

Fred's November 2025 SF Proposition Explainer and Slate Card

There's only one thing on the November 2025 ballot for SF voters: Prop 50. So this time I'm going to keep it short and sweet (unlike [last November](#)):

Vote Yes on 50 (unless you are a Trump supporter and want Republicans to continue to control the House – in that case, vote No).

What does Prop 50 do? Prop 50 would replace California's congressional maps, drawn by an independent commission, with new maps drawn by Democrats that aim to flip five seats from Republican to Democratic control. This is intended to offset a recent partisan redistricting in Texas that flipped five seats to Republican control. The new Prop 50 maps would be in place for elections in 2026, 2028 and 2030. California's independent redistricting commission would resume drawing congressional maps following the 2030 census.

tl;dr It gives me no pleasure to recommend a Yes vote on Prop 50, because I think gerrymandering is a bad way to do democracy ("voters should choose their representatives, not the other way around"). But Texas has already gerrymandered their districts at President Trump's request, and Trump is [actively pressuring Republican governors](#) to follow Texas' lead. So gerrymandering is going to happen no matter the outcome of Prop 50. But if Prop 50 doesn't pass, Democrats will be at least 5 *more* seats behind than they otherwise would. If you are a Democrat, now is not the time to unilaterally disarm in the face of Republican gerrymandering. And for those who hate this partisan gerrymandering race to the bottom, I hear you, but a principled stand in California won't restore fairness in the face of gerrymandering everywhere else.

Long version: In most states, voting districts are defined by state legislatures every ten years after each federal census. That system invites gerrymandering, a practice with roots that go back to the dawn of the republic. But since 2010, thanks to two state ballot propositions, California is an exception. Its districts have been designed by the independent California Citizens Redistricting Commission. These districts are not due for revision until the 2030 census.

Prop 50 would overturn that system in favor of new districts drawn by Democrats and approved by the Democratically controlled state legislature. This is a direct response to Trump's concerted efforts to get states controlled by Republicans to redistrict before the 2026 midterms. (That's on top of Republican gerrymandering efforts in 2020 that have already [tilted the field in their favor](#).) Texas went first, likely shifting 5 seats in the Texas House delegation from Democrats to Republicans in 2026. The redrawn Prop 50 map is

designed to offset that Texas shift. But [Missouri, Utah, Florida, Indiana, Louisiana, Kansas, and Ohio](#) are also [in play](#) and controlled by Republicans. [President Trump has made it clear](#) to Republican governors that redrawing the maps to advantage Republicans in the 2026 midterms is one of his top priorities.

So Republicans are going to redraw the maps in states they control no matter what California does with Prop 50. (Some Democratic states like Maryland and New York have expressed interest in joining the gerrymandering fray, but any redistricting in New York – the biggest potential shift in favor of Dems – wouldn't take effect until 2028.)

Nor will the federal courts help – the Supreme Court ruled in 2019 that federal courts do not have the authority to adjudicate claims of partisan gerrymandering.

Don't get me wrong – I think [gerrymandering is a terrible thing for democracy](#). It exacerbates partisanship (because there is no incentive to be moderate if you have a “safe” district) and leaves very few genuinely contested House seats (so the only real fight is the primaries, which also favors more extreme partisan candidates). And partisan gerrymandering is often a pretense for what is actually racial gerrymandering (especially in the South).

But I don't see how sticking to our principles in California makes sense when Republican states are racing to stack the deck. Even the League of Women Voters of California and Common Cause, long-time opponents of gerrymandering, have remained neutral on Prop 50.

Where is the money coming from? The Prop 50 fight is shaping up to be among [the most expensive in California history](#). Unsurprisingly, much of the money is coming from partisan sources, with Gov. Newsom, MoveOn, CA Teachers Association, NEA, George Soros, organized labor, and House Democratic SuperPACs funding the bulk of the Yes on 50 efforts. On the other side is Charles Munger Jr., who helped fund the ballot measures that created the independent California Citizens Redistricting Commission, along with both state and national Republican SuperPACs.

Yes: Gov. Newsom, Nancy Pelosi, Barak Obama, and basically every Democrat you can think of; the McClatchy newspapers (inc. Sacramento Bee), National Education Association (NEA), California Teachers Association (CTA), California Nurses Association (CNA), Planned Parenthood.

No: Arnold Schwarzenegger, basically every Republican you can think of, California Farm Bureau.