The Princeton Gerrymandering Project

Sam Wang

CURRENT RESEARCH

Where Law, Elections and Math Collide

Partisan gerrymandering, the manipulation of electoral district boundaries to achieve political control, has reached unprecedented levels in the United States. This practice disenfranchises entire demographics on a massive scale. In the current redistricting cycle, millions of voters live in districts where their votes just don't matter. Sam Wang, of Princeton University, wants to solve this problem by assessing electoral asymmetry with proven statistical methodology.

Gerrymandering has threatened free and fair elections in the United States since 1812. This manipulation of electoral district boundaries to achieve political control by one party over another has become even easier to accomplish with the advent of technology. Over the last three decades, the Supreme Court has wrestled with the issue, agreeing that gerrymandering is unconstitutional but unable to settle on a standard to identify it. Sam Wang, a professor of neuroscience and molecular biology at Princeton University, wants to change that with math and simple statistics.

   Wang started analyzing elections statistically in 2004, and found strong evidence following the 2012 election that gerrymandering had reached unprecedented levels in the United States. Large groups of voters are consistently put on the losing side of every election because of their party affiliation, causing mass disenfranchisement and enough wasted votes to nullify the effect of both voter identification laws and fraud. In the years following, Wang created the Princeton Gerrymandering Project and designed a cohesive series of statistical tests used to score the fairness of elections in individual states. The results are then published to an...

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AFFILIATION

Princeton University

EDUCATION

- Ph.D., in Neuroscience , Stanford University
- B.S., in Physics , California Institute of Technology

AWARDS

- National Science Foundation CAREER Award, 2004
- McKnight Technological Innovations in Neuroscience Award, 2012

RESEARCH AREAS

Law / Ethics, Political Science, Technology

FUNDING REQUEST

We are seeking funders who believe in democracy and are interesting in helping the Princeton Gerrymandering Project make a significant impact on the 2021 redistricting effort. Our goal of $710,000 includes educational programs, litigant/reform support, supercomputing simulations, and outreach to provide reformers and litigators data they can use to effect real change. Ultimately, the goal is a fair democracy.