

The gerrymandering wars and the breakdown of American democracy

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On August 23, the Texas Senate passed a sweeping mid-decade congressional map designed to cement Republican dominance and entrench the political power of Donald Trump and his far-right allies. The bill, previously passed by the Texas House on August 20 and expected to be signed any day by Republican Governor Greg Abbott, could add as many as five GOP-leaning districts to Texas's US House delegation, strengthening Republican efforts to maintain control in the 2026 midterm elections.

Trump instructed the Texas Republicans, led by fascistic Governor Abbott, to carry out the gerrymandering. Implemented five years before the next scheduled census-based map, it is the latest salvo in an escalating electoral war between the two parties of big business. California Democrats have advanced their own plan to redraw congressional districts to create five new Democratic-leaning seats, setting up a nationwide tit-for-tat battle that threatens to engulf the electoral system in chaos.

What takes the form of a political dispute over district lines and midterm strategies is a sign of the deep and accelerating breakdown of the traditional mechanisms of bourgeois democracy in the United States. The terrific contradictions of American capitalism, particularly the unprecedented levels of social inequality, are incompatible with democratic forms of rule. The political superstructure is realigning itself with the underlying social relations.

While these redistricting wars erupt, Trump is carrying out a coup d'état in Washington and escalating ICE raids against immigrants, using the machinery of the state through the military and the police to suppress opposition and establish a dictatorship. In June, his administration deployed National Guard troops and US Marines in Los Angeles. He has made clear his

intention to expand militarized control into major cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

The absence of any significant opposition to Trump's moves to dictatorship and police-state rule by the Democratic Party and the liberal media, which are systematically downplaying Trump's military takeover of major cities, gives the lie to the Democrats' attempt to portray their maneuvers in response to the Texas gerrymander as a defense of democracy.

The redistricting plan approved by Texas Republicans is designed to cement GOP dominance for the next three election cycles. The measure dismantles Democratic-leaning districts with large minority populations and fractures urban voting blocs, aiming to lock in Republican control in one of the nation's fastest-growing and most diverse states.

The response of the Texas Democrats has been a pathetic display of political cowardice and impotence. Earlier in August, they staged a theatrical two-week walkout, fleeing to Illinois and California in a hollow stunt to stall the gerrymandering bill. From the start, it was a maneuver aimed not at mobilizing workers and other voters against the assault on democratic rights, but at posturing for the cameras and providing a cover for their acquiescence.

When the Democrats slunk back to Austin on August 18, they meekly accepted humiliating police measures imposed by the Republicans. Forced to sign "permission slips" to leave the House floor and subjected to round-the-clock surveillance by Department of Public Safety officers—who trailed them even to their homes—the Democrats submitted without protest. Their capitulation ensured a quorum, handing the Republicans their victory.

Within hours, 13 Texas residents—the "Gonzales plaintiffs"—filed a federal lawsuit alleging the plan

violates the Voting Rights Act and the Equal Protection Clause by deliberately diluting Latino and Black voting power.

Despite legal challenges, Trump and Abbott dismissed opposition as political theater. With Republicans holding a narrow 219–212 majority in the US House, the Texas map is central to securing control in the 2026 midterms and advancing Trump’s increasingly authoritarian agenda.

California Governor Gavin Newsom has been leading a counterattack to Republican gerrymandering. On August 21, the California legislature approved Proposition 50, officially suspending California’s independent redistricting commission—created by voters in 2010—and replacing its map with one drawn by lawmakers to flip five GOP-held seats.

If voters approve the measure in a special election on November 4, 2025, the new map will govern the 2026, 2028 and 2030 elections, after which the commission’s authority would resume.

Newsom framed the plan as a necessary response to Republican attacks, declaring, “We tried to hold hands... We can’t just think differently, we have to act differently.”

In other words, Newsom initially signaled his willingness to partner with the Republicans when it comes to consolidating ruling class power. In reality, Democrats are mirroring the GOP’s methods, discarding the state’s independent redistricting process—established to prevent partisan manipulation—in order to secure their own power.

Tensions escalated on August 14, when dozens of heavily armed Border Patrol agents descended on the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo district. Their deployment coincided with a press conference by Newsom and other leading Democrats promoting the redistricting initiative, underscoring the growing militarization of state politics.

Despite polls showing nearly two-thirds of Californians oppose bypassing the commission, Democratic leaders remain determined to override public sentiment. As in Texas, both parties are using the state apparatus to entrench corporate and political dominance. Both parties maintain ballot-access laws that systematically block socialist, independent, and third-party candidates, ensuring that the financial elite

dominates the entire political system.

The gerrymandering battles in Texas and California are triggering a nationwide wave of similar maneuvers. States, including Illinois, New York, Indiana, Missouri and South Carolina, are already signaling plans to redraw maps before 2030. In the coming months, dozens of lawsuits are expected: Republicans suing Democrats in California, Democrats suing Republicans in Texas, and both parties maneuvering for advantage elsewhere.

The collapse of democratic norms and Trump’s escalating coup underscore a fundamental reality: democratic rights cannot be defended through either of the two corporate-controlled parties or on the basis of the capitalist system which they uphold.

None of the official institutions of bourgeois rule—Congress, the courts, the two big business parties, the trade union bureaucracy—have or will lift a finger to halt Trump’s march to a police state. The social force that must and will stop the drive to dictatorship is the working class, which will come into increasingly explosive conflict with the entire capitalist establishment. What is required is the independent mobilization of the working class, organized through rank-and-file committees and a socialist program that confronts the root cause of the crisis: the capitalist system itself.



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