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## *Is Racial Gerrymandering Going Out of Style?*

Some liberals are coming around to the view that white voters will elect black candidates.



By

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Voters at a polling station in Columbia, S.C., Nov. 3.

PHOTO: JOSHUA BOUCHER/ZUMA PRESS

With apologies to Stephen Sondheim, a funny thing has happened in the redistricting battles leading up to next year's midterm elections. Democrats have discovered that divvying up voters by race might not be such a good idea.

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For decades, Democrats have operated under the assumption that white voters wouldn't pull the lever for black candidates. They clung to this belief even after majority white cities had elected black mayors, majority white states had elected black governors and senators, and a majority white country had elected a black president. When Barack Obama won the presidency in 2008, he performed better among white voters in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia than John Kerry did in 2004 and Al Gore in 2000.

When it comes to drawing political maps for congressional seats, Republicans have been happy to create these "majority minority" districts because that made it easier for Republican candidates to win elsewhere. The downside of creating "safe" black districts, however, is that they give candidates little incentive to form multiracial coalitions that appeal to nonblacks or to anyone other than base voters. The result is more racial division and hyperpartisanship. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus typically have voting records that are more liberal than both black voters and even white Democrats.

The Journal [reported](#) last week that some on the left may be rethinking this tradeoff as 2022 redistricting gets underway using the latest Census data. "Black leaders are approaching this process with a different mindset than a decade ago, with more arguing that Black political representation no longer rests on a need to pack Black voters into highly concentrated districts," the paper wrote. "The shift could help Democrats push for maps that make the party more competitive in some states by distributing Black voters—the party's most supportive voting block—across more House districts."

The shift in thinking is also a roundabout acknowledgment that liberal concerns about "voter suppression" are mostly play acting. In 2008 and 2012, [black voter turnout exceeded white turnout](#), according to the U.S. Elections Project database run by

University of Florida political scientist Michael McDonald. In 2016 black turnout returned to its pre-Obama level, which almost certainly reflected a lack of enthusiasm for Hillary Clinton, not an inability of blacks to cast a vote.

How do we know this? Because in 2018, “all major racial and ethnic groups saw historic jumps in voter turnout,” according to a Pew Research Center analysis. The 2020 election once again saw record-high participation among Hispanics and Asians, and the third-highest black turnout—after 2008 and 2012—on record.

None of this is consistent with the voter-suppression narrative in the media or with the rhetoric coming from traditional civil-rights groups. Minority voting has increased even as states have adopted stricter protocols in the name of ballot integrity. Sure, activists are enraged, but support for voter-ID laws transcends race, ethnicity and even party affiliation. A Monmouth University poll released in June found that 80% of Americans—including 62% of Democrats, 87% of independents and 91% of Republicans—support voter ID requirements. To raise money and stay relevant, organizations such as the NAACP pretend it’s still 1964. And Democrats use fear tactics to scare blacks to the polls. But black voter registration in the South, where most blacks still live, was higher than in other regions of the country long before anyone had heard of Stacey Abrams.

If some liberals are coming around to the view that you don’t need majority black districts to elect black officials, it’s a welcome development that’s long overdue. Still, it doesn’t square with their endless chatter about “systemic racism” in America, which we’re told is not only endemic but ascendant. In the 1980s, a majority white district in Missouri was represented by a black Democrat. In the 1990s, a black Republican from Connecticut represented a district that was nearly 90% white. More recently, Democrat Keith Ellison of Minnesota and Republican Mia Love of Utah, two black former members of Congress, represented districts that were mostly white.

If anything, the trend has been accelerating. In 2018, 14 black congressional candidates won seats in districts where a majority or plurality of voters were white, the Journal reported. And “seven Black lawmakers now in Congress represent districts that were majority Black in 2010 but no longer are.” Democrats in Congress want to federalize voting rules instead of leaving them up to the states, which is a solution in search of a problem. The black franchise isn’t in jeopardy, and claims that American society is increasingly segregated are not borne out by data on where people choose to live and how they choose to vote.

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