

## Redistricting

Village member Kathy Utgoff clarified the newly complex situation faced by voters in terms of redistricting. She explained that she was “Interested in superstructure of voting, not the politics.” Every ten years or so each state redraws legislative districts. Redistricting can be used as a “political weapon.” Utgoff said, “In the past both parties used this process to satisfy their own needs.”

Virginia had to redistrict in 2019 because the “Supreme Court ruled that lines had been drawn to dilute the voice of black voters.” Gerrymandering can be used in a way that jeopardizes minorities. The ruling had a great impact on next cycle because districts had to be redrawn.

Previously, Lake Barcroft had been split into two legislative districts. With the new redistricting, lines could be drawn to encompass “communities of interest.” Another major change was that prisoners are no longer counted in as residents of the district where the prison is located but rather in their former jurisdiction.

In Virginia, the redistricting commission failed. Special Masters were appointed and on December 28 the newly redrawn maps were approved with minor changes. It was deemed important to have the maps available immediately. There are still fifteen states with districts still undecided; five of those are battleground states. Virginia has been able to move on this with greater speed than many others.

The results are that Gerry Connolly is still our Congressman until January 2023. However, he will not be on the ballot in November 2022. Lake Barcroft has been moved into District 8 where Don Beyer is the incumbent and, depending on the results of the primary, may be on the ballot. There has been no Republican primary because Republicans held a convention.

For the Virginia legislature, candidates must live in the district from which they are running. The same does not hold true for Congress. Previously, people who drew the districting maps gave weight to incumbents and knew where the legislators lived. This time maps were drawn only according to the law. Half of the new districts have two legislators and half have none. Lake Barcroft is now in District 13. District 13 is the home of two incumbents, Kaye Kory and Marcus Simon. Kaye will be the delegate to 2024 at least and then there will be another election. Utgoff commented, “Both won’t have a job.”

Currently there are two Senators for Lake Barcroft. On the “north” side there is Sen. Dick Saslaw, and on the “south” side there is Sen. David Marsden. The new district is the home of both Marsden and Saslaw; all Lake Barcroft residents will have the same senator.

Utgoff concluded that “The process is now more transparent.” She commented, “It’s not perfect. . .this started 10 years ago. . . It can definitely be improved and things will look different when this process starts again.”

Kathy Utgoff worked as an economist before she retired. She now works on bipartisan voting issues. She was on the Board of OneVirginia2021 during their redistricting campaign and is President of a newly launched non-profit that will begin with a campaign to educate voters about ranked choice voting in Virginia.