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**Intelligence Squared U.S.****Gerrymandering is destroying the political center**

For the Motion: David Daley, Caroline Fredrickson

Against the Motion: Chris Jankowski, Nolan McCarty

Moderator: John Donovan

**AUDIENCE RESULTS****Before the debate:****62% FOR****8% AGAINST****30% UNDECIDED****After the debate:****53% FOR****34% AGAINST****13% UNDECIDED**

Start Time: (00:00:00)

John Donovan:

In American politics, the center is dead. The election we passed through in 2016 exposed once again the depth of division and also a level of discourse where compromise has been a dirty word. And how did we get to such an extreme state of polarization? Is it something about the Internet, or is it about the kinds of people who go into politics? Or is it, as some have argued, the strange American practice known as gerrymandering, where every 10 years, the parties redraw the political map to create an advantage for themselves by putting together districts made up overwhelmingly of voters likely to support them, making their seat so safe and so uncompetitive that they have no incentive to compromise, and the center dies.

00:08:04

Well, that is an intriguing theory, but does it hold up to examination? That sounds like the makings of a debate, so let's have it. Yes or no to this statement: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center, a debate from Intelligence Squared U.S. We are at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., in partnership with the National Constitution Center, with four superbly qualified debaters on stage who will argue for and against the motion: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center. As always, our debate will go in three rounds, and then our live audience here in Washington votes to choose the winner, and only one side wins.

Let's go to those key pads and have you vote now as you come off the street, on this motion: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center. If you go to the keypad, pay attention to keys number one, two, and three. If you agree with the motion, push number one. That means you're arguing with this side.

00:09:00

You agree with this side's arguments. If you disagree with the motion, push number two. And if you are undecided, push number three. You can ignore the rest of the keys. They're not live. And if you push the wrong key, just correct yourself and your last vote will be recorded before we lock out the system. And I'm judging by eye contact that we're done. Okay. And what I want to explain is that at the end of the debate, after you have heard the arguments and judged their quality and persuasiveness, we will have you vote again. And what we do is we look at the difference between the first vote and the second vote. And it's the difference between the two votes that determines our winners. It's the team's numbers who have moved up the most in percentage points who will be declared our victor. Again, our motion is this: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center. We have one team arguing for, one team arguing against. Let's meet the team first arguing for the motion.

00:10:00

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome David Daley.

[applause]

Hi, David.

David Daley:  
Hello.

John Donovan:

So, you wrote a book whose name I'm not allowed to say on the radio or in front of small children. So, I will try to get around it. You -- the name of the book is, "Ratfu --" and it ends in K-E-D, the true story behind the secret plan to steal America's democracy. What exactly does that term that I can't pronounce mean?

David Daley:

Well, I like to quote the great political philosophers of AC/DC and talk about dirty deeds done dirt cheap. It is a term that goes back to Watergate. You can trace it back through the redistricting battles of the 1990s as a term for political chicanery. And in this most vulgar of years, it seems like a good way to cut through the system and grab people's attention for a topic that might have put you to sleep in civics class back in eighth grade.

John Donovan:

Some time-honored profanity. All right.

David Daley:  
Rat-bleeped.

00:11:00

John Donovan:  
Thank you. Thank you very much, David. And please tell us who your partner is.

David Daley:  
I am debating this evening with my friend, Caroline Fredrickson.

John Donovan:  
Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Caroline Fredrickson.

[applause]

Hi, Caroline. Welcome to Intelligence Squared U.S. And you are president of the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, a progressive group. And we are wondering -- again, we're going to need a lot of background throughout the evening for those of us not so familiar with gerrymandering. We know that both parties do it. They have been doing it for a few centuries. But does that mean that, technically speaking, it's legal?

Caroline Fredrickson:  
It's not. In fact, the Supreme Court has recognized that drawing lines to prevent a legislature from being, quote, collectively responsive to the popular will is actually unconstitutional and has questioned partisan gerrymandering. So, no, it's not.

John Donovan:  
So how do we get to a point where it's happening anyway?

Caroline Fredrickson:  
Well, just as I think people might consider some of the Supreme Court decisions a little vague.

00:12:02

And that's because they haven't figured out the standards to how to evaluate when the line has been crossed.

John Donovan:  
Okay, and that's why we have a debate here tonight. Thank you, the team, welcoming, for the motion.

[applause]

I think I just misspoke, so I get the chance to rewind and do things over again. So, I'm just going to say, "Thank you to the team arguing for the motion."

[applause]

And you have two opponents, please welcome, arguing against the motion. First, Chris Jankowski.

[applause]

Chris, you're actually a major character in your opponent's book. You ran a program called REDMAP on behalf of the Republican State Leadership Committee, pulling off what many say was the most successful gerrymander of all time, on behalf of the Republican Party. Rachel Maddow called you the unsung political genius of our time.

00:13:00

And all of this was your idea. Where did that idea come from?

Chris Jankowski:

Well, good evening. I would say -- and I -- it's only going to go downhill from here based on Rachel's billing. But, you know, I hate to -- the worst part about David's book is it outed me as a New York Times reader. And I was reading a Sunday story in July, 2009, that mentioned the upcoming census ongoing and the redistricting and reapportionment that would take place and the significant changes in populations from the Rust belt down the Sun belt and that state legislatures would be doing these lines and that -- of course, I knew that from college poly-sci probably. But I thought, "You know what? We could do something."

John Donovan:

So, you moved?

Chris Jankowski:

We did.

John Donovan:

And who is your partner?

Chris Jankowski:

Well, I believe you take a gun to a gun fight, and I think you take an Ivy league professor to a debate. So, I brought Nolan McCarty.

[laughter]

John Donovan:

Ladies and gentlemen, Nolan McCarty.

00:14:00

[applause]

Nolan, it is Princeton, indeed. You're a chair of the department of politics there. And you've been studying politics and wrote a book called, "Polarized America," which looks at the causes and the results of polarization in American politics. But if -- are we being misty-eyed to look back to the past and say, "It's never been as bad as it is today?"

Nolan McCarty:

Well, we have measures of polarization in Congress, going back to reconstruction. Reconstruction was a pretty nasty time. We just finished the Civil War. One party believed that the other party consisted of traitors. It's worse now.

John Donovan:

Wow. Okay, we got a heck of a debate coming up, ladies and gentlemen. The team arguing against the motion, which, once again is, "Gerrymandering is Destroying the Political Center." Let's move onto round one. Round one comprised of opening statements by each debater in turn. They will be six minutes each. They will be uninterrupted. And here, speaking first to get you to vote, "Yes," on the motion, Gerrymandering is Destroying the Political Center, Caroline Frederickson.

00:15:04

She is president of the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy. Ladies and gentlemen, Caroline Frederickson.

[applause]

Caroline Fredrickson:

Thank you. And thank you so much for having me here. So, I was asked to start off with a little bit of the legal framework. Why do we actually do this? So, some of you may know that our Constitution requires that they re-draw our Congressional and state legislative district lines every 10 years. And as our country grew after its founding, it didn't grow equally, as you might guess. Some towns and counties grew larger than others, and some jurisdictions actually took account of that and changed their district lines, but others didn't.

So, for an example, in Tennessee, from 1901 to 1961, the legislature just ignored the requirement to re-draw district lines. Another example, in Alabama, you had -- in addition to the literacy tests and poll taxes that kept African Americans from registering to vote -- you had mal apportionment that helped preserve the power of segregation in places like Lowndes County, Alabama.

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In that county, you had 15,000 -- approximately -- residents who had as many representative in the Alabama Senate as the 600,000 residents of Birmingham's Jefferson County. Well, the Supreme Court ended this perversion of democracy in a series of landmark cases in the '60s, ruling that legislative districts had to be roughly equal in population. They're known as the one person, one vote cases. And so, district boundaries now are being re-adjusted to account for new population information. And so, when the census is conducted at the start of the new decade, district boundaries have to be re-drawn. And so, we have this re-districting and gerrymandering. So, as you know, gerrymandering is nothing new. It's named after Elbridge Gerry, who was the Massachusetts governor and future vice president, who, in 1812, signed a re-districting plan that benefited his own party.

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It looked a lot like a salamander. And hence, the "gerrymander." But just because it was done in the past doesn't make it any less insidious and any less anti-democratic. And now, we have these sophisticated technologies and maps that allow it to become so much worse. And as you know, maps and -- are -- tend to be drawn by the state's legislators. Legislators are very self-invested in this process. And this gives them the tools to figure out exactly what they want their own district and their own voters to look like for the next 10 years. And because they are -- the parties have learned that they can gain many votes by altering the mix of who votes rather than assuming the median positions of the likely electorate, and they can speak more directly to partisans and donors -- the extremes, really, through the microtargeting that is available to them.

00:18:06

And these base voters are then the key to the primary. With districts that are configured like this, to benefit the incumbent or one party, the primary becomes the only thing that matters. And so, you can look in 2012 and 2014, where you had partisan asymmetry that was at its highest level in 40 years. And that's measured by how one party can get more seats than its votes should allow. The districts are structured not to be competitive. So, as I mentioned, the Supreme Court has raised concerns about partisan gerrymandering as being unconstitutional, as not -- when the districts are not collectively responsible to the popular will. And the reason for this is that the re-districting requirement was essentially -- was meant to create fairness and balance. The districts were created -- the drawing was meant to keep them fair, and the populations balanced.

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And not -- and I will quote from a piece that was in the Washington Post by Phil Andrews, a former county councilman -- Montgomery County, Maryland. He said the 3rd District of Maryland "staggers like a drunken sailor from Annapolis to Olney." And you have to look at it. You could see, it actually does kind of look like a drunken sailor staggering. That's not what the founding fathers were intending when they said that we should have this process go on. Madison actually said that the House was meant to be a numerous and changeable bodies, where the members would have a, "habitual recollection of their dependence to the people." Madison said, "Every new election in the states will change one half of the representatives." Well, as you know, we have elections where almost nobody in the House changes unless they happen to retire. So, we can see that we have a situation where the gerrymandering has significantly added to the level of polarization.

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You have districts that have no competition and hence, only the incumbent runs for re-election because it's really not worth it for anybody else there are so few competitive districts. And that leads to disincentivizing dialogue because there's no reason to talk to somebody on the other side of the aisle because if you do and you compromise, you'll have a primary attack. And the primary, as I mentioned, is the only election that matters. So, I would just end with a couple other points about why this has contributed so significantly to the destruction of the middle. When there's only one person on the ballot or only one party that can win a district, the citizens are essentially -- have no way to hold that individual accountable. They have no choice. As a result, people stop voting. Turnout goes down. And let me remind you that primaries, and since primaries are often now the only vote matters, primaries are already a low turnout operation -- exaggerating even more how far to the extreme and out of the middle both the voters are and those people who are responding to them, the elected officials.

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So, I just want to quote -- to close in the same set of articles yesterday in The Washington Post, there was an expert, Ross Lawrence from the American Enterprise Institute, a Republican, who talked about why it was -- why it is that competitive elections are good for voters. He reminds us that one party dominance is a recipe for corruption and complacency. So, I ask you, give us your vote, because it's clear that gerrymandering is destroying the political center. Thank you.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Caroline Frederickson.

[applause]

John Donovan:

And that is the motion: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center. Here to get you to vote no on this motion, I want to bring to the lectern Nolan McCarty.

00:22:03

He is the Susan Dod Brown professor of politics and public affairs at Princeton. I allowed your opponent to go over 30 seconds. If you need it, you'll get the same privilege. Please, ladies and gentlemen, welcome Nolan McCarty.

[applause]

Nolan McCarty:

The heart of tonight's debate is the question of whether gerrymandering can be blamed for what political scientists and others have called polarization. For our purposes tonight, polarization can be thought of as the disappearance of moderate views from politics and the increased likelihood of extreme ones. The system often manifests itself in extreme differences between the two parties. Polarization can appear at two different levels. It can appear among elites like in Congress, so we see the hauling out of moderates in Congress, or it can happen in the electorate where we see the disengagement of moderate voters. The conventional wisdom among political scientists is that polarization is primarily an elite phenomenon -- at least it started there, and that's most clear in the data.

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Voter polarization emerged much later and is more empirically ambiguous and is often driven by other behavior. I am going to focus on the extent to which gerrymandering is related to elite polarization. My partner will take up questions of voter polarization. My focus on Congress has two -- at least two advantages. First, it's well studied, and there's a historical record of congressional voting on bills. And polarization in Congress is obviously directly pertinent to questions about the effects of gerrymandering. So, let me start with just giving you some data and some facts about polarization in Congress. So, in my work, I've measured polarization in Congress by levels of partisanship and ideological division on roll call votes on legislation. These measures have varied greatly over 140 years -- since Reconstruction, which I mentioned before.

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It was obviously high during Reconstruction in the Gilded Age, through about 1920. It was low from the 1930s to the 1970s. And a dramatic growth began in the late 1970s. And as I said before, now we're at an all-time high. Second fact, the House and the Senate have polarized more or less in tandem. There's no significant differences between the trend and the turning points between those two chambers. I and the data also suggest the trends are very long term with very few abrupt changes reflecting the obvious role of deep cultural changes, economic

and technological shifts and demography. Given these long-term trends, I argue that it's very doubtful that any small change in electoral procedure such as the way we draw districts can really account for what is going on. So, the first point I want to make in support of that argument is to go to the theoretical argument that people have made about how it is that gerrymandering is supposed -- partisan gerrymandering -- is supposed to increase polarization.

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I would argue it's very important not to conflate partisan gerrymandering, the attempt that majority parties do to try to maximum number of seats, and incumbency protection gerrymandering, the role that incumbents might play in creating safe seats. They're not the same, and they're very different. So, let me give you an example to show how the argument underlying this case doesn't make any sense. So, consider a state with two districts. And we'll say that party A has an advantage across the state. Say they get 53 percent of the vote, so they're a slight majority party. They get to draw the district boundaries and can do so to get any allocation of partisans into districts. In such a scenario, party A has essentially two choices; one, it can do the partisan gerrymandering. It can create two identical districts so there's at least 53 percent in both of those districts. Or it can do incumbency protection. It can create a safe party A district and a safe party B district.

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Now, note that the one with the safe districts is the incumbency protection gerrymandering. It's not the partisan gerrymandering. The partisan gerrymandering gives the incumbents of the majority party much narrower margins than the incumbency protection. So, it's really not the -- it's really not -- partisan gerrymandering -- its effects on polarization just aren't clear theoretically. But I'm an empiricist, so let me talk a little bit about the data against the proposition. First of all, as I've already alluded to the Senate. Since the Dakotas were split in the 1890s to give the Republicans four Senators instead of two, the Senate has not been gerrymandered. Yet the data shows it's just as polarized as the House of Representatives. Small states can't be gerrymandered. They're states with one member of Congress. They send extreme numbers to Congress all the time. Recall a certain Vermont senator who was a Socialist until he became a Democrat. That's from a state with one House member.

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If you look at state legislatures, lower and upper chambers are equally polarized. Lower chambers are easier to gerrymander than upper chambers. Why are they the same if this is what's going on? Turns out, if you look at the geography, extreme partisan districts are no more frequent than extreme counties. So, the underlying geography of the United States is one that's quite polarized and the districts themselves are not much more polarized than the

underlying geography. And then finally, and most importantly, polarization does not seem to increase disproportionately around reapportionment years. It increases in off years, every year. In fact, since 1977, it's increased every year, and the increases around the apportionment are no bigger than they are around other years. Just a few other points of more suppressed sophisticated evidence. It's important to note that since the 1970s, the main growth in polarization measured by the differences between the parties in the voting records has been the polarization that's occurred in partisan competitive districts.

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It's not because there are few competitive districts, even though districts where Democratic and Republican voters are at rough equal strength, the same members of Congress were just as polarized as the other types of districts. Finally, more sophisticated evidence based on simulations where we can simulate any type of districting we want, partisan, incumbency, gerrymandering, this type of gerrymandering versus that type of gerrymandering shows they have very, very little effect on levels of polarization. So, I conclude based on the theory, which I don't think makes any sense, and the data, which doesn't support it, that the proposition should be redacted.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Nolan McCarty.

[applause]

John Donovan:

And a reminder of what's going on. We are halfway through the opening round of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate. I'm John Donovan. We have four debaters, two teams of two, fighting it out over this motion: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center. You have heard the first two opening statements and now onto the third.

00:29:01

Standing at the lectern is David Daley who is author of the book "Rat Fu\*\*ed: The True Story Behind the Secret Plan to Steal America's Democracy." He's also publisher of the Connecticut Mirror. He will get -- be up here trying to persuade you to vote yes. Please welcome David Daley.

[applause]

David Daley:

I want to tell you all a story about what happened in Florida in December of 2010, just a few weeks after upwards of 60 percent of the state's voters in 2010, a big Tea Party year -- voters couldn't agree on much of anything in 2010. They did back two Constitutional amendments mandating that all redistricting be conducted without any partisan intent. It did not take but a couple of weeks for the smartest Republicans strategists in the state, guys who run firms like Data Targeting and Strategic Direction, guys who make deep in the six figures every year just to do things like be a redistricting coordinator, to gather at GOP headquarters in Tallahassee with legislative leaders and top aids and bold-faced names from Washington.

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The goal, launching a sophisticated and highly concealed campaign to run two redistricting processes in Florida, one public, one in the shadows; both in their control and loaded with partisan intent. They might have gotten away with it except the lawsuits brought by the reformers uncovered the meeting's agenda. Questions like, "Communication with outside lawyers, how can we make that work? Evolution of maps: should they start less compliant and evolve through the process or should the first map be as compliant as possible and then change very little?" A furious federal judge in 2014 declared several of these districts unconstitutional, orders new maps in light of a conspiracy to manipulate and insulate redistricting that made a mockery out of the claim transparency and tainted the process with improper partisan intent. Why? If the professor and his table who has partisanship and polarization correct with these highly accomplished and highly paid strategists and elected officials take such risks just to violate constitutional amendments?

00:31:10

Perhaps the politicians know something truer about the district lines, something like this: that all components of a successful congressional race, including recruitment, message development, and resource allocation rests on the congressional district lines. And this was an area where Republicans had an unquestioned advantage. Those are not my words. Those come from the triumphant 2012 annual report of Chris Jankowski's Republican State Leadership Committee, a victory lap after his party retained a 33-seat majority in the house that year despite 1.4 million fewer votes, thanks to their audacious reinvention of the oldest political trick in the book, the gerrymander and the strategy call REDMAP. We are here to ask whether gerrymandering has destroyed the political center. Yes, it did.

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The center has been an endangered species for some time, yes. But its destruction accelerates in 2010 and 2011 just as Republicans take what Harvard political scientists Theda Skocpol describes as the biggest lurch in one direction, the right, as anyone began recording legislators voting record at a deep electoral discontent settled into our politics. We all know that this is true. The center has been erased with the click of a map maker's mouse. It's been drawn away. We are a 50/50 nation, but an uncompetitive one, dominated at the legislative level by

the rule of one party. The gerrymander is at the root of it. Democrats have taken the popular vote in six of the last seven elections. Ballot splitting reached a 100 plus year low in 2012. And, yet, in the last six years, Republicans have claimed their biggest sustained congressional majorities ever, even in years when they get fewer votes. In 2010, they also ended parity at the state legislative level. They now control 67 of 98 state legislative chambers and 100s more seats than Democrats.

00:33:04

So why is it that, despite regularly winning a majority of voters, Democrats have no power? It is because Chris understands something his partner wants to dismiss. When you draw the lines, you make the rules. And, when you draw the lines with the breathtaking technological tools available today, you make the rules for a decade and these rules changed forever in 2010 with REDMAP. Chris masterminded this strategy in 2009 and 2010 with the stated goal of flipping state legislature, ensuring Republicans to be the only people in the room when the new district lines were drawn in 2011. "The rationale was straightforward," he writes – REDMAP's report writes. "Controlling the redistricting process in these states would have the greatest impact on determining how both state legislative and congressional district boundaries would be drawn, drawing new lines in states with the most redistricting activity presented the opportunity to solidify conservative policy making and maintain a Republican stronghold in the house for the next decade.

00:34:02

This is how you destroy, even nullify the center and advance your agenda in a 50/50 polarized world. It's polarization that has made extreme gerrymandering so effective. When we are as polarized as this, the most essential element becomes where you draw the lines, how you distribute the voters. This is how the center gets destroyed, how National Journal can find 137 congressional centrists in 2002 and four in 2012. It's how Nate Silver can find 133 swing districts to 35 between 1992 and 2012. This plan worked better than Republicans even expected. They were able in 2011 to draw 193 of the 435 districts themselves after the 2010 election. Democrats had complete control over just 44. This election year, we're down to 37 competitive states.

00:35:02

Destroying swing districts and gutting these last outposts of centrism and debate is the goal. You could blame polarization for this. You could blame geography for this. You could blame partisanship for this. Or you can simply take the Republicans at their word. Thank you.

John Donovan:

Thank you, David Daley.

[applause]

Our motion, again, Gerrymandering is Destroying the Political Center. And here to make his argument against this motion, to get you to vote no, is Chris Jankowski. He's a political strategist and former executive director of the Red Map Project at the Republican State Leadership Committee. Please welcome Chris Jankowski.

[applause]

Chris Jankowski:

Thank you. I was briefly a prosecutor before I became a career political hack. And what David just did reminds me of when a prosecutor gets up and starts throwing out all kinds of unflattering information to the jury, but it isn't really relevant to the charges.

00:36:00

And so, I completely plead guilty to everything he just laid out, and that was playing by the rules and maximizing the impact on the American political system. But the question before you is, does gerrymandering cause the polarization -- which is destroying the American center? And so, what I want to talk about is the fact that the swing voter in America has been disappearing for the last 20 years, and is just reaching a -- we've just reached a new height in that. I would point you to a New York Times article in August of 2012, written by Rebecca Berg. And she looked at all the academic research available at that time. She interviewed experts on both sides of the aisle. And she concluded that even among so-called self-identified "swing voters" in America at that time, half of them vote for one party or other party all the time. They want to identify themselves as not being affiliated with a particular party, but if you look at their actual voting behavior, half of them already have a team.

00:37:00

They have a jersey on; they just have a coat over. And so, I think that's important. And if you take that -- say there's -- 10 or 15 percent is the typical national number of swing voters. We talk about playing this game between the 40-yard lines, et cetera. You take half of that, and you say it's 7.5 percent. And you take that, and you ignore California and Texas, and some of the bigger states that skew one way or the other, and you try to apply it to our electoral system in the battleground states. And from what I can tell, you've got about 500,000 households that are really up for grabs in a national election. And that, to me, is polarization. I mean, we have gotten to the point where we have our jerseys, and we put them on come election time. We try not to, but by the time the election rolls around, we have them on, for the most part. The other thing to point out is, Pew has done quite a bit of research the last 25 years. They do this value study. They've updated it 14 times. In 2014, they issued a report that's called "The Polarization in the American Public."

00:38:00

And one of the things they cite in there -- there's a couple points I want to leave you with. First is the number -- the percentage of voters in America who had -- who identify solely and extremely with the liberal or conservative view has doubled, from 10 to 21 percent. And extrapolate that out to likely voters, and it's a bigger part of the electorate. But what really got me was that the percentage of voters who believe that the other party that they oppose -- that they threaten the well-being of the nation -- that's the wording of the question, "the well-being of the nation" -- that percentage has doubled to 37 percent of Republicans felt that way, in '14 - - and 27 percent of Democrats. That's over 60 percent of the voters. Six in 10 Americans think that the other party, should they get complete control, would threaten the very foundations of the country -- the well-being. And I'm not even one of them. But six in 10. So, we start with a very small narrow path, if you want to talk about who the swing voters -- who's actually persuadable and who switches.

00:39:07

I'm not saying they don't exist. But if you look at the data -- that was from 1994 to 2004. In 20 years, we got more polarized, and it had nothing to do with the gerrymandering that took place after 2010. I mean, it just doesn't. I mean, you cannot look at 20, 25 years of history and a clear trend, and then say, "Oh, but these last few years have made the difference." The other part is - - I'd like to talk about briefly is what I actually do, which is a political consultant, and run campaigns. And another thing I see in voter behavior -- and voters are the consumers that we as consultants and politicians are trying to gain. And they have siloed themselves off in America, in self-reinforcing silos, through social media, through where they live and who they associate with, and through, obviously, the -- you know, the notorious cable news networks.

00:40:02

And so, that voters across the spectrum are getting what they want to hear. They block out what they don't want to hear. And that has further, I would argue, created this polarization in the data that I -- that Pew has picked up on, that all that technology and all that social media, it's just gone up. And for people like me, we take advantage of that. Yes, we do a poll at the beginning. We do research and we do polling and -- before we start a race, and we look at how we're going to build that 51 percent. But then we start slicing and dicing it, and we say, "How are we going to talk to that group of voters without this group of voters seeing it?" What goes on TV is usually the last thing, it's the least efficient cost in a campaign, and in terms of the marginal votes that can change, and it's the least important. Today's elections are about turning out the people that already agree with you. And we -- and we'll touch on that in the conclusion later. Finally, just a show of hands, how many members of the NRA are here today?

00:41:03

None. All right, well, I'll keep my hand up. So, if you're not a member of the NRA, you've never been subjected to the deluge of phone calls, stuff on your phone, social media, online outreach, mailbox, door knocks with strong Second Amendment issues. But I can assure you it goes on. And because the NRA wouldn't admit, but in most instances, the gun issue probably works against them net-net, they are still very effective because of all the tools and the trends that I just mentioned at motivating those single-issue voters. And I would submit to you that that happens with every segment of the electorate. Both parties have their different blocks they have to get out and how to talk to them. The key is to do it without making the other side notice or get excited. And that's polarization, folks.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Chris Jankowski.

[applause]

And that concludes round one of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate where our motion is: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center.

00:42:05

Now, we move on to round two. And in round two, the debaters address one another directly, and they also take questions from me and from you, our live audience here at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The team arguing for the motion, Caroline Frederickson and Dave Daley, they have told us that politics work best when there is competition, but that gerrymandering takes competition out of the equation, creating safe seats where being extreme does not cost politicians votes. And so, that the only election ultimately that matters will be the primary. That as a result of this, there is a disincentive to dialogue, a disincentive to compromise. They say that the center has been drawn away by partisan map makers. The team only the opposite, that wants you to vote against this motion, Nolan McCarty and Chris Jankowski, they agree that our politics is polarized and possibly even broken, but they don't think that that has much to do with gerrymandering.

00:43:01

Their evidence shows that politicians are taking their positions -- sometimes extreme positions, regardless of how safe their seats are and reflects, actually, a polarization in the electorate itself. They say it's the underlying geography that determines polarization, that the swing voters have been vanishing on their own and that as for the rest, they are separating themselves into silos. And that is the source of polarization. I want to go first to the team arguing for the motion, start with Caroline Frederickson. One point your opponents made in terms of -- in terms of refuting your gerrymandering -- gerrymandering argument as destructive to the political center, is that they cited the fact that the Senate -- the U.S. Senate, is likewise

highly polarized, but it's not a body whose districts are defined by gerrymandering, are defined by state borders. What's your response to that?

Caroline Fredrickson:

Well, I actually think we've seen more effort at compromise in the Senate than we have in the House, certainly.

00:44:00

I'd say one fact is that the control of the Senate has actually changed hands between the parties more often since the '80s than the House has. So clearly, it's the fact that the districts are more competitive to some extent in the Senate as a reflection of an easier ability to have more debate. And the Senate is the place where they have actually tried to work together on some issues: Immigration reform, where you had Marco Rubio working across the aisle, and I think -- you know, I worked in the Senate for 10 years, and I think it was definitely a place where there -- you had the gang of 14 -- you don't see anything like that in the House, where they just talk to each other, one side only talks to each other, and some of the most extreme behaviors have been in the House.

John Donovan:

Okay. So, Nolan McCarty, your point about the Senate being refuted by Caroline Frederickson who's saying that in fact the Senate does -- does have more of a functional center than the House.

00:45:03

Nolan McCarty:

I think she just made a wonderful argument for the filibuster. The reason why we see much more bipartisan cooperation in the Senate despite the polarized differences is because the minority party always has the opportunity to block legislation with a filibuster. I believe if we got rid of the filibuster, you'd see just as much partisanship in the Senate as you'd see in the House. And -- which is sort of consistent with the data. I would, you know, also just point out the -- you know, that also doesn't deal with the small state problem. If you look, small state representatives who've never been gerrymandered, they take very extreme positions. They're no different than those from large states which presumably might have been gerrymandered.

John Donovan:

Caroline, you want to respond to that?

Caroline Fredrickson:

Well, you know, I think this side certainly has its own unique elements to it. And the fact that there's generally been polarization in the country doesn't mean that -- I mean, that there isn't more polarization due to gerrymandering and the fact that the House is more polarized than the Senate.

00:46:04

That the Senate was created to be somewhat more conservative in its structure from the Constitution having every state represented the same number of senators. It has had different rules and anti-majoritarian principles. The filibuster, for example, that I think have led it somewhat in a different direction. But the fact of the matter is that the House is supposed to be where there was more change going on. As I mentioned, Madison's understanding was that every election you'd have 50 percent turnover. And that clearly has not -- has not happened, and we've gotten to a state where the incumbents have such protection that almost none of them turn over.

John Donovan:

Chris Jankowski, want to respond to that? And if not, I have a question for you.

Chris Jankowski:

I don't want to respond to that.

John Donovan:

Okay. I'm going to give you the question then.

Chris Jankowski:

All right.

John Donovan:

Your opponent, I think David Daley, anticipated your argument that polarization has been going on for a while -- for 25 years as a process, by saying, yeah, but it sure has accelerated a whole lot, meaningfully, significantly, as a result of, particularly, the last round of gerrymandering by the Republican party.

00:47:13

So, he's saying it's not the same because it got so much more intense. Your response to that.

Chris Jankowski:

Well, that's true. I mean, it doesn't mean that that's what's caused the polarization, though, in the American electorate as a whole. But --

John Donovan:

So, let me just interrupt you. I believe he is saying -- he is arguing that it's causing it. So, can you respond?

Chris Jankowski:

Well, yeah, he's saying it. He's not proving it, is what I would respond. I would say that I -- if you look at the research that I cited, it's been a progression since at least 1994 of increased polarization. But what he's alluding to is accurate. There is -- I mean, it's gotten down to an iPad-level technology and the microtargeted -- the data on every single one of us that's available and how you can sort voters has just gotten amazingly easier and more precise.

00:48:04

And so, yes, the gerrymander is as effective as it's ever been in terms of trying to maintain a majority. That's not the same as protecting incumbents, for sure. But I -- what I don't see is the connection. There's just a lack of proof that that is causing what we saw in our presidential primaries where we had the left and the right pull both ways. There was no gerrymandering in that, in any of these Senate, governors' races, the presidential race, very polarized electorate, not gerrymandered.

John Donovan:  
David Daley?

David Daley:

Chris does a really good job of redrawing the lines, and I think he just did that a little bit there. I think what we want to keep in mind is he talks a lot about where the swing voters sit on -- when these lines are being drawn, it's not simply that's where the swing voters sit, it's where all the voters sit.

00:49:00

So, you take a state like Pennsylvania, for example, which in 2012 and in 2008 both go for Democratic if you add up all the votes in the state for Democratic House candidates 2008 to 2012. It's about the same hundred thousand margin in favor of the Democrats. In 2008, the Democrats won 12 seats. In 2012, they won five seats. Did the polarization increase? Did everybody move to Philadelphia? No, the lines changed in the middle. Democrats get themselves packed into five seats. They win with percentages of 85, 89, 77, 69 and 61. There's one close race, and other races get won by margins of 13, 25, 14, 19, 13, 23, 31, 17, 13, 16, and 26, again. Those margins in that many districts, in a state that the Democrats get more votes, and in a year in which there's less ballot splitting than ever before, the lines have a special privacy.

00:50:10

And there is academic research on this. You can look to -- you can look to Harvard's Theda Skocpol who has laid out the biggest lurch to the right since political scientists began studying the voting records of legislators between 2010 and 2016. You can look at the work of Michael

Latner at Cal Poly who takes a look at the seat vote -- the ratio in the 2000s and says that the Republicans have an asymmetry of 3.4 and takes a look at it after 2011 and the asymmetry goes to 9.39. You can take a look at the work that Professors Chen of Michigan and Rodden of Stanford have done when they took a look at those Florida states that we talked about.

John Donovan:

Okay, let me -- let's let your opponents respond to some of what you're saying. Nolan McCarty.

Nolan McCarty:

Yeah, I would like to reiterate there's really huge conflation in this debate between the idea that a majority party does bad things to maximize its seat share.

00:51:08

They tend to spread their voters out, and pack the opposition voters so they can get more seats. That's quite different than saying that politicians potentially create safe districts and polarize the system.

John Donovan:

What is -- just -- what is -- take a minute for what is the big difference?

Nolan McCarty:

Well, so again, if we go back to the example I gave in my opening remarks, if you have a party that's a majority party, they can -- they really have two choices. They can kind of spread their voters out so that they have a bare or close to bare majority in as many districts as they can, and then they pack the opposition party -- now, the opposition party may be polarized because they're packed, but you're creating a bunch of districts that, if they miscalculate, for example, could go the other way. They're not increasing the safety. A good example during the notorious mid-decade gerrymandering in Texas in 2003 --

00:52:06

-- Tom DeLay actually reduced his district from 57 percent Republican to 52 percent Republican and he almost lost the next election. That is the mechanism behind the partisan gerrymandering. It's not making the majority party safer. It's spreading the majority party out in the hopes of winning more seats.

John Donovan:

And Caroline Fredrickson, that was the second time at my request that Nolan McCarty explained that point of view, the distinction he's making between incumbent -- incumbency protection and his partisan gerrymandering which he says in his opening means your theory makes no sense. What's your response?

Caroline Fredrickson:

Well, I actually wanted to say, there's not -- these aren't the only options, right, I mean, as -- we could actually take this thing out of the hands of politicians. We've had a number of states that have gone in that direction because I think most people agree intuitively with the proposition that when politicians decide what the districts look like, it's going to be biased and unfair and, you know, if I can use a commonly used word, rigged.

00:53:06

And so, you know, when you create -- when you actually give an independent nonpartisan body the ability to create maps, they make really different maps. And what happens is that there's actually more competition and that the districts are -- then the members are more responsive to the voters. And you can see that -- how this plays out because when you had citizen redistricting commissions or these nonpartisan redistricting commissions, you have many more of these districts that have more than one major party on the ballot because, when you have the noncompetitive districts, as I said, the other party doesn't really bother to even run because there's no way to get elected. It's just the primary that matters. And that really changes when you have a nonpartisan process. So, I think --

John Donovan:

So, you're saying you believe there is a decrease in polarization that can be seen, can be spotted?

Caroline Fredrickson:

Absolutely.

John Donovan:

Now, let's take it to the other side.

00:54:00

So, your opponents are now arguing that a sort of reverse gerrymandering, or a more fair redistricting that might lead us away from the pejorative term, "gerrymandering," has in fact resulted in less polarization. What about that, Chris Jankowski?

Chris Jankowski:

Well, I think that it's an inherently political function to draw these lines. And if you go back to our founders of the constitution, they tended to put the inherently political thing into the hands of the political people, which would be the legislative chamber -- the legislative branch, if you will.

John Donovan:

And by, "political," do you mean an action taken to benefit one party's interests?

Chris Jankowski:

No, I mean, the people who are most accountable to the voters.

John Donovan:

Okay.

Chris Jankowski:

-- and subject to that. And so I'm not against reforming -- redistricting. I'd just like to see a fair system. I'm -- I don't think this system is necessarily the most fair. I think we need some guard rails.

00:55:02

But I -- and I think maybe the courts are going to do that, personally. But I think that this idea that there's such thing as a neutral re-districting process --

John Donovan:

But Carolyn's point --

Chris Jankowski:

-- it hasn't been proven.

John Donovan:

-- but Carolyn's point wasn't that there's -- at this moment, she wasn't making the argument there should be this process. She is saying that in examples where this process was followed, more competitive districts were created, and therefore polarization was reduced. So, that's --

Chris Jankowski:

Okay.

John Donovan:

-- the -- that's really the question. You want to take it, Nolan?

Chris Jankowski:

Well, actually, I think I can --

John Donovan:

[inaudible] --

Chris Jankowski:

-- I mean, Arizona is the infamous commission. Just look at the election we just had in Arizona for president. It was racially polarized between the white and non-white vote. It was polarized

by income, by education levels. It was just a microcosm of what went on in America. It -- and you know, those folks are -- have picked their jerseys, and they have picked their team.

00:56:00

And the fact that they are stuck in a particular district -- Congressional district -- that may be more competitive and more fair, if you will, doesn't change that -- their behavior. It doesn't make them less partisan. You run a state-wide race in Arizona the same way you run it in Pennsylvania -- which, by the way, Trump won this year. So, I think it does defeat some of the taint on the redistricting that was done in Pennsylvania.

John Donovan:

Would you like to respond, David Daley?

David Daley:

Yes. I think that Arizona is certainly a classic example of a state where non-partisan redistricting is non-partisan in name only. It's really partisan redistricting, just in a smaller room. But what I think we're not getting at here is that incumbent-protection gerrymandering is what the Democrats do in Maryland, for example, where they get seven out of eight seats that they shouldn't have. There should probably be a five-three delegation, if you were to go, you know, based on fairness.

00:57:04

The partisan gerrymandering that we see explode after 2010 is the kind of gerrymandering that takes a state like Michigan, where Democrats get 240,000 more votes, and packs them into five districts and gives Republicans nine of the 14 seats. It's taking a 50/50 state like Ohio and making the delegation 12-4. It's taking a state where, in 2012, more votes, again, for Democratic candidates, but the delegation goes 10-3 Republican. And that can't but affect the kind of politics we have. There is still a center in this country. There is still a center where folks - - and you can look at the polls. 55 percent say -- of common-sense gun control, 50/44 on abortion. Should the next president support or oppose climate change, 69/23.

00:58:00

Should we let undocumented immigrants stay if they meet certain standards, 72 percent. There is a center, even on the issues that we are told are the most hot buttons. Are we getting any action from this Congress on any of these issues? No.

John Donovan:

So, what do you mean by -- if you look at our motion, when you say "destroying the political center," you mean destroying -- you don't mean causing those voters not to exist who would have more centrist views. You mean what?

David Daley:

I am saying that we are electing politicians who will not represent the center because they are not accountable to anybody.

John Donovan:

Okay.

Caroline Fredrickson:

I just wanted to add one point to why I agree so much with David's initial point -- is that you have to remember that not only are primaries -- as I said -- the only election that matters, that they are low-turnout. But then, in many states, where you have unaffiliated voters, they're not allowed to participate in the primaries. So, you're really seeing a situation where the most partisan people have the most ability to infect -- or -- affect the outcome of elections.

00:59:00

And the rest of the people who may be independent voters, unaffiliated, or just disgusted by how partisan the person is who is being elected just opt out. And that means that those people are not having anybody speak for them. I think that's what -- why you can say that the middle is being destroyed.

John Donovan:

Okay. Nolan McCarty, I let your opponents go twice in a row, so you can do the same. But a lot was said by your opponents just now. Do you want to respond to any of it in particular?

Nolan McCarty:

Yes. So, I think data is very important for these discussions. I mean, I think we can come up with anecdotes and stories. It might surprise most people, but the correlation between how extreme a member represents his or her district and how competitive that district is, is almost zero. Republicans in safe districts and in competitive districts are just as conservative. Democrats who represent safe districts and competitive districts are just as liberal. So, it -- so I agree that lots of things can be done by the majority party to skew in favor of them, in terms of the number of seats.

01:00:02

But whether or not that is actually reducing the number of moderates in Congress just doesn't jibe with the data. On the point of nonpartisan redistricting, the best example of that is the state of Iowa. In Iowa, two bureaucrats get in a room, and they re-divide the state into four quadrants, and they just move the boundaries just to make sure the four quadrants are the same. You can't imagine a more technocratic exercise in gerrymandering than that. But the members of the Iowa delegation are just as extreme within their parties as would be expected if it were a state that didn't have that.

John Donovan:

So, you're saying the safety of your seat has nothing to do -- does not correlate with the extremity of a politician's views.

Nolan McCarty:

Not really. The Republican side is zero, and Democratic side, minority districts are quite different. But among nonminority districts there's pretty much no correlation.

John Donovan:

Let me bring that back to your opponents because it's sort of a direct assault on their premise that there's little incentive to compromise whatsoever.

01:01:03

But what do you make of that, David Daley?

David Daley:

I think the danger here is that what we've created is a system in which there is no way to hold a party accountable or individuals accountable. And I look -- I look again -- I look at -- and I think that there is, you know, plenty of data here from serious thinkers, whether they're Stanford or whether they're at Harvard, or many other schools who have noticed and observed what changes in 2010. It's not necessarily rocket science to see how these lines move and what the result is in our politics. And I go back to -- I go back to North Carolina and a new district that was drawn for --

01:02:06

-- that was a Democratic district out in the mountain part of the state, where Heath Shuler, formerly a quarterback here in Washington played, and they crack Asheville in half, split it in two, and it elects a second Republican, a guy named Mark Meadows. And it's Mark Meadows who goes to Washington and essentially is the key driver behind the government shutdown in 2012, is the key driver between the parliamentary move to oust John Boehner last year. And Mark Meadows would not have been in Congress had that district not have been drawn in that way. That district once sent a conservative Democrat -- a moderate Democrat, somebody who opposed Nancy Pelosi.

01:03:00

After redistricting, it sent somebody who shuts down the government and goes after the speaker of his own party.

John Donovan:

All right, I want to go to audience questions now. And the way this will work, if you -- I'll call on you. If you could stand up, we need to hear your voice also through our recording, so please

wait for a microphone to be brought to you. There will be people walking around. I appreciate it if you would state your name and if you're writing our communicating about this publicly, I ask if you're a journalist or a blogger, we'd appreciate knowing that. And the last part is I need you to be terse and actually ask a question. In the back row, very back row, yeah. No, speaking of -- yep, thank you. If you could stand up so we could see you. Can you just tell us your name, please?

Female Speaker:

Hi. My name is Faith Doyle. I was curious, I'm really unclear as to what your definition of the center is because it seems like you're talking about either politicians that we elect that are able to compromise, or is it representation for people who are more -- or are less -- I guess less politically ideological.

01:04:04

John Donovan:

Great question. I have a feeling we might hear slightly different answers, but I want to go to Nolan McCarty with the numbers, what you mean by the center, and then I want to go to Caroline.

Nolan McCarty:

At one time, I mean, in the United States House and in the Senate there were a number of Democrats who compiled more conservative voting records than many Republicans and many Republicans who compiled more liberal voting records than many Democrats. So, there was a center in which the parties were close together and they interacted and they overlapped. And the data now -- that's missing. We don't see those sorts of conservative Democrats, liberal Republicans. There's a gap.

John Donovan:

So, to use Chris' term, there was a time when people would put on their jerseys, but they wouldn't always play for the team.

Nolan McCarty:

They would occasionally dance with the other side.

John Donovan:

We're going to mix some metaphors here.

[Laughter]

John Donovan:

Okay. So, by center -- by the center, you mean being able to cross-compromise both for -- not strictly with the party with the tribe on --

01:05:03

Caroline Fredrickson:

You know, I have a disagreement with that. I'd say, you know from my experience, as I mentioned, I spent, you know, a number of years working in the Senate. I also worked on the House side. And there was so much more collaboration. Certainly, things were partisan in those days. But the change has been, I think, the fact that there -- it's very hard to work across the aisle and not get in trouble.

John Donovan:

Okay. By "center" then, it sounds like we're both talking -- we're not talking about the existence of the electorate. We're talking about the behavior of the politicians who are elected. That's what we're talking about. I hope that clarified. Thank you for that, and that's for that question. Sir.

Male Speaker:

Hi. My name is Michael. I'm a grad student here in D.C. I wanted to pick up on something that professor McCarty had mentioned earlier. You were talking about the partisan redistricting where the majority party is trying to sort of spread out, and they can pack the other party into compact districts. And you said that that might make the other party more polarized.

01:06:00

But it sounded like it was sort of making the opponent's argument. So, I wondered if you could clarify that or follow up with that.

John Donovan:

Great question.

Nolan McCarty:

Sure, that's quite -- that's quite possible. But in all of this discussion about the lack of a political center, the notion has been that there are too many Republicans, not that there are too few Democrats and that they're packed into homogenous districts.

John Donovan:

Does that answer your question?

Male Speaker:

[inaudible]

Nolan McCarty:

Well, I mean, if the argument -- if the argument is that homogenous districts create polarization, the largest numbered districts will be less homogenous because those are the

districts held by the majority party. Some districts will be more homogenous, but by definition of it being a minority party, there will be fewer of those.

John Donovan:

Okay. Thank you. Right down in front here. And wait for the mic to find you. It's coming down the aisle.

01:07:00

Female Speaker:

Hi. My name is Sara Straighter, and I have a question for this side. It seems --

John Donovan:

Just for those who can't see you, you want to --

Female Speaker:

For the team for the motion.

John Donovan:

Yes, thank you.

Female Speaker:

Thank you. It seems a strong correlation has been drawn between gerrymandering and voter polarization. But I wonder if it's possible that the direction of causation could be reversed. So, could it be that the shrinking of the political center has itself played a role in causing the recent uptake in dramatic gerrymandering that partisans don't think they can win over nonexistent moderates, so, as a result, they then resort to more heavily redistricting.

John Donovan:

What a fantastic question. David, do you want to take that? And I do want to let the other side respond to that question as well.

David Daley:

Sure.

John Donovan:

David Daley.

David Daley:

I think we just saw an election in which lots of states that hadn't flipped in many years did flip and go the other way. So, certainly, there are still people out there who are open to persuasion

and possibility. What has changed over time is the amount of data that is available to these map makers.

01:08:02

And I mean, really, 2010 is ground zero for this. I mean, think about the way you texted in 2000 and in 2003. It was completely different than what you're able to do in 2011 and those map makers draw the lines. And the kind of information that they have, when these maps zig and zag, we used to look at them and say, oh, that's just a funny Rorschach test. You know, it's a drunken sailor. But, you know, I mean, I got out and I drove them as I was writing this book. And you see the purpose and the mission behind them when you are up close. You see the way the neighborhoods change across the street even sometimes and why those lines are there. And it's because the data is so good that those of us who are persuadable, they know who you are. Those of you who are not persuadable, they've got a pretty good sense of who you are. And they can draw these in such a way that even these districts that look like they're 53, 54, 55 percent districts, that's solid these days because they know who the 53 are.

01:09:04

They know if you turn out and they can take all of these public record data sets and match them up against your consumer preferences, against the census --

John Donovan:

Okay. Let me let Chris Jankowski respond as well.

Chris Jankowski:

Sure. First, there weren't a bunch of states that flipped. There were a small handful. And what happened in those states? Wisconsin, Trump won by about 27,000 votes. Turnout was up 124,000 votes from 2012. But Clinton got 231,000 fewer votes. 231,000 four votes than Obama in '12. And when you look at where those fewer votes came out of, they are Democrat-based areas. The base did not come out. It wasn't -- sure, Trump did a better job in "flipping the map," yes, and bringing the blue collar white voter over, yes. They turned out more. But those kind of numbers are only made up by a complete loss of Democrat-based votes. Same thing in Michigan. 13,000-vote margin roughly right now.

01:10:01

They're still going, I believe. That's 58,000 more voters turned out overall from '12. Three -- almost 300,000 fewer votes for Clinton. And when you look at it and the voter file will be available, but we can already see from the returns, that that came from the democrat base area. So, bases -- adjustments in bases are changing the elections and flipping them. And that -

John Donovan:

And how does what you're saying -- how does what you're saying support your point in the motion -- argument for the motion?

Chris Jankowski:

Well, to go back to earlier questions and volleys, on what -- how do I define the center? The center is that group of voters in the middle that are willing to go between elections and switch parties based on the candidate. And the objective data that we've provided -- the Pew research shows that six in 10 of Americans not only won't switch, they think the other party's going to destroy the country. And it doesn't get that much better for the next 30 percent. But -- and so what I see over and over again, you can talk about the issues without putting a partisan label.

01:11:02

You can talk about gun control. You can talk about education. You can talk about school choice. You can talk about abortion. You name it and you can focus group it, and I have many focus groups. As soon as you start putting partisan labels on it and a label on candidate X as a Republican, this is a Democrat, people divide. And that narrow center is very small. That is the polarization. Gerrymandering has been indicted, convicted, and sentenced to life tonight, and fine. It doesn't prove their proposition. America is divided and polarized and you can see it from the last -- what happened last week.

John Donovan:

Yeah, I want to point out that we have two definitions of, "center," now, to go to your question. One is about the voters and one is about the behavior of politicians. So, you have to sort that out as you vote. Do you want to respond to that because I want to -- I'm going to go to some more questions unless you'd like to respond?

Caroline Fredrickson:

Well, I just -- it just is a --

John Donovan:

Caroline Fredrickson.

Caroline Fredrickson:

-- maybe it's like corrective is that I think one of the things we don't often connect are the gerrymandering and then what legislators do afterwards.

01:12:02

And I think what we saw in several of the states that Chris was talking about was that the states through the redistricting process targeted just a small number of districts and flipped the State House and then immediately moved to put more restrictive voting measures on the ballot and then we see how that comes out in this election where you may say that there were that many

thousands of voters -- votes that people didn't turn out. We don't know that yet, whether they didn't turn out or whether they couldn't turn out. So, I think that's just a question that remains to be explored. But, I mean, I think the fact of the matter is we all know that -- in our gut, that when people are only talking to people that agree with them, which is what happens in these races -- now, because the districts have been created, so that there's only one group of people to talk to, there's only one kind of candidate. Now, that means that -- so you were talking about the six in 10 voters who wouldn't switch. I want to talk about that four in 10. There's still four in 10, even under your data -- there are people that are open. Those are people who want to be talked to by people who are going to be reaching compromise.

01:13:03

They're going to be trying to find legislative solutions and I think that's exactly where this takes us.

Chris Jankowski:  
May I respond?

John Donovan:  
Yes. Please do.

Chris Jankowski:  
It wasn't my data. Pew says that six in 10, those people are gone, gone. It doesn't mean the four out of 10 are. *The New York Times*, Rebecca Berg's article determined that half of the self-identified swing voters aren't swing voters. So we're so far from having 40 percent available, look at your next poll and say, "Who are the swing self-identified ticket splitters, swing voters, and divide that in half?" That's your number. That's what's available.

John Donovan:  
I want to remind you that we are in the question and answer section of this Intelligence Squared U.S. Debate. I'm John Donovan, your moderator. We have four debaters, two teams of two, arguing it out over this motion, "Gerrymandering is Destroying the Political Center." Nolan McCarty, did you want to get in on that? I can move on to another question. I wasn't sure if --

Nolan McCarty:  
You can move on.

John Donovan:  
Okay, let's have another question. Right in the center there, sir, the gentleman nearer to me, yeah.

01:14:05

Male Speaker:

Thank you so much. My name's Jim. I'm a resident of D.C. So, curious about perception, if people believe that gerrymandering by the opposite party is causing polarization in states, do they therefore become polarized due to that belief. So even conceding that maybe gerrymandering doesn't have any practical effects, [unintelligible] believe that it causes polarization and become so? Doesn't that add to the polarization and, therefore, destroy the middle?

John Donovan:

Let me let Caroline -- or, actually, let's -- we haven't heard from David in a while. Is the story of gerrymandering itself causing polarization? Is the narrative about the process of gerrymandering resulting, I think you're saying, in people being disaffected and causing polarization?

David Daley:

It could be. I don't -- I don't have any -- I don't have any data on that or any sense that, that's the case.

01:15:00

I mean, I think that there is more awareness of this issue, because I think it's happening at every level of our democracy. It's happened not only at the Congressional level, but it's happened at the state level in very, very deep and dramatic ways. So, there are, you know, plenty of folks in North Carolina where, in many years, more voters come out for the Democrats, but they live under veto-proof majorities for Republicans in their House and their Senate.

John Donovan:

I think, Caroline, you wanted to join?

Caroline Fredrickson:

Yeah. I just wanted to say, I think it plays into a narrative that's pretty pervasive about how dysfunctional Congress is, how dysfunctional politicians are. They become completely unresponsive under this -- under the sort of perception of gerrymandering. They're not accountable to us anymore. And that means that people then stop participating, which means that they're even less accountable. So, I think the perception and the reality are definitely self-reinforcing.

01:16:00

John Donovan:

Nolan McCarty, do you want to respond to them as well?

Nolan McCarty:

I don't think there's any data on the question. They've studied voter responses to various electoral laws, such as campaign finance laws, other laws. They find almost no correlation between how strict a state or how liberal a state's campaign finance law is, and the way voters feel about the system --

John Donovan:  
And --

Nolan McCarty:  
-- so I would assume it would be the same about gerrymandering.

John Donovan:  
And I'm not asking this sarcastically. You're a data guy. So --

Nolan McCarty:  
I am a data guy.

John Donovan:  
-- narrative -- narrative-y arguments don't carry weight with you very much?

Nolan McCarty:  
I think narratives are nice. They help us to get -- build intuitions about what might be going on. But at the end of the day -- on the question like polarization, which is a description of how millions and millions of voters are behaving and hundreds and hundreds of legislators throughout the United States are behaving, I think the numbers are really important.

John Donovan:  
Well, I have this to say. This concludes Round 2 of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate, where our motion is Gerrymandering is Destroying the Political Center.

01:17:01

[applause]

And now we move on to Round 3. I want to remind you that right after Round 3, you're going to vote a second time. And I want to remind you that the way we determine victory is the difference in percentage points between the first and the second votes -- whoever's numbers go up the most. Round 3, closing arguments, over this motion: Gerrymandering is Destroying the Political Center. These statements will be brief. They will be two minutes each. And first to make her statement in support of the motion, to get you to vote "Yes," Caroline Frederickson, president of the American Constitution Society.

Caroline Fredrickson:

Thank you. Well, I just -- I want to tell a little story, because I actually think narratives are really important in politics. I want to tell you about Dale Schultz, who is a former Republican state representative in Wisconsin. He served 30 years. He's the plaintiff in one of the cases that's moving forward that's challenging partisan gerrymandering as a violation of the Constitution.

01:18:00

He served in both the House and Senate of the Wisconsin State House. He was Senate Majority Leader. And he retired in 2014 because the environment had become so partisan in Wisconsin. And he may be a Republican, but he was critical about how the state house had become so extreme, so full of gridlock, with no role for moderates. And when the 2011 districts were drawn, his district was drawn to be way too conservative for a moderate like him. So, in 2014, he led the effort for non-partisan redistricting in Wisconsin, but the Republican legislature wouldn't even have hearings. And so, I just want to leave you with his quote. And he says, "It's just sad when a political party has so lost faith in its ideas that it's pouring all of its energy into election mechanics. We should be pitching, as political parties, our ideas for improving things in the future, rather than mucking around in the mechanics and making it more confrontational at the voting sites and trying to suppress the vote."

01:19:06

Thank you.

John Donovan:

Thank you very much, Caroline Frederickson.

[applause]

The motion, again: Gerrymandering is Destroying the Political Center. And here to make his closing statement against the motion, Nolan McCarty. He is professor and chair of the Department of Politics at Princeton University.

Nolan McCarty:

Thanks. A lot of it has been made of the lack of competitiveness in House elections throughout this debate. So, the question is, is it true? And my answer is yes, with a lot of very large "buts." First but is that from 2006 to 2010, the House of Representatives suffered the largest three-party swing since the 1930s. So, gerrymandering and polarization have been going on for a long time. In recent memory, we have as much turnover over three elections as we've seen since the 1930s. We have measures of competitiveness. How competitive are the districts? They tend to not change very much after reapportionment, but they changed a lot mid-decade.

01:20:03

There are long trends in competitiveness. They have almost nothing to do with reapportionment. The reason why there's so little competition in House elections has to do with two major realignments that this country has witnessed over the past 30 years. The first and the best known is the Southern realignment, where we went from a situation which there was monopoly control of the South by the Democratic party and they transitioned to a competitive system where Democrats and Republicans were competitive and finalized into a situation where the Democratic party is not very competitive in House elections that are not minority districts. A second realignment is in the northeast. The northeast went from a uniformly Republican region for the most part, transitioned to a competitive region where Democrats and Republicans competed and has become a Democratic stronghold. None of that had to do with realignment. Those were broad trends.

01:21:01

And finally, let me make one last point. I think one of the things we learnt last Tuesday really reinforces my point. As we all know, Donald Trump lost the popular vote, which appears to now be by 1 percent or 1 1/2 percent, yet won the electoral college in a pretty substantial way. That's exactly the phenomenon that the proponents have been complaining about, that the Republicans are getting more seats than votes. That has nothing to do with gerrymandering. That's just where the American people are and where they live.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Nolan McCarty.

[applause]

John Donovan:

The motion again: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center. And here to summarize his position in support of the motion, David Daley, author of "Rat F-blank, blank-k-e-d: The True Story Behind the Secret Plan to Steal America's Democracy." Here is David Daley.

David Daley:

Thank you so much for being here tonight and listening to us. We do have data on what's happened since 2010. We know that the middle has lost 99 percent of its representation in Congress over these last 20 years.

01:22:06

We know that this does not happen by accident or because we have self-sorted ourselves. We have the data from Harvard showing the largest lurch since 2010 in one direction. We have political scientists who often doubt the role of the gerrymander in this, who study the maps that came out in 2010 and call it things like "extreme statistical outlier," "the most biased I have

ever seen," "a one-in-a-thousand shot of actually not having partisan intent." We know what has happened both from data and from living through it. I do want to return for a moment to Mark Meadows in North Carolina because that is what happens on a concrete, specific level when you redistrict a state and you turn a conservative Democrat into a Tea Party Republican.

01:23:04

Meadows represents a district that is 75 percent white. The average is 63. 9 percent Latina, the average 17. These are the numbers of these districts that the far right that has stopped so much in Congress over the last six years represent. They've drawn them for themselves. This is not about partisanship. It's about democracy. Our elections are not games. Our principles are too important to be subject to every 10 years arms wars over district lines. They make our politics more nasty, more negative, way more expensive. We are the only democracy that allows it to happen. We've seen the ferocity with which partisans will fight to keep it. Nothing will change until we take it back. I ask for your support of this motion as a first step, thank you.

01:24:01

John Donovan:  
Thank you, David Daley.

[applause]

John Donovan:  
And that motion one more time: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center. And here to summarize his position against the motion, Chris Jankowski, former executive director of the Red Map Project.

Chris Jankowski:  
Thank you. I wasn't going to bring it up, but Caroline brought up Senator Schultz in Wisconsin. Let's talk about that. Senator Schultz is a -- what we would call in our part a known moderate, now. And he was not happy with the results of the elections in 2010 where his party actually took control and there were more conservative members in his party that had the leadership or the control. He was -- did not support Governor Walker's budget reform, public union reform, did not support any of that. But we had a two-vote, and Red Map picked up two -- a two-seat majority, not just a one in Wisconsin Senate, so we were able to get all that through. What people don't realize is because Scott Walker did win his recall, we actually lost control of the state Senate in those recalls.

01:25:00

The first wave in August of 2011, we won -- we held on to one seat, we lost a seat. We held onto the other seat by 471 votes, after \$30 million were spent on those state Senate elections. There was a few seats up under Governor Walker the following June, all of this under

the old lines. And we actually lost control of the chamber by one vote, but by then there was going to be new -- you know, the new lines had already been passed, and they would go into effect, so they picked it back up in November. Those lines that were in place through the recalls, though, were passed by Republicans in 2000. Democrats took complete control under them. They lost it back and forth. So, I'm not sure that, you know, Senator Schultz had a lot to complain about -- about the gerrymandering in Wisconsin. But I would also say that the state of Wisconsin was galvanized. You were either for Governor Walker or against. And there was no undecided vote, and that had nothing to do with gerrymandering. It just didn't. So, I just want to take a quick minute. How many people know somebody, friend, colleague --

John Donovan:

I just want you to know you have 12 seconds left.

01:26:01

Chris Jankowski:

-- who no matter what you tell them about the last election, they were going to stick with their candidate? One person in your life. One person. I would say almost the room knows one. Real quick. How many people know two people in their life? All right. That's my point, folks.

John Donovan:

Time is up.

Chris Jankowski:

We are polarized.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Chris Jankowski.

[applause]

And that concludes Round three of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate where our motion is Gerrymandering is destroying the political center. And now it's time to learn which side you feel has argued the best. I want to ask you again to go to the key pads at your seat. The vote is the same as at the beginning, except now you've heard the arguments. The motion, Gerrymandering is destroying the political center, if you agree with the motion, if you want to vote yes, vote with this side, push number one. If you disagree with the motion, you're voting no, you're voting with this side, push number two. If you became or remain undecided, push number three. And just as before, we'll have -- we'll lock out the vote in about 15 seconds, and then we'll have the result in about a minute.

01:27:03

No, more like a minute and a half. Okay, looks like from my contact again, everybody's back with me. So, one thing I want to say is, you know, I said at the beginning we wanted to devote - - dedicate this to Gwen Ifill who was the PBS news anchor -- News Hour anchor who passed away today because of her, how deeply she represented civility and truth, a search for the facts. I want to congratulate this panel for living up to that. This is -- as we all know, it's a very tense time. There have been some bad feelings. I felt on this stage what we saw was a demonstration of civility, respect for one another, and search on both sides for the truth. So, I want to congratulate our debaters for the way that you did this.

[applause]

John Donovan:

And I also -- I want to thank Jeffrey Rosen and the National Constitution Center for partnering with us. You are a terrific partner. The National Constitution Center is an hour and a half train ride from here.

01:28:01

It is well worth a visit. I mean it. It is really well worth the visit up in Philadelphia. Intelligence Squared U.S. is a nonprofit organization. I know that you paid ticket prices to get in here, but ticket prices don't come close to covering what it costs us to do this program in the cities that we do it in. It's a philanthropy. Our podcasts, our radio broadcasts are sent out into the world for free. We are used now in hundreds of schools. So, if you support what you heard here tonight, we would very much appreciate your going to our website, IQ2US.org and making a donation. It would make a great deal of -- it would mean a great deal to all of us. Our next debate, we're going to be in New York City on November 29th at the Kaufman Center. The motion will be looking at -- we'll be looking at President Obama's foreign policy legacy. Our panel will include military historian and former counselor at the Department of State, Eliot Cohen and Derek Chollet who is a former undersecretary of defense.

01:29:00

He's author of a book called "The Long Game," which is described as being "the closest anyone will come to understanding the thinking behind [Obama's] foreign policy." On December 7th, we will be again partnering with the National Constitution Center. Our motion will be whether -- well, I don't have the phrase of the motion. I'm telling you what the topic is. It's going to be over whether or not we should be calling a Constitutional convention to amend the Constitution, which in light of tonight's discussion gets even more juicy. Our debaters will include Harvard law professor Lawrence Lessig and Mark Meckler, who is a grassroots activist and a cofounder of the Tea Party Patriots. Tickets for that are still available through our website. And I do want to mention this: If you can't get to our debates -- and we're delighted everybody got here. We love coming to Washington and to G.W. for this reason, to see all of

you here. But you can watch our debates and listen to them a wide variety of ways. Our newest addition is that we are now available as an app on Roku and on Apple TV.

01:30:02

So, if you have Roku or Apple TV, you can just search through there. We also have an app where you can watch and listen to debates on your phone through the Apple store and through the Android store. And for all of this, just to learn more about us completely, our website has everything going on there, IQ2US.org. Thank you very much. Okay. I have the results now. You have voted twice. The motion is this: Gerrymandering is destroying the political center. I want to remind you that it's the difference between the two votes that determines who our winner is. Let's look at the first vote. In the first vote, Gerrymandering is destroying the political center, 62 percent of you agreed. 8 percent were against; 30 percent were undecided. The team arguing for the motion, let's look at their second vote. Their first vote was 53 percent, their -- 62 percent. Their second vote was 53 percent. They lost 9 percentage points. Let's look at the team argue against the motion.

01:31:01

Their first vote was 8 percent; their second vote was 34 percent. They picked up 26 percentage points. It means the team arguing against the motion, Gerrymandering is destroying the political center, named our winners. Our congratulations to them. Thank you from me, John Donovan, and Intelligence Squared U.S. We'll see you next time.

[applause]