

**Comments on *Voters Not Politicians*
Approach to Evaluating Partisan Fairness**

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Voters Not Politicians (VNP) suggests a modified approach to evaluating the partisan fairness of the proposed state senate plans. While they rely on the same partisan fairness measures, VNP considers only four election contests in their analysis and they calculate their composite, or aggregate, score on the basis of these four contests. The MICRC composite score is calculated using all 16 statewide elections conducted since 2012 and the results are weighted so that years with more election contests do not contribute more towards the composite index scores.

The result of this difference in approaches produces the following differences in partisan fairness scores:

The VNP mean-median difference aggregate scores suggest the majority of plans are less favorable to Republicans than the MICRC composite scores indicate. In all but one of the plans, according to the MICRC composite scores (and in all of the plans according to the VNP aggregate scores), the Republicans are favored. But in a majority of the plans, the VNP aggregate score is lower than the MICRC composite score, suggesting that the Republicans, while still favored, are not favored as heavily as the MICRC composite scores indicate.

Mean-Median Difference Scores

Plan	MICRC composite index	VNP aggregate index
Szetela	1.02	0.40
Heron	-0.26	0.82
Kellom	1.48	1.29
Crane	2.86	1.98
Starling v3	1.32	2.00
Cardinal	2.61	2.65
Dove	2.45	2.65
Orton	3.36	2.66
Wagner	3.40	2.68
Finch v2	2.66	2.69
Lange	3.31	3.13
Curry	3.31	3.14

The VNP efficiency gap aggregate scores, on the other hand, suggest that all of the plans are more favorable to the Republicans than the MICRC efficiency gap composite scores indicate. And most of the plans are considerably more favorable to Republicans, according to the VNP aggregate index.

Efficiency Gap Scores

Plan	MICRC composite index	VNP aggregate index
Szetela	-0.83	0.74
Heron	-0.76	0.81
Crane	1.82	3.38
Starling v3	1.88	3.52
Kellom	-0.79	3.54
Cardinal	-0.82	5.93
Finch v2	-0.82	5.93
Curry	1.89	6.11
Lange	1.89	6.11
Wagner	1.92	6.20
Orton	1.87	6.34
Dove	4.58	8.76

The VNP lopsided margins aggregate scores suggest that most of the plans, while still favorable to Republicans, are less favorable to Republicans than the MICRC lopsided margins composite scores indicate. While Democrats are winning by lopsided margins in all of the plans using either of the composite scores, the districts are less packed with Democrats in 10 of the 12 plans according to the VNP aggregate scores.

Lopsided Margins Scores

Plan	MICRC composite index	VNP aggregate index
Heron	3.80	2.03
Szetela	4.01	2.30
Kellom	3.76	3.29
Starling v3	5.02	3.39
Crane	5.09	3.44
Cardinal	3.65	4.36
Finch v2	3.73	4.46
Lange	5.05	4.70
Curry	5.05	4.71
Orton	5.10	4.73
Dove	5.23	4.94
Curry	6.18	6.12

Why the difference in results?

Choosing to look only at close elections and defining “close” as a winning margin of less than 3% produced a small set of less-than-representative election contests:

- Three of the four elections were won by Democrats by small margins; the fourth election was won by a Republican by a small margin
- The 12 elections not incorporated in the analysis included nine contests won by Democrats by more than 3% and only three contests won by Republicans by more than 3%

The choices made by VNP – to focus on only close elections – resulted in an electorate that is more inclined to vote Republican than a composite score that considers all recent statewide elections. A more Republican electorate produces a reduction in the number of wasted (surplus/lost) Republican votes, hence efficiency gap scores that are more favorable to Republicans and lopsided margin scores that produce less heavily Democratic districts.

Additional reasons for differences

Three of the four elections included in the VNP aggregate score fall in presidential election years (2016 and 2020) when turnout is considerably higher than in the years in which state senate contests are conducted (2014, 2018, and 2022).

General Election	Top-of-the-ticket turnout
November 2022	4,461,972
November 2020	5,539,302
November 2018	4,250,585
November 2016	4,799,284
November 2014	3,156,531
November 2012	4,730,961

Years with more elections included in the index shift the score towards that year: Two of the four elections included in the VNP index fall in the same year, over-representing that year (2020) in the aggregate score. When the VNP aggregate index is weighted by year (so that each year – 2020, 2018, and 2016 – contributes equally to the score), the scores are consistently lower for the efficiency gap, but almost always slightly higher for the mean-median difference.

	Efficiency Gap		Mean-Median Difference	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Heron	.8	.4	.8	.7
Cardinal	5.9	5.5	2.7	2.9
Dove	8.8	5.8	2.7	2.8
Crane	3.4	3.0	2.0	2.1
Curry	6.1	5.7	3.1	3.5
Finch v2	5.9	5.5	2.7	3.0
Kellom	3.5	3.2	1.3	1.4
Lange	6.1	5.7	3.1	3.5
Orton	6.3	5.9	2.7	2.8
Starling v3	3.5	3.1	2.0	2.0
Szetela	.7	.4	.4	.4
Wagner	6.2	5.8	2.7	3.1

Relying on only a single, or a small number, of elections produces considerable volatility in the scores. Compare, for example, the VNP efficiency gap scores for the 2020 presidential and senatorial contests – same plan, same year, same measure, but different scores. In some instances, one election contest indicates the plan favors Democrats, while the other election contest indicates the plan favors Republicans. The 2020 US Senate race, which the Democrat won with a smaller margin, produces a consistently higher efficiency gap than the 2020 presidential contest.

Plan	Efficiency Gap 2020 President	Efficiency Gap 2020 US Senate
Szetela	-0.59	1.22
Heron	-0.54	1.28
Crane	-0.56	3.86
Starling v3	2.21	4.01
Kellom	-0.51	4.03
Cardinal	4.66	6.44
Finch v2	4.66	6.44
Curry	2.14	6.62
Lange	2.14	6.62
Wagner	2.20	4.00
Orton	-0.61	6.86
Dove	4.84	6.41

This table compares the VNP mean-median difference scores for the 2020 presidential and senatorial contests – same plan, same year, same measure, but different scores. Again, the US Senate race, which the Democrat won with a smaller margin, usually produces a higher mean-median difference score than the presidential contest.

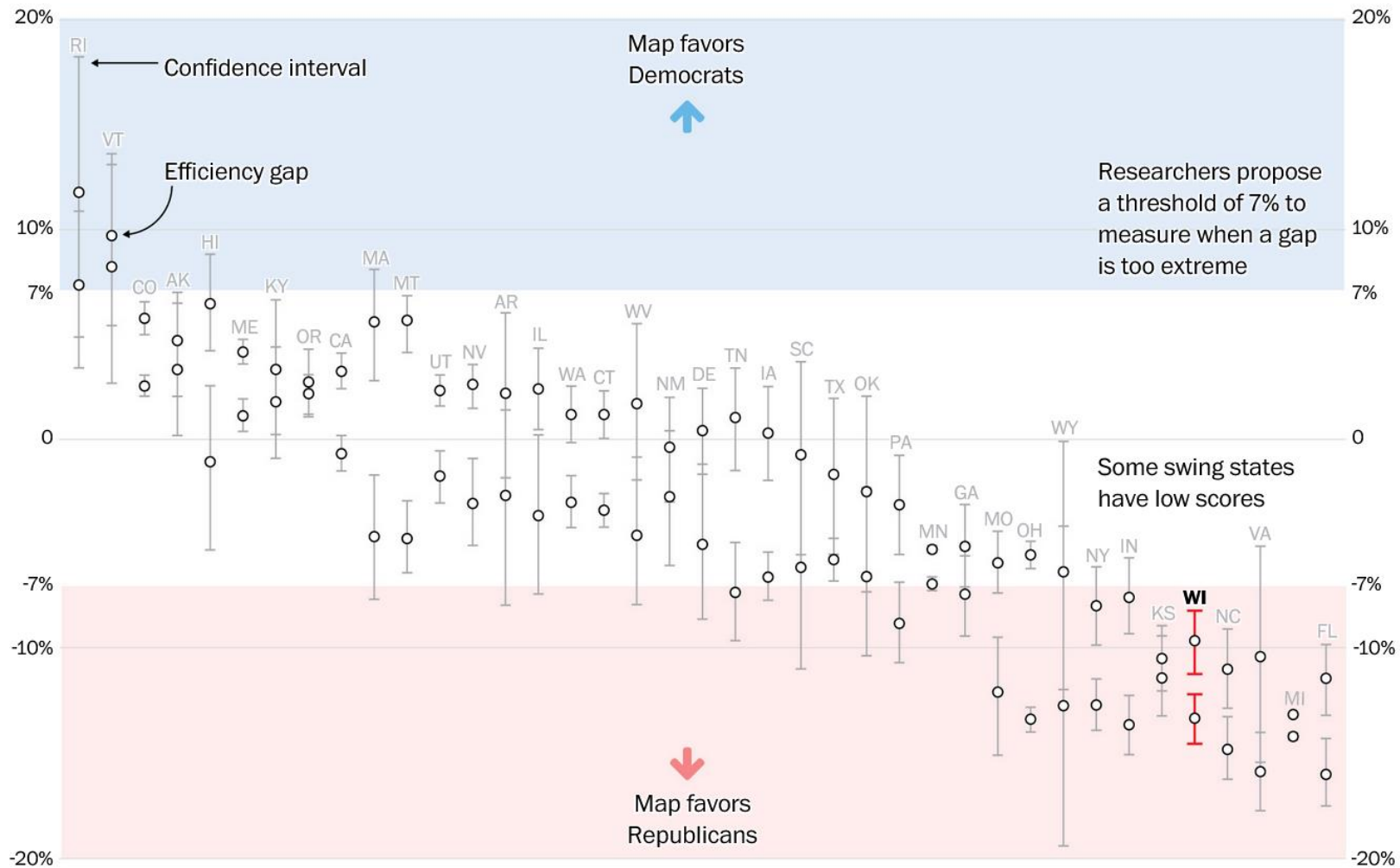
Plan	Mean-Median Difference 2020 President	Mean-Median Difference 2020 US Senate
Szetela	0.58	-0.13
Heron	1.17	0.47
Kellom	0.70	0.85
Crane	0.76	1.98
Starling v3	1.35	2.00
Cardinal	1.95	2.60
Dove	2.22	2.39
Orton	1.03	2.68
Wagner	1.52	2.67
Finch v2	1.96	2.65
Lange	1.71	3.13
Curry	1.32	3.14

Conclusions

- 1. *Plan evaluation*** Despite the differences in how the indices were created, the MICRC composite index (based on 16 election contests and weighted by year) and the VNP aggregate index (based on 4 elections and not weighted) produce very similar rankings of the plans. Based on the ranking of each of the plans on both the mean-median difference and the efficiency gap scores, the two indices agree on five of the top six lowest scoring (fairest) plans, albeit in a slightly different order.

EDS Composite Index	Voters Aggregate Index
Szetela	Szetela
Heron	Heron
Kellom	Crane
Finch v2	Kellom
Cardinal	Starling v3
Starling v3	Cardinal

2. **Difference in scores not particularly large** Comparison across states of efficiency gap scores (lower chamber, 2012-2014) shows much higher variation in scores

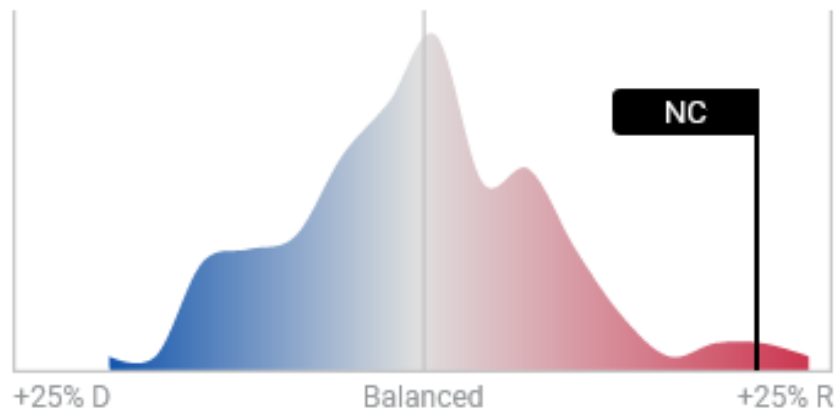


From Washington Post, Oct.4, 2017, Daria Cameron

Examples of Large Efficiency Gap Scores

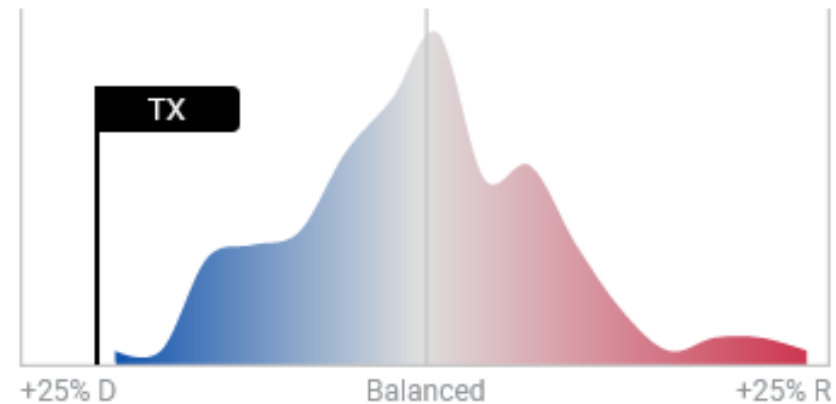
North Carolina 2012

Under North Carolina's 2012-2014 congressional plan, votes for Republican candidates were wasted at a rate 20.3% lower than votes for Democratic candidates.



Texas 1992

Under Texas's 1992-1994 congressional plan, votes for Democratic candidates were wasted at a rate 20.3% lower than votes for Republican candidates.



Examples of Large Mean-Median Difference Scores

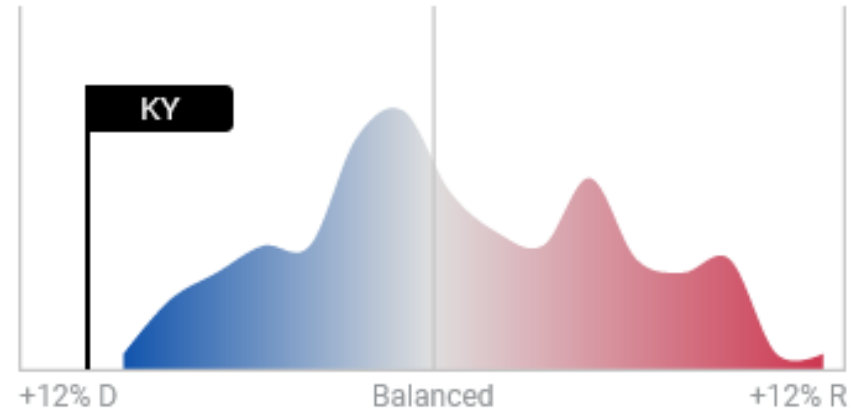
Georgia 2006

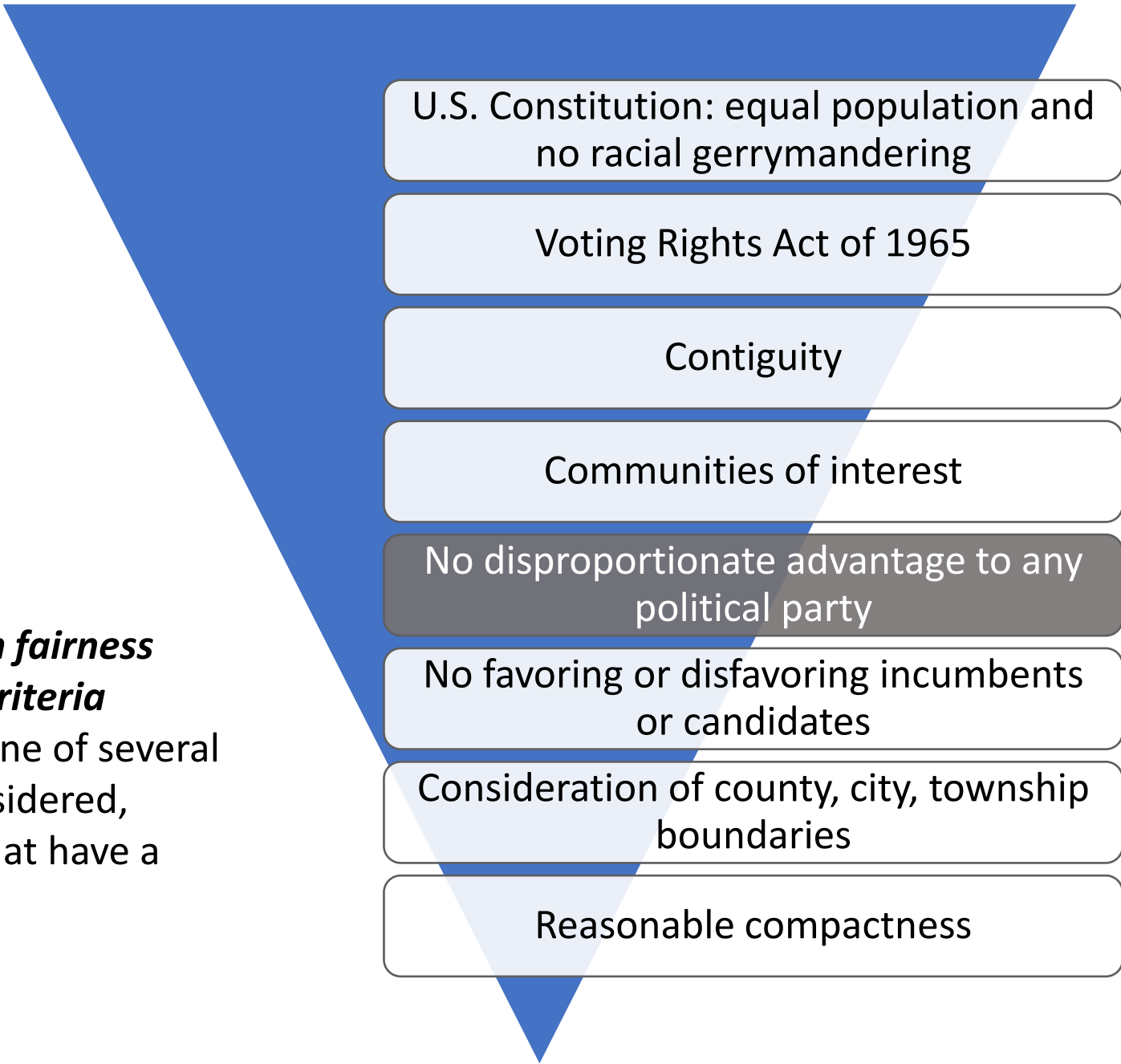
Under [Georgia's 2006-2010 congressional plan](#), the median Republican vote share was 11% higher than the mean Republican vote share.



Kentucky 1972

Under [Kentucky's 1972-1980 congressional plan](#), the median Democratic vote share was 10% higher than the mean Democratic vote share.





U.S. Constitution: equal population and no racial gerrymandering

Voting Rights Act of 1965

Contiguity

Communities of interest

No disproportionate advantage to any political party

No favoring or disfavoring incumbents or candidates

Consideration of county, city, township boundaries

Reasonable compactness

3. *Need to balance partisan fairness with other redistricting criteria*

Partisan fairness is only one of several criteria that must be considered, including some criteria that have a higher priority