



Media Advisory for July 13, 2018  
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## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

# **For Third Consecutive Week, Pro-democracy Activists Demand Action on Gerrymandering Reform**

**WHO:** MarchOnHarrisburg  
**WHAT:** Protest to Demand that Pa Leadership Act on Gerrymandering Reform  
**WHERE:** Speaker Turzai's House: 260 Bradford Rd., Marshall Twp (Wexford, PA) 15090  
**WHEN:** Friday, July 13, 10 a.m

HARRISBURG, PA—Two weeks ago, MarchOnHarrisburg and other pro-democracy, anti-corruption organizations, camped-in at Governor Wolf's office with a promise to return if he did not call legislators back from vacation to vote on clean redistricting reform. After no action was taken by the governor's office, MarchOnHarrisburg returned.

On Thursday, July 5, about two dozen activists set up camp outside of Governor Wolf's home in Mt. Wolf, bearing signs that asked, "WHERE'S WOLF?" as well as life-size 'Gerrymander,' and 'Waldo' puppets. During the occupation, the office wanted to make this compromise: Once the legislature is back in session, redistricting reform will be the top priority. However, because of the deadline for the Constitutional Amendment that redistricting reform requires, protestors denied and continued to camp-out. Later that day, Wolf's office responded this protest with the following statement:

*"Even before I had the honor of being elected Governor, I supported removing politics from redistricting, as well as a true independent commission to draw Pennsylvania's lines. Though bills have advanced in the legislature to address this issue, I urge leaders in the General Assembly to come together to finalize a compromise before the end of the month. If they do, I am ready to call a special session for a vote on a consensus, bipartisan redistricting reform proposal."*

To help ensure a special session was called, MarchOnHarrisburg spent the past week drumming up support from leadership to in both chambers work together to pass a bill consistent with what the citizens of Pennsylvania have demanded for more than a year by supporting an up-or-down vote on the Samuelson amendment to SB 22.

On Thursday, constituents, along with other MoH volunteers, attempting to meet with Senator Costa, House Minority Leader Dermody, and Speaker Turzai at their local offices in and around Pittsburgh. The only legislator they were only able to meet with Costa. They spoke with staff from Dermody and Speaker Turzai.

*"I'm in favor of an up-or-down vote vote on the Samuelson Amendment, whether that is called through a special session or through bringing the House back into session," Senator Costa told MoH in a meeting.*



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On Friday, July 13, MarchOnHarrisburg turns its attention to Speaker Turzai, who refused to directly meet with MarchOnHarrisburg, despite nearly a hundred requests from both MoH and Fair Districts PA. MoH will be visiting his home at 10 a.m to demand that he call the House back into session for a vote on the Samuelson Amendment.

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#### **BACKGROUND ON THE SPECIAL SESSION AND THE SAMUELSON AMENDMENT:**

MarchOnHarrisburg thanks Governor Wolf for voicing his support of gerrymandering reform and his willingness to call a Special Session of the Legislature if a bipartisan consensus can be reached. It is now incumbent on leadership in the House and Senate to come to consensus on how a bill can move forward in both chambers. March On Harrisburg is requesting leadership to agree to have an up or down vote on the Samuelson amendment proposed for HB 722 in the House.

The Samuelson amendment creates an Independent Redistricting Commission designed to be truly independent. It acknowledges and accommodates the concerns of the Legislature that they have some participation in the selection of members of the Commission while at the same time it is built on the essential mechanism ensuring that members of the commission must come from the citizenry and must be randomly selected to avoid the heavy hand of self-interested parties and incumbents. In addition to keeping the Legislature at arms-length from the redistricting process, the Samuelson amendment removes the Supreme Court from the process of selecting the maps in the case of the commission being unable to decide on a final map. The amendment is the result of thoughtful consideration and compromise, and we feel it will produce a truly independent commission. This is the best hope for taking redistricting out of the hands of self-interested politicians and putting it into the hands of the citizens before the 2022 redistricting.

#### **BACKGROUND ON THE MARCHONHARRISBURG:**

MarchOnHarrisburg, a group of **nonpartisan** activists, organizers, and volunteers, working to repair democracy in Pennsylvania by advocating for **two pro-democracy, anti-corruption bills which would end gerrymandering and end legalized bribery**, has been advocating for redistricting reform through the bipartisan legislation SB 22 / HB 722 since January 2017. In that time, they met with 250 out of the 253 legislators to discuss the solution to end gerrymandering. SB 22 / HB 722 would have created an independent redistricting citizen commission that would take the power to draw maps out of incumbents' hands and give it to the citizenry. Additionally, 42 activists have been arrested with MarchOnHarrisburg while demanding a vote on these two bills.

Because of the lobbying efforts of MarchOnHarrisburg and other pro-democracy organizations, HB 722 was the most co-sponsored bill this session in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, both the Senate and the House directly contradicted the will of the people of Pennsylvania and gutted these grassroots-supported and fought for reforms, gutting the reform they were supposed to create.

On Monday, June 25, the Pennsylvania State Legislature left for their summer vacation without ending gerrymandering. Governor Wolf needs to use his constitutional power to call the Legislature back to Harrisburg this week to vote on redistricting legislation.

If Governor Wolf does not call legislators back into Session, Pennsylvania will continue to same partisan, racist gerrymandering redistricting system they have until at least 2032.