

HOUSE No. 01975

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Bradley H. Jones, Jr. and

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act establishing an independent redistricting commission and criteria for redistricting for congressional districts..

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
<i>Bradley H. Jones, Jr.</i>	<i>20th Middlesex</i>
<i>Donald F. Humason, Jr.</i>	<i>4th Hampden</i>
<i>Angelo D'Emilia</i>	<i>8th Plymouth</i>
<i>F. Jay Barrows</i>	<i>1st Bristol</i>
<i>Shaunna O'Connell</i>	<i>3rd Bristol</i>
<i>Susan Williams Gifford</i>	<i>2nd Plymouth</i>
<i>George Ross</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>
<i>Donald Wong</i>	<i>9th Essex</i>
<i>Richard Bastien</i>	<i>2nd Worcester</i>
<i>Todd M. Smola</i>	<i>1st Hampden</i>
<i>Sheila Harrington</i>	<i>1st Middlesex</i>
<i>Steven L. Levy</i>	<i>4th Middlesex</i>
<i>David Vieira,</i>	<i>3rd Barnstable</i>
<i>Paul K. Frost</i>	<i>7th Worcester</i>
<i>Bruce E. Tarr</i>	<i>First Essex and Middlesex</i>
<i>George N. Peterson, Jr.</i>	<i>9th Worcester</i>

Bradford Hill

4th Essex

Elizabeth Poirier

14th Bristol

Viriato Manuel deMacedo

1st Plymouth

HOUSE No. 01975

By Messrs. Jones of North Reading and deMacedo, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 1975) of Tarr and others establishing an independent redistricting commission and criteria for redistricting for Congressional districts Joint Committee on Election Laws.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE
□ HOUSE
□ , NO. 589 OF 2009-2010.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand Eleven

An Act establishing an independent redistricting commission and criteria for redistricting for congressional districts..

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. The General Laws, as appearing in the 2008 Official Edition, are hereby amended
- 2 by inserting after chapter 57, the following new chapter:--
- 3 Chapter 57A. Section 1. Any redistricting commission established pursuant to Article 101 of
- 4 the Constitution shall have the additional duty of redrawing congressional districts as provided
- 5 by this chapter. If said commission has not been established, it shall be established in the
- 6 manner prescribed by this chapter.

7 SECTION 2. The federal census shall be the basis for determining congressional districts for
8 the ten year period beginning with the first Wednesday of the third January following the
9 commencement of the taking of said census.

10 SECTION 3. In the year after each census is commenced, and only in that year, an independent
11 redistricting commission, herein referred to as the commission, shall be convened and shall
12 divide the commonwealth into the number of congressional districts as required by federal law
13 and any other districts as otherwise provided by law. All districts shall be drawn of contiguous
14 territory, shall be equal in population to the extent required by law, and shall comply with federal
15 constitutional and statutory requirements. No district shall be drawn for the purpose or with the
16 effect of diluting the voting strength of a group based on race, ethnicity or language minority
17 status, or for the purpose of augmenting or diluting the voting strength of a political party, or any
18 individual. In drawing district lines, the commission shall not consider residential address, party
19 affiliation, or partisan voting history of any individual or groups of individuals, except to the
20 extent necessary to avoid dilution of voting strength based on race, ethnicity or language
21 minority status. In addition, to the maximum extent possible, district boundaries shall be drawn
22 so as to: (1) maintain the unity of well-defined municipal neighborhoods; (2) observe municipal
23 boundaries; and (3) promote geographic compactness of districts. If it is not possible to draw
24 district boundaries that fully comply with these criteria while also complying with the mandatory
25 requirements set forth herein, then they shall be drawn to optimize the criteria in the order of
26 priority set forth hereinabove. The commission shall also consider communities of interest in
27 determining which cities, towns, or neighborhoods thereof to aggregate into a single district and
28 if all other criteria are met.

29 SECTION 4. (a) The commission shall consist of seven member commissioners. On or before
30 January 15 of the year following the commencement of the federal census , the following offices
31 shall each appoint one member of the commission: the governor of the commonwealth, who
32 shall appoint a dean or professor of law or political science or government at an institution of
33 higher learning in the commonwealth; the attorney general of the commonwealth, who shall
34 appoint a retired justice who resides in the commonwealth; and the secretary of the
35 commonwealth, who shall appoint an expert in civil rights law who is a resident of the
36 commonwealth.

37 (b) By the same date, the house speaker, the house minority leader, the senate president, and the
38 senate minority leader shall each nominate three individuals. The appointees chosen by the
39 governor, attorney general, and secretary of the commonwealth shall then select one of the three
40 nominees named by each said official.

41 (c) If nominations or appointments are not made by January 15 of such year, the office
42 responsible for making the appointment or nominations shall forfeit its rights under this section
43 and the remaining direct appointees shall then make an appointment to fill the vacancy.

44 (d) Nominations and appointments shall reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic, gender, and age
45 diversity of the commonwealth to the maximum extent feasible and shall be selected on the basis
46 of civic involvement and knowledge of redistricting policy, civil rights, political science,
47 demographics or statistics, election expertise, voting rights, community organizing, or law. No
48 person nominated or appointed to the commission, in the five years preceding such nomination
49 or appointment, shall have held Congressional, state legislative or statewide elective office, or
50 shall have served as mayor or city councilor of a city in the commonwealth, governor's

51 councilor, or shall have been elected to a state or federal party committee; or shall be a current
52 employee, agent or family member of any of the above; or, in the two years preceding such
53 nomination or appointment, shall have been a legislative agent. The commissioners shall agree:
54 (1) not to stand for election to congress, except to the extent as otherwise prohibited by law, the
55 general court, or the governor's council, until districts are redrawn following the next census; (2)
56 to apply the provisions of this article in an honest, independent, and impartial fashion; and (3) to
57 act at all times so as to uphold public confidence in the integrity of the redistricting process.

58 SECTION 5. The commission shall be convened no later than February 15 of the year following
59 the commencement of the decennial census. The commission shall disband only upon final
60 adoption and exhaustion of judicial review of challenges to congressional districts.

61 SECTION 6. The commission shall hire staff and may retain experts to assist it in the
62 performance of its duties. The commission shall establish rules governing its operation and
63 procedures. Commissioners may receive compensation for actual time spent on commission
64 duties and shall be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses. The budget of the
65 commonwealth shall provide adequate funding for the operation of the commission.

66 SECTION 7. A member of the commission or an appointing authority may petition the supreme
67 judicial court to remove a commissioner on the grounds of neglect, misconduct, or inability to
68 perform the duties of a commissioner. A vacancy so created shall be filled by the office which
69 appointed the removed commissioner or by the nomination and selection process set forth in
70 section 4, as applicable.

71 SECTION 8. All meetings of the commission shall be open to the public, consistent with the
72 laws of the commonwealth concerning open meetings. All documents produced by or for the

73 commission shall be public. The commission shall hold public hearings in at least five
74 geographically disbursed counties. The public shall be afforded the opportunity to submit
75 proposed maps for consideration by the commission and the commission shall make map-making
76 software available for public use. The commission shall take all steps necessary to ensure that
77 the public can exercise its right to review and comment on proposed district maps before they are
78 approved and shall publish all preliminary and final plans in publicly accessible forums that are
79 free of charge and that ensure wide public distribution. Proposed districts shall be presented in
80 both graphic and narrative form.

81 SECTION 9. (a) Within 120 days of the completion of the decennial census, the commission
82 shall prepare and publish for public comment a preliminary plan for congressional districts. The
83 public shall have a three-week period to comment on the preliminary district plan. The
84 commission may revise the preliminary district plan in response to public comment and shall
85 submit the revised plan to the general court, which shall vote on the revised plan. If the plan is
86 rejected, then the commission shall prepare, publish, revise, and submit a second-round
87 preliminary district plan in the same manner as the first. Following the period for public
88 comment, the commission shall submit the revised plan to the general court for a vote. If the
89 general court votes to reject the second-round plan, then the commission shall prepare, publish,
90 revise, and submit a third-round preliminary district plan, in the same manner as the first. If the
91 general court rejects the third-round plan, then the commission shall prepare, publish, and revise
92 a fourth-round plan in the same manner. The plan, so revised, shall become law without
93 submission to or approval by the general court.

94 (b) With respect to each plan the commission submits to the general court for a vote, the vote
95 must be taken within two weeks of submission. No amendments to the plan as submitted may be

96 made. If the plan is approved by a majority of the members of the house of representatives and
97 senate present and voting or if no vote is taken within the two-week period, then the plan as
98 submitted shall become law.

99 SECTION 10. Original jurisdiction is hereby vested in the supreme judicial court upon the
100 petition of any voter of the commonwealth for judicial relief relative to the establishment of the
101 congressional districts. The general court may by law limit the time within which judicial
102 proceedings may be instituted to challenge any redistricting map.