

On Monday, January 22nd the LWVHC held a Lunch and Learn at the Community Co-op with guest speaker Dr. Jennifer Bremer from the LWVNC State Fair Elections Action Team (FEAT). Dr. Bremer spoke to a packed room of League and community members alike. While her talk focused on judicial redistricting, she also addressed the complex issues of racial and partisan gerrymandering at both the state and federal levels. She explained that, given racial gerrymandering has been illegal since 1965, the US Supreme Court found that the NC state legislative maps drawn by the NCGA in 2011 were unconstitutional and racially discriminatory. The Federal Court has now ordered that the special master legislative map be implemented. These maps apply only to state legislative races, not federal congressional races. Since this case has been to the US Supreme Court, it is unclear what actions the NCGA can take in this case. However, the Assembly is planning to appeal in hopes that Justice Neal Gorsuch will make a difference. Partisan congressional gerrymandering, of which both sides have been guilty, has been around since at least the early 1800's. However, in 2011, the NCGA used extreme data and computer programming to gerrymander so that 11 out of the 13 districts are held by the Republican party. The worst case for the previous Democrats' maps were a split of 6 voting districts going to each party. The US Supreme Court has heard cases of partisan gerrymandering from Wisconsin and Massachusetts with Wisconsin favoring Republicans and Massachusetts favoring Democrats. The federal court in NC has ruled that the Republicans have unconstitutionally gerrymandered the congressional

districts and ordered new maps drawn by Jan 24, 2018. The NCGA has now appealed the partisan cases (Rucho) to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ordered a stay in this case but has not yet accepted it for hearing. It is expected that the decision from the Wisconsin case will impact the NC case and perhaps settle it. The Wisconsin case was argued in October 2017 and should be out in April or May. Rumor has it that it may be out in March so that gerrymandered maps in congressional districts can be redrawn in time for the 2018 elections.

When asked about specific advocacy “talking points,” Dr. Bremer recommended contacting state legislators to say that, 1) the judicial branch of government does not need changes. It is working in an independent and fair way right now; and that, 2) there are three branches of government. The legislative branch should NOT be appointing judges as they do in SC, which has a broken judicial system, and that, 3) any redistricting of the court system with the maps currently under consideration in the House of Representatives would result in partisan gerrymandering and probably end up in a protracted legal battle which will cost taxpayers additional millions of dollars.