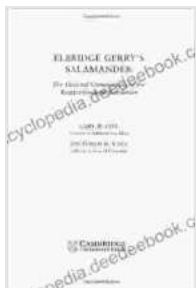


Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: A Tale of Gerrymandering

The Elbridge Gerry Salamander is a famous example of gerrymandering, a practice used to give one political party an unfair advantage in elections. The salamander-shaped district was created in 1812 by Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry, and it has been used as an example of gerrymandering ever since.

Gerrymandering is the practice of redrawing political boundaries to give one party an unfair advantage over another. This can be done by creating districts that are oddly shaped, by packing voters of one party into a few districts, or by splitting voters of the other party into many districts.

The Elbridge Gerry Salamander was created by Governor Gerry in 1812, after the Massachusetts legislature had redrawn the state's congressional districts to give the Federalist Party an advantage. Gerry, a Democratic-Republican, redrew the districts to give his party an advantage, and the resulting district was shaped like a salamander.



Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: The Electoral Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution (Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions)

by Gary W. Cox

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 2432 KB

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 248 pages

Lending : Enabled
Hardcover : 116 pages
Item Weight : 8.2 ounces
Dimensions : 6 x 0.48 x 9 inches



The Elbridge Gerry Salamander was used in the 1812 election, and it helped the Democratic-Republicans win a majority of the state's congressional seats. The district was later declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, but it has remained a symbol of gerrymandering ever since.

Gerrymandering is a controversial practice, and it has been used by both political parties over the years. It is often used to protect incumbents or to give one party an advantage in a particular election. However, gerrymandering can also lead to uncompetitive elections and a lack of representation for certain groups of voters.

In recent years, there have been a number of efforts to reform gerrymandering. Some states have passed laws that create independent redistricting commissions, which are responsible for drawing the state's political boundaries. Other states have passed laws that prohibit partisan gerrymandering.

The Elbridge Gerry Salamander is a reminder of the dangers of gerrymandering. It is a practice that can be used to give one political party an unfair advantage over another, and it can lead to uncompetitive elections and a lack of representation for certain groups of voters.

There are a number of ways to identify gerrymandering. Some of the most common signs include:

- **Oddly shaped districts:** Gerrymandered districts are often oddly shaped, with long, narrow tendrils that reach out to include voters of one party or exclude voters of another party.
- **Packed districts:** Gerrymandered districts may also be packed with voters of one party, making it difficult for the other party to win.
- **Split districts:** Gerrymandered districts may also be split into multiple pieces, making it difficult for voters of one party to unite and elect a candidate.

If you suspect that your district has been gerrymandered, you can contact your state's election officials or a nonpartisan organization like the Brennan Center for Justice.

There are a number of things that can be done to stop gerrymandering. Some of the most common solutions include:

- **Independent redistricting commissions:** Independent redistricting commissions are responsible for drawing the state's political boundaries. These commissions are typically made up of nonpartisan experts, and they are not allowed to consider political factors when drawing the boundaries.
- **Prohibitions on partisan gerrymandering:** Some states have passed laws that prohibit partisan gerrymandering. These laws typically require that the state's political boundaries be drawn in a way that is not designed to favor one political party over another.

- **Voters can speak out against gerrymandering:** Voters can speak out against gerrymandering by contacting their elected officials and by supporting organizations that are working to reform gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering is a serious problem that can undermine our democracy. However, there are a number of things that can be done to stop gerrymandering and ensure that our elections are fair and competitive.



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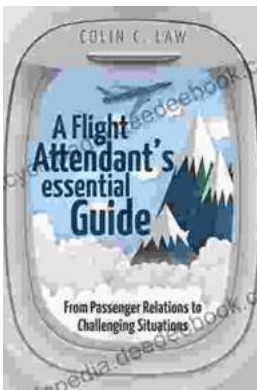
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