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Published by

Engstrom, Erik J.
Partisan Gerrymandering and the Construction of American Democracy.
University of Michigan Press, 2013.
Project MUSE. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/book.27372>.



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[136.0.111.243] Project MUSE (2025-01-31 10:32 GMT)

Partisan Gerrymandering and the Construction of American Democracy

In *Partisan Gerrymandering and the Construction of American Democracy*, Erik J. Engstrom offers an important, historically grounded perspective on the stakes of congressional redistricting by evaluating the impact of gerrymandering on elections and on party control of the U.S. national government from 1789 through the reapportionment revolution of the 1960s. In this era before the courts supervised redistricting, state parties enjoyed wide discretion with regard to the timing and structure of their districting choices. Although Congress occasionally added language to federal-apportionment acts requiring equally populous districts, there is little evidence this legislation was enforced. Essentially, states could redistrict largely *whenever* and *however* they wanted, and so, not surprisingly, political considerations dominated the process.

Engstrom employs the abundant cross-sectional and temporal variation in redistricting plans and their electoral results from all the states—throughout U.S. history—in order to investigate the causes and consequences of partisan redistricting. His analysis reveals that districting practices across states and over time systematically affected the competitiveness of congressional elections, shaped the partisan composition of congressional delegations, and, on occasion, decided party control of the House of Representatives. In conclusion, Engstrom places recent developments in redistricting politics and scholarship within the larger historical context uncovered in this book.

Erik J. Engstrom is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Davis.

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Partisan Gerrymandering and the Construction of American Democracy

ERIK J. ENGSTROM

PARTISAN GERRYMANDERING
AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF
AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

Erik J. Engstrom

The University of Michigan Press
Ann Arbor

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Published in the United States of America by
The University of Michigan Press
Manufactured in the United States of America
⊗ Printed on acid-free paper

2016 2015 2014 2013 4 3 2 1

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Engstrom, Erik J.

Partisan gerrymandering and the construction of American democracy / Erik J. Engstrom.

pages cm. — (Legislative politics and policy making)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-472-11901-1 (hardback) — ISBN 978-0-472-02952-5 (e-book)

1. Gerrymandering—United States. 2. Apportionment (Election law)—United States. 3. Election districts—United States. 4. Voting—United States. 5. Representative government and representation—United States. 6. United States—Politics and government. I. Title.

JK1341.E64 2013
328.73'073455—dc23

2013015656