Redistricting Quick Guide

Some History
- Every ten years, legislatures use census data to draw the district lines based on population, communities of interest, and other factors.
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965 required states with a history of racial gerrymandering to undergo *preclearance*, or the process of sending maps and any voting law changes to the Department of Justice. In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled against the preclearance clause; this redistricting cycle will be the first without that guardrail.

Potential Problems
- Many states have nonpartisan committees that create fair lines, but in South Carolina, the legislatures themselves draw the lines.
- Politicians have both the power and temptation to draw lines to benefit themselves and their parties.
- It is a common practice to pack all voters of one party in one district, called "packing" or draw lines through communities to dilute their votes, a process known as "cracking."
- A S.C. specific issue is incumbent protection. We have very few competitive districts in both the House and the Senate.
- This is not a Republican or Democrat issue; it is one of power.

What would this mean for voters?
- Representatives can pick their voters, instead of voters picking their representatives.
- Your representative may not understand your specific community concerns, whether it be zoning issues, off-shore drilling, school district needs, etc.
- The elections may be unfairly stacked against any opposition.
- Your representatives could stop listening to you if they don't need your vote. Often what happens without competition is that representatives don't feel like they need to listen to all of their constituents. Instead, they reach for the fringes which leads to more polarization.

What can voters do?
- Learn about the process, the history of the Voting Rights Act, and other legislative changes that have the potential to ramp up skewed maps.
- Pay close attention to the maps. Look closely at your district and question its shape. What racial, economic, political, religious, or other community affiliations might be packed or cracked?
- Call & write your representatives, early and often. Let them know #WeAreWatching.