
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Political gamesmanship

The recent op-ed by state House Speaker Turzai provides a lesson in how politicians play us. His opinion about lack of consensus on gerrymandering sounds quite reasonable if you haven't been following the events of the past two years. Most of what he says is factual but not true in the larger context. He skirts the fact that Pennsylvania has one of the least fair methods of drawing political districts of all the states. As a practical matter, Pennsylvania's political insiders draw the districts to secure themselves from worries about re-election.

Speaker Turzai is the only leader in Harrisburg who did not respond — in

any way — to constituents, colleagues, citizens asking to meet and discuss reform. To date, despite thousands of emails, hundreds of calls, over 1,600 petition signatures, the only response I am aware of has been in the press.

As a legislative leader, Speaker Turzai failed in his role of promoting consensus. In sharp contrast, the Senate leadership was open. As a member of the 2011 legislative redistricting commission, Turzai has first-hand knowledge of the difference between that commission and the kind of independent citizens commission the original SB-22 reform would have made possible.

His strategy was and is to run out the clock for reform

in this decade by political gamesmanship. He has thwarted the concerns of a majority of the voters of Pennsylvania and has failed to lead on the reform issue by allowing the House version of the bill to stall in committee despite it having more cosponsors than any other bill this session. He could, if he chose to, support House passage of the original SB-22 stripped of the last-minute poison-pill judicial redistricting amendment.

Instead, he prefers to politicize reform by accusing others of derailing it. We are in the final minutes of this political game. Will voter's care that they are being thwarted, deceived and played for suckers?

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