021 redistricting cycle

- A-grade benchmark: 8R – 6D w. 0-2 competitive
- Enacted map: 9R – 5D, 0 competitive (Grade: C)

2023 court-ordered redistricting

- Added 1 Black majority district (GA06)
- Partisan take-back removed 1 minority coalition district (GA07)
- Map remains 9R – 5D with no competitive districts



Gerrymandered legislature enables controversial partisan policies to pass, ignoring voters' wishes

Issue	Prior polling	Bill considered	Chamber voting	Win margin	Estimated map bias of prior election
Medicaid expansion	71% GA Voters favor full Medicaid expansion under ACA	SB106 Partial Medicaid expansion w. work requirements (2019)	Senate	4 votes	+1 to +4 R (-1 to -7 comp)
Election integrity	58% - No fraud in 2020 55-59% - oppose limits on absentee voting and drop boxes	SB202 "Election Integrity" (2021)	House Senate	10 votes 5 votes	+1 to +7 R +1 to +4 R (-1 to -7 comp)
		SB189 (2024)	House Senate	11 votes 5 votes	+1 to +7 R (-4 to -13 comp) +1 to +4 R (-1 to -5 comp)
Gun rights – No permit required	70% oppose carry without permit	"Constitutional carry" (2022)	Senate	4 votes	+1 to +4 R (-1 to -7 competitive)
Reproductive rights	57% - Abortion should be legal 70% - Keep Roe v. Wade 6-week ban (oppose 48%, favor 43%)	HB481 - LIFE Act (aka "Heartbeat bill") (2019)	House	2 votes (with +15 R seat elected margin)	+1 to +8 R

Disclaimer: FDGA expresses no opinion on the merits of these policies.

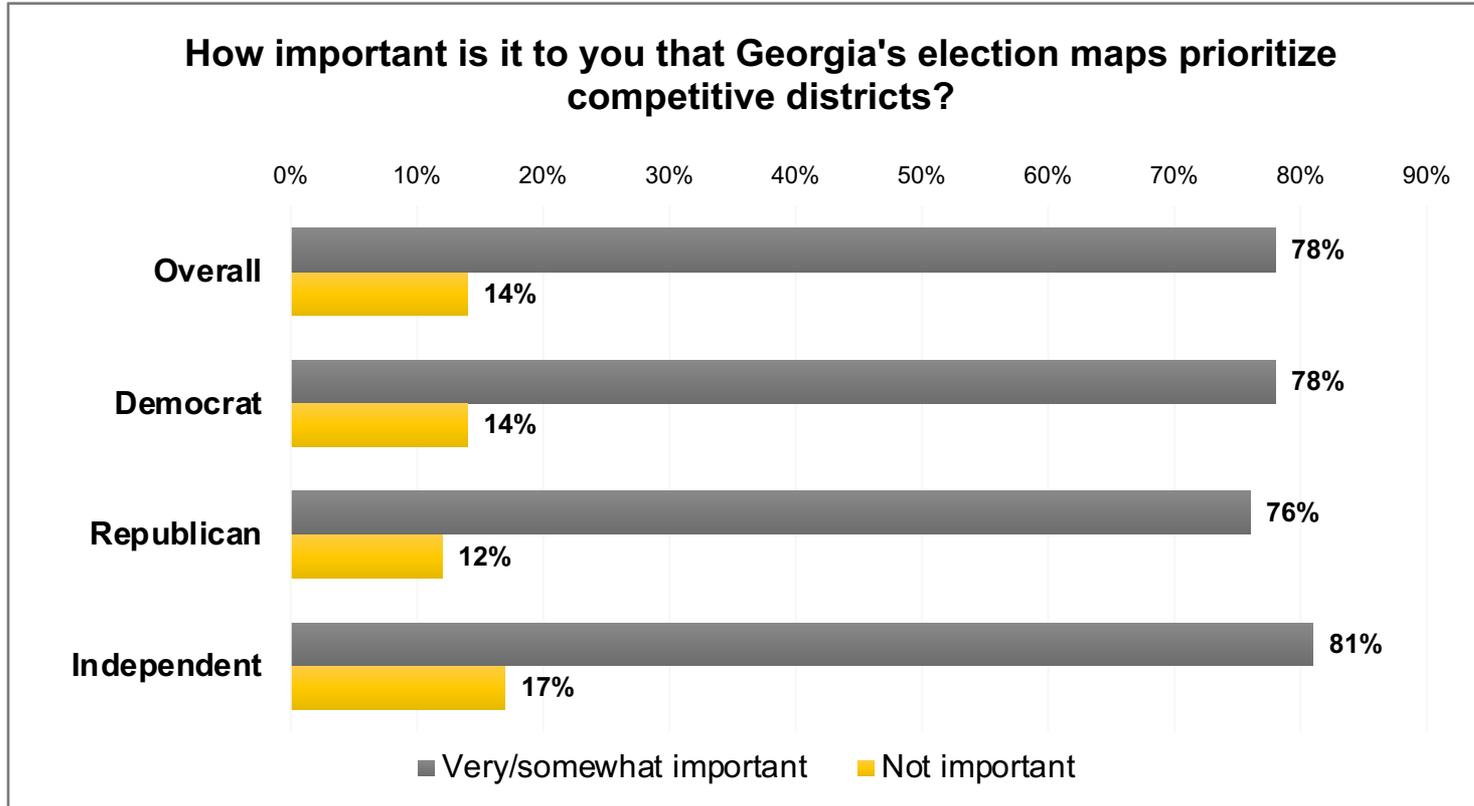
Sources: AJC polls, GA legislative votes, Princeton Gerrymandering Project

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FairDistrictsGA FOUNDATION

Georgia voters overwhelmingly want competitive districts



Source: July 2022 GA Redistricting Poll (ACLU, LWV, CC, FDGA)



Conclusion

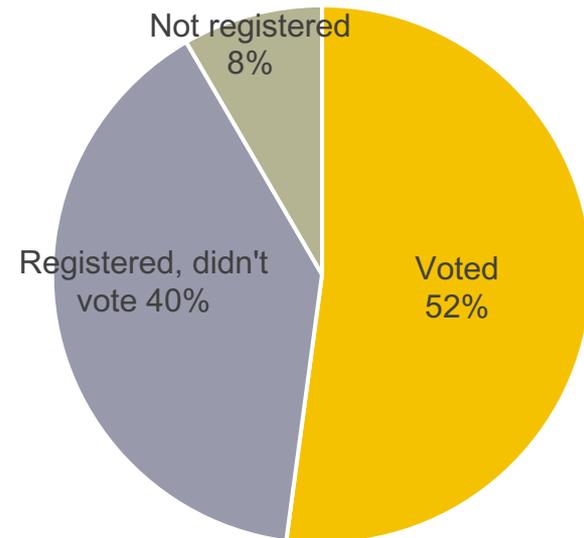
- Georgia could have fairer maps that put the State House and State Senate in play
- Increased competition benefits voters
 - Elections and votes matter
 - Legislature responds to changes in voters' preference
 - More moderate candidates, less partisanship, more compromise
 - Competition breeds excellence
 - Voters choose legislators instead of legislators choosing their voters



What can you do about it?

- Register and vote!
 - Turnout can create more competitive races
- Ask candidates to sign the pledge
- Get involved
 - Volunteer
 - Run for office

Georgia participation in 2022 election
(7.6M voting-age citizens)



Source: GA Secretary of State and US Census Bureau estimate (+/- 3.6% margin of error)



DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

She's running with all she's got for a seat she can't win. That's the point.

Kate Barr is waging a sure-to-lose campaign for a seat in the North Carolina legislature as a protest against gerrymandering, which has made elections uncompetitive in states nationwide.

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FDGA Pledge Campaign

I TAKE THE PLEDGE!

FAIR DISTRICTS GA

Name:
Signature:
Candidate for:

I PLEDGE TO SUPPORT FAIR REDISTRICTING AND REDISTRICTING REFORM ACROSS GEORGIA, TO INCLUDE:

A fully transparent redistricting process with robust citizen engagement;
Fair district maps, validated by independent experts, reflecting the diversity and communities of interest of Georgia which do not unnaturally favor any political party;
Competitive districts that give voters meaningful candidate choices;
An end to mid-cycle redistricting and prison gerrymandering.



- Check to see if your legislative candidates have pledged at bit.ly/FDGAPledge
- Reach out to tell your legislative candidates your expectation of support
- Ask all candidates to pledge when attending meet and greets, fundraisers, town halls
- Candidates can sign electronically by replying to FairDistrictsGA.org email
- Or print from website, sign, scan & email back

Thank you

Email: info@fairdistrictsga.org

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Election recap

Next Town Hall



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– Thank you!



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