

TOWN COUNCIL
Town of Trumbull
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TOWN HALL
Trumbull

TELEPHONE
(203) 452-5000



VOTER REDISTRICTING PUBLIC FORUM

LEGISLATION & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES
JANUARY 25, 2020

Call to Order: The Community Forum was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

Present: Jason Marsh, Chairman, Thomas Whitmoyer, Vice Chairman, Ashley Gaudiano, Eric Paulson, Carl A. Massaro, Jr., Steve Lemoine, Joy Colon, Alternate and Tony Scinto, Alternate

VOTER REDISTRICTING PUBLIC FORUM

First Selectman Vicki A. Tesoro explained this forum is an informational session so the public can become more engaged in the process of redistricting and answer their questions. What she didn't want to see happen was for this to turn into a political debate on seven (7) v. four (4) districts. That's not the purpose of the meeting. Moving forward the redistricting process will be explained. There will be multiple opportunities for the public to become engaged, to ask questions and participate in public hearings. If this meeting turns into a debate it will be stopped. Sharing opinions are always welcome. First Selectman Tesoro extended her gratitude to all for attending. If anyone has questions after the forum they are welcome to reach out to her, or their Town Council representative.

Regina Haley one of the founders of the Citizens for Seven Districts was present. The information presented at this meeting in the attached power point is actual verified voter data available from the CT Secretary of State, (accessible on-line) as well as the Trumbull Registrar of Voters, (received directly from the Trumbull Registrar of Voters). This is raw data, it's not fabricated or skewed. This exact data can be looked up by anyone.

An analysis was done from when Trumbull used to be seven districts and when it became four. Ms. Haley presented a power point. Highlights are as follows, (full presentation attached):

- Overall voter turnout has declined in Trumbull, it is true for municipal, state and national elections. This is not the case statewide or nationally.
- Under the former seven districts voter turnout was 2-4 points above the state. When we switched to four districts that declined considerably, we are still doing better than the state but it is a large difference.
- Why the decline? Polling places have become crowded and there is difficulty finding parking spots. Trumbull had the highest rate per polling place in the 2018 election. Average in Fairfield County was 3600 voters per polling place, Trumbull had 6500 voters per polling place.
- District 2 stands out as one of the lowest voter turnout for the last seven elections, as low as 25% of the other districts.
- When the change to four districts was done the intent was to have three districts equal with one super district.
- District 2 voters have to drive farther to vote, 8 or more minutes depending on where you are driving from.
- People have to be out of town the whole day to do an absentee ballot.
- MIT believes distance to polling places affects voter turnout.
- Citizens for Seven Districts wants to bring back convenient polling places, reduce the polling place congestion, bring voters closer to their polling places and hopefully increase voter turnout.

Data Q&A

The four districts had unintentional quirks, how do we know the seven districts won't have some too?

Is there time to give feedback on the 7-District plan?

First Selectman Tesoro explained there will be a Redistricting Committee set up and will be on the Town Council February agenda. Nothing is set in stone. The committee will be looking at plans and whatever the committee sees fit to look at.

A constituent had mentioned to Mr. Mecca that four districts brings people together.

Ms. Haley stated there are positives and negatives to both plans. The goal is to get voter turnout back up to where it should be in Trumbull and believes seven districts will do that.

It was determined the number 6,500 voters in the presentation is based on registered voters, not the total number of voters.

(End of Data Q&A)

First Selectman Tesoro stated the four district plan was vetted and voted on in 2012. This was her first term as a Town Council member, her first job for the Council was being a member of the Redistricting Committee. The Committee was formed in January 2012, it first met in February and the Council voted for the plan in April 2012. It was a short process and

was also a presidential election when the change was instituted. There are no rules that a Redistricting Committee has to be formed. They had been thinking about having this go through the regular Town Council process, but have since decided to move to a Redistricting Committee. Hopefully this will give the public more opportunities to become informed and engaged in the process. It is on the February 3, 2020 Town Council agenda. On January 29th it will be discussed on the subcommittee level of the Council. She wants as many people to come, be engaged and ask questions of the process.

In 2012 there was a similar process and this 4 district map was developed that is presently in place. It came out of that committee, was voted on by the Council and was instituted in November 2012. At the same time they vetted the 4 district map they vetted the 7-District map on display at this forum. The 7-District map prior to this one was very similar and only tweaked the previous map, not a major shift as the 4 district map was. The committee complied with what the committee was charged with which was to follow the One Person One Vote Rule, which is extremely important. This is when you have a change in population census data and the voting districts must follow One Person One Vote, which is done by taking the total population of the town which at that time was 36,000. That number is divided by the number of Town Council people (21) in this case it was 1,715 people. Each town council person had to represent 1,715 people. Both maps did that, the difference is there were equal districts in the 7-District and the 3 of the 4 districts in the 4 district map were equal except the super district where they added another council person. Both maps complied with the One Person One Vote. The other committee charge was to remove any unnecessary split districts. The prior 7-District plan had multiple split districts between the 123rd, 134th, 122nd, 123rd. In district 5, 6 and 2 there were multiple split districts which creates more voter lines and confusion at polling places. There is only one split district left in Trumbull and that is the 122nd district, there is no way to eliminate it. Both plans of 2012 complied with the committee's charge.

The 7-District plan will restore 7 polling places which is important for the 2020 election. The greatest number of voters is in a presidential election and expects to see the same thing. Generally 80%-90% of voters come out to vote in a presidential election. The 2018 mid-term elections had a high turnout. The First Selectman was at Middlebrooks School, a large portion of that day was very difficult, parking was difficult, and she saw people walking out without voting because they couldn't spend the time in the lines. We should always make it easier for people to vote. That is what this is about, 7 polling places makes it easier for people to vote. It is as simple as that. You can't add an extra polling place to a district, you can only have one polling place per district. The 7-District plan restores equal population to all the districts. There is no super district, some people have asked why one district has additional representatives than theirs. No party should have a super majority on the Council. It's a bad way to govern, it doesn't reflect the actual distribution of the party that is in the minority as to their actual representation in the public. Trumbull has been historically 25% republican, 25% democrat and 50% unaffiliated. Seven districts will allow one person from the minority party in each district to be elected, there will be a minimum of 7 people from the minority. Once you go over the 14 seats to a party you are in the super majority and questioned how that represents the public and why is that good for any town. We are looking at 7 districts because it is better for the community. No one should have a super majority. We

have seen this sway back and forth. With a super majority the minority's job becomes bigger because you have to sit on many subcommittees because there are not enough people to divide the work. 7-Districts does enhance the neighborhood concept with a smaller group of people with issues who need to talk to their Council person, and there is less ballot confusion. We already have a two-page ballot. Some people don't finish the ballot.

Public Comment:

Dave Rutigliano of 52 Stemway stated he is agnostic about the districts, he doesn't care about 7 or 4. He does care about confusion in the when and how. He thinks we should take the time to do it right. He votes at Madison Middle School and has never had a problem. He used to campaign in Tashua, he is 2/10 of a mile from Tashua School, if we go back to 7 districts he will vote at Madison. If we do this now we are displacing voters for 2020 which is our biggest voter turnout election? If simple steps are done at the Registrar of Voters level it will make it easier for people to vote. Most cities in the state of CT have a L-M-N-O line for streets because most streets are named with those letters. We don't do that here in Trumbull. We have unwillingness to change how people enter the building, let people wait inside so they aren't out in the weather. We should go slower. He doesn't like to see confusion at a large election, and some of the problems at the polling places can be corrected with simple steps. The minority representation is a laudable goal and applauds that proposal. That can be done at the Charter level. Fairfield has 65,000 residents and have 10 districts, it could be 4 or 5. Shelton has 41,000 residents and has 4 wards. Trumbull has had many voter configurations over the years, we have spent quite some time with seven, and about 10 years with 4. We don't run the polling places as well as we should, with a little creativity and willingness at the Registrar of Voters level we can fix that and people could get through the line easily. He extended his gratitude for the time and offered to help in any way he can.

Bill Holden of 6 Woodfield Drive and Registrar of Voters stated this was not a debate on the districts. The legislature in CT reapportion the districts every 10 years following the census. There is a statute, 9-169f requiring municipal bodies to reapportion by June 1st following a regular election of the general assembly. Because of this it's not the right time reapportion. Two years from now would be. The US Census is being conducted this year. We don't know what the population of CT will be and don't know what the population of Trumbull will be. We don't know if CT will lose a congressional seat or split into more than one congressional district. There are 5 municipalities that have more than one congressional district. Trumbull was split between the 4th and 5th districts 30 years ago, it could be split again. Every neighboring town has more than one state senate district. In Trumbull this could result in more split districts. It depends on where the state draws the line. We don't know what the state will do with assembly districts. District 122 used to be a part of Trumbull and then in 2001 it was not and in 2011 it was added back in. Split districts can cause confusion for voters and election officials. Fairfield had a problem with mixed up ballots following reapportionment a few years ago. The town of Stratford had wrong ballots issued for a district in the last state election. More than a year later it was ruled 70 people lost their vote. The question before the Council is shall the Council follow the laws and reapportion in 2 years' time? The Council shouldn't be deciding the number of districts or the boundaries at this time they should wait for two years from now when the process has gone full circle.

Ray Baldwin of 700 Booth Hill Road explained he has the benefit of the last 50 years working with 8 administrations. What he admires most about Trumbull's form of government is their minority representation and it is our strength. Having a strong minority representation allows for checks and balances which is important. He has seen communities with super majorities where one party controls the entire administration. That is not healthy government. Having 7 districts will make voting easier and more convenient to get to the polls and vote, there won't be waits, but more importantly it will allow for a more representative government which is key to this. He applauds First Selectman Tesoro and this administration. Normally when someone gets a super majority they roll over their agenda and move forward with disregard to the minority party. In this case they are taking a step to include a strong minority representation. He supports however it's done to get us to a place where we have minority representation, helping with voter turnout and thinks that should be part of the charge of the committee.

Gloria Coney of 16 Wood Avenue, a resident in district 4 and a taxpayer in Trumbull since 1953. She was present to speak on her own behalf as well as the League of Women Voters of the greater Bridgeport area. In 2012 when this issue first was before the Council she went with the views of the Women's League of Voters. The view is having seven districts provides for better minority representation on the Town Council. When it comes to votes that require a super majority when you only have 4 votes you don't have any vote. Having at least representative from each of the districts gives better balance. They are concerned about the travel distance. She personally doesn't have a problem but that isn't true for all the people in her district or in other districts. Travel distance may prevent some people, particularly those that have to get to work, have small children or have physical issues or age issues that make it difficult to travel to these distances. They are concerned about the long lines at the polling places. Being in district 4, she is aware of the problem at Middlebrooks School with long lines. She has an advantage because she is retired and can go to the polling place any time that is convenient for her, but that is not true for many people in Town. Parking is a concern because Trumbull doesn't have mass transit we have to drive wherever we go. She has circled the parking lot at Middlebrooks several times waiting for someone to pull out so she could park, she ended up parking in a no parking area. The League still feels these are issues that the Town must consider. The League is political in that they take a view on issues but aren't partisan. We are talking about the welfare of the citizens of the Trumbull. She has seen many changes over the years, some good, some bad but all of them have taken consideration of the citizens of town. She thanked all for their attention and allowing them to participate.

Richard White of 169 Church Hill Road had 4 broad points:

- Minority representation is not good governance. For a single party to have more than enough votes to pass any of our issues that require the Charter super majority vote.
- Fairness is a question. On Election Day he has 2 fewer candidates to consider than those living in the super district. The day after he has one fewer representative to call on a districtwide issue. The bulk of the town is outweighed by 2 candidates and 1 additional representative in the super district.
- He lives in one of the quirks where their children don't go to the same schools as the rest of the district, and when there are district-wide issues centered on the schools returning to 7 districts gives them back the link to the schools. He has sympathy for

the minority. The majority can over work the minority by having their standing committees meet once a month, and there is always a building committee and other required committees.

- The census is happening in April. The data will not become available until the following April. There will be 2-3 elections under the existing 4-District plan before the town has a chance to align with the new data. At that time the town can tweak from the proposed 7-District plan any changes due to the new census data. He asked the state reps when it comes time to draw the boundaries not to create any additional burden for the towns.

Tracy Vonick of 155 Killian Avenue is the appointed Assistant Registrar. No one present is opposed to minority representation or majority limitation. If you are talking about the number of districts and getting as many people to vote as possible there are many things they can do on Election Day that alleviate the problem. Specifically on Election Day it is a day when schools are closed but teachers have work sessions at the schools that have the elections. They should be moved and that would alleviate a lot of the parking issues. He does this because he likes to do it and volunteers to do it. Getting poll workers is very difficult, getting good poll workers is even harder. Going to a 7-District and trying to rush it through for this election will make it very difficult to get the workers. He thinks they will end up with the same delays. There is not a huge delay in District 4 even in the 2016 presidential election, outside of the first 10 minutes when everyone lines up to vote at 6:00 a.m. no one in district 4 waited more than 15 minutes. District 4 has great poll workers they have all been together for 5 years and that is something he pushes in district 4. He wants to make sure that people from the registrar's office are asked and are involved in whatever committee is set up. Get the poll workers involved and everyone's opinion, don't rush to put this through because you think 7 districts would be a lot better for this year's election when we expect a large turnout.

First Selectman Tesoro asked if there was anyone else who wanted to speak, hearing none she stated on the Town Council February meeting they are formulating a Redistricting Committee that will begin to meet no later than February 20th and will continue to meet until they bring the plan to the Committee no later than April 6th, 2020. They aren't rushing anything, they are going to vet this process as it was done in 2012 and give the community the opportunity to come to meetings to voice their opinions, reach out to their Council people, to her and express their concerns they may have. That is the process going forward, this will be on the website and on their Facebook page so people will be aware of the dates of the meetings so they can participate

The Community Forum was closed at 11:07 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Margaret D. Mastroni, Town Council Clerk

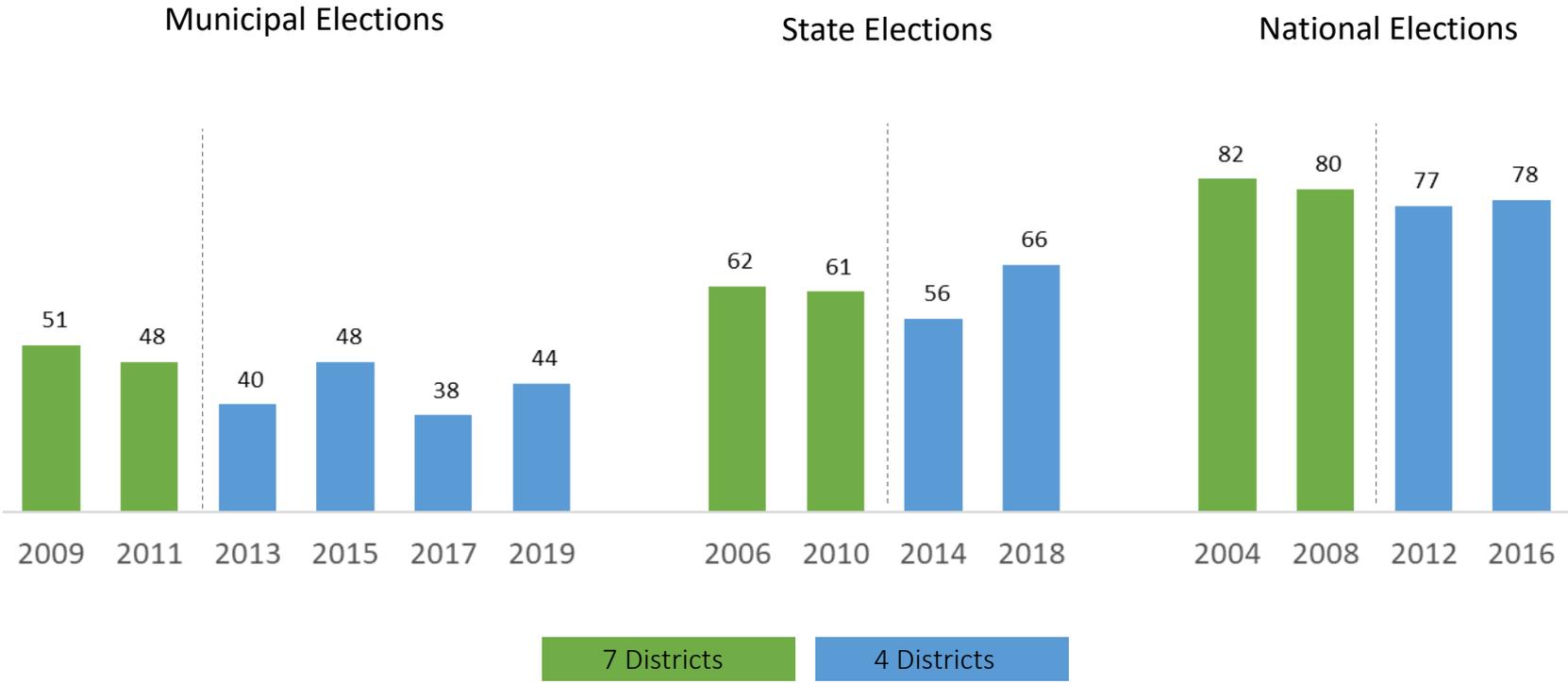
TRUMBULL VOTER DATA CONCERNING THE MOVE FROM SEVEN TO FOUR DISTRICTS

1/21/2020

*NOTE: The following data is actual, verified voter data reported by
the CT Secretary of State and Trumbull Registrar of Voters*

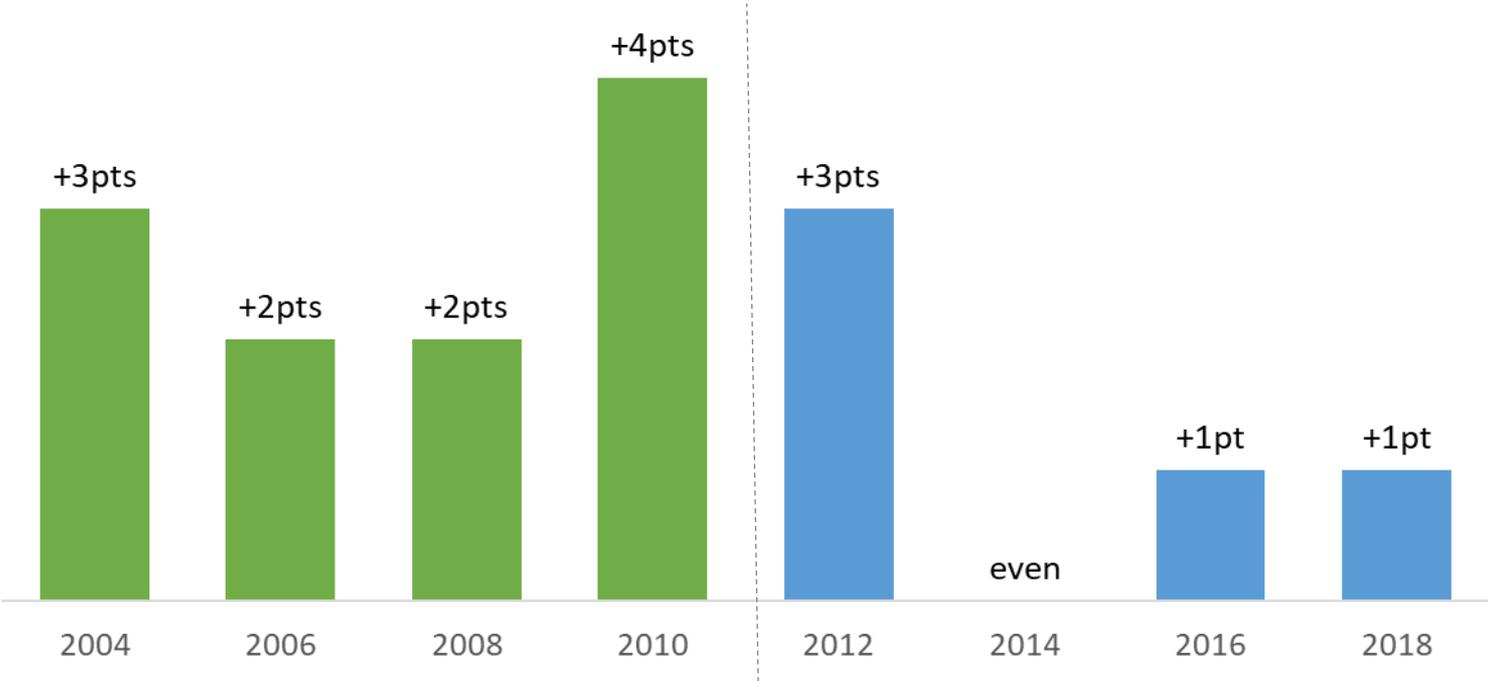
Since the change from 7 Districts to 4 Districts, Trumbull's voter turn-out has generally declined

TRUMBULL VOTER TURN-OUT RATE



Under 7 Districts, Trumbull's voter turnout was 2 to 4 points above the State turnout rate. This declined under 4 Districts.

Difference between Trumbull and CT State Turnout

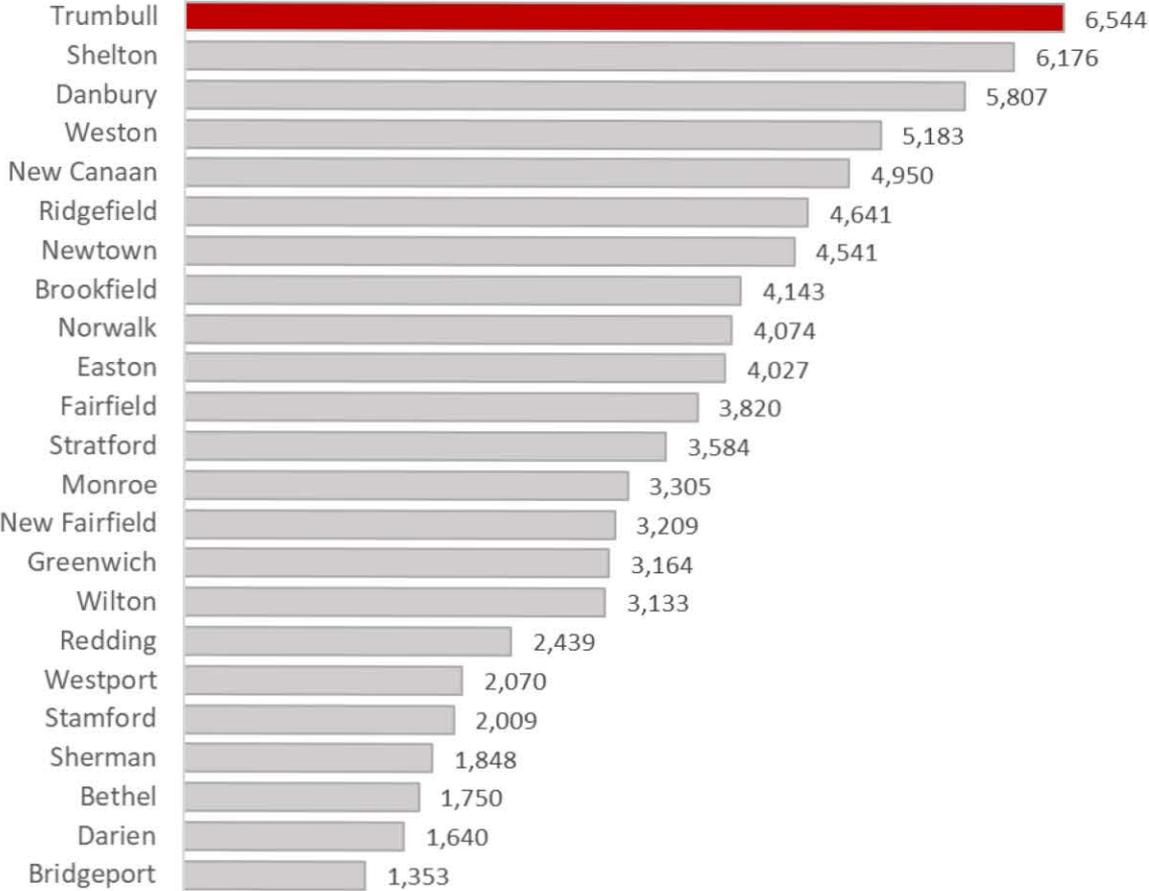


POSSIBLE FACTORS IN THE DECLINE OF TRUMBULL VOTER TURNOUT

1 – Crowded Polling Places

In the 2018 election, Trumbull had the HIGHEST rate of voters per polling place in Fairfield County. On average, Trumbull crowded 80% more voters through polling locations.

of Voters Per Polling Place
(2018 Statewide Election)



Average: 3,626

Comments from Trumbull Voters

I had to come back to vote because I couldn't find a parking place.

-D4 voter

I don't understand why I had to wait 50 minutes to vote. Trumbull isn't even that big!

-D1 voter

I had to drag my mother with her walker all the way across town to vote and it took forever because of the lines.

-D1 voter

One line was going quick, but I was on the other line which was moving like a snail. Can't they figure that out?

-D2 voter

I actually called the Registrar of Voters to complain about the lines.

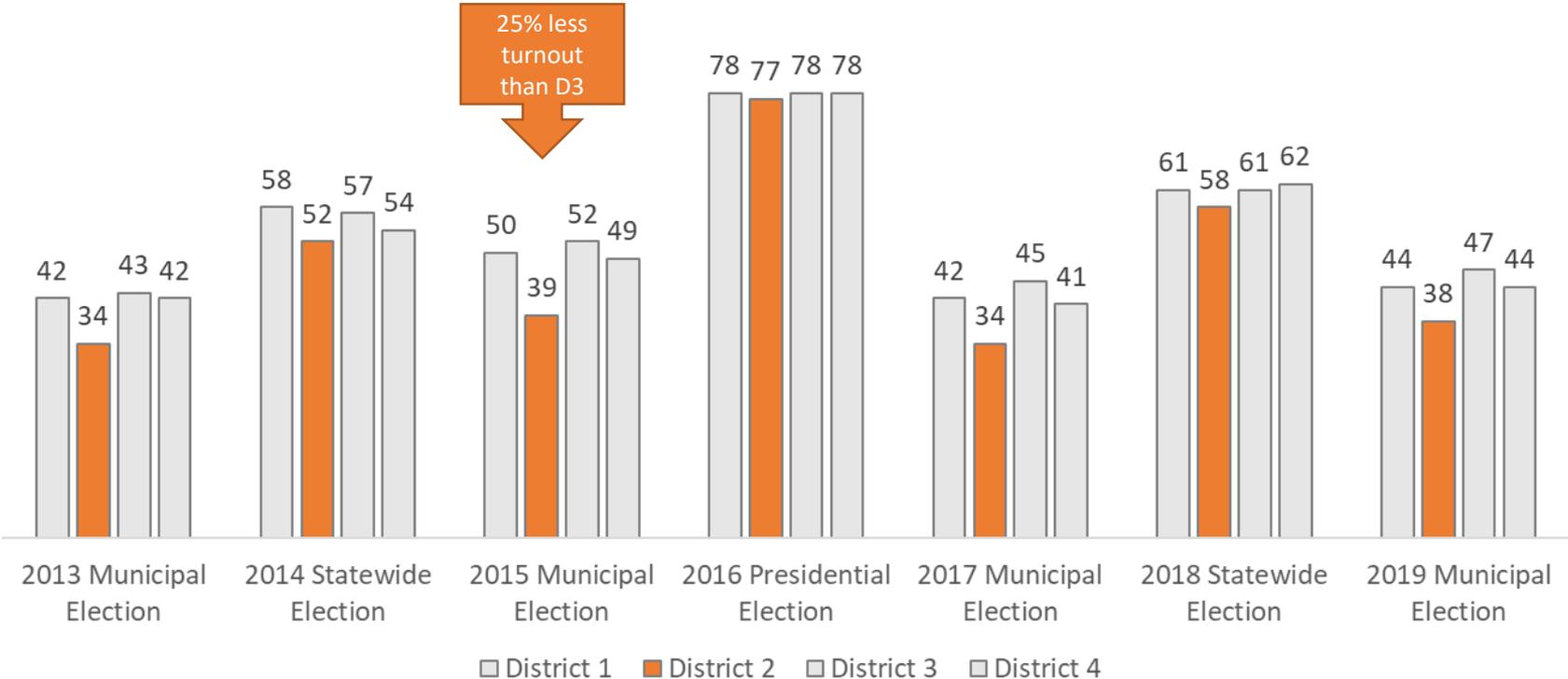
-D2 voter

POSSIBLE FACTORS IN THE DECLINE OF TRUMBULL VOTER TURNOUT

2 – Polling Place Locations

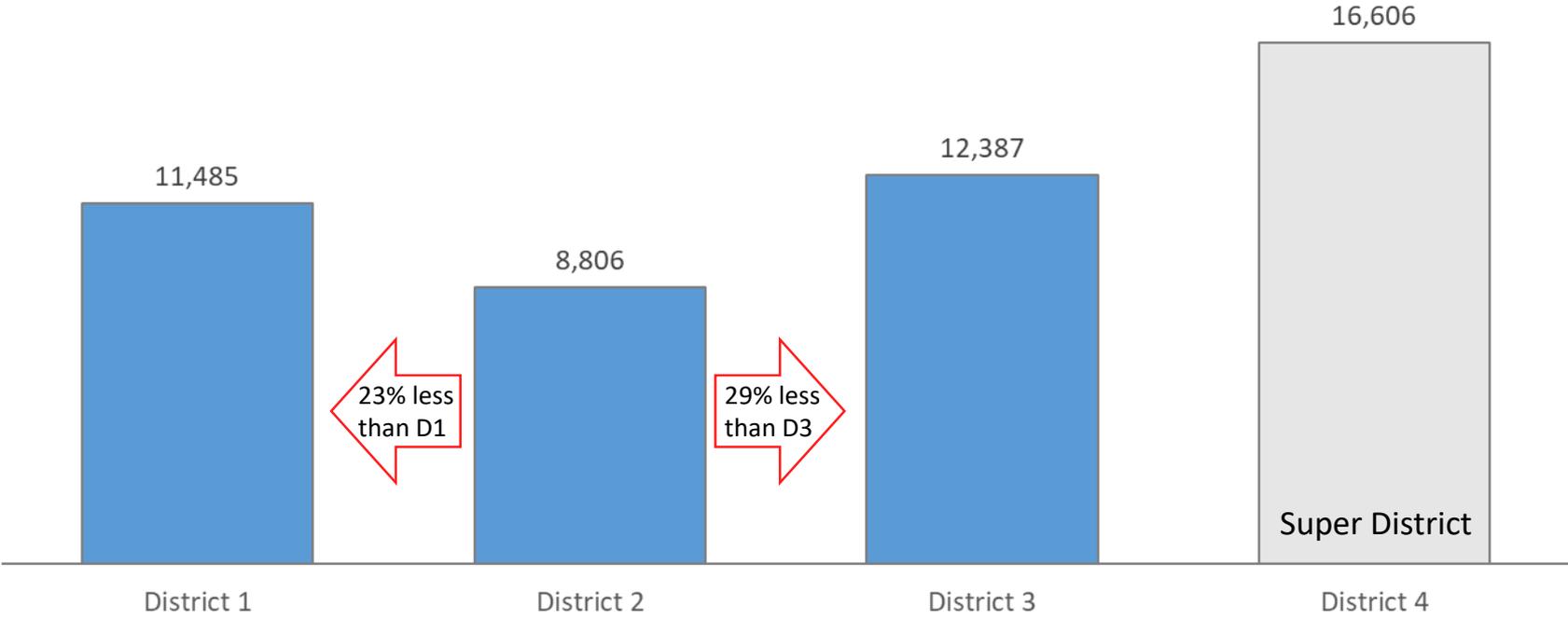
There is one stand-out District with low turn-out rates. District 2 had lower voter turn-out for the last seven elections - as low as 25% below other Districts!

Trumbull % Voter Turnout



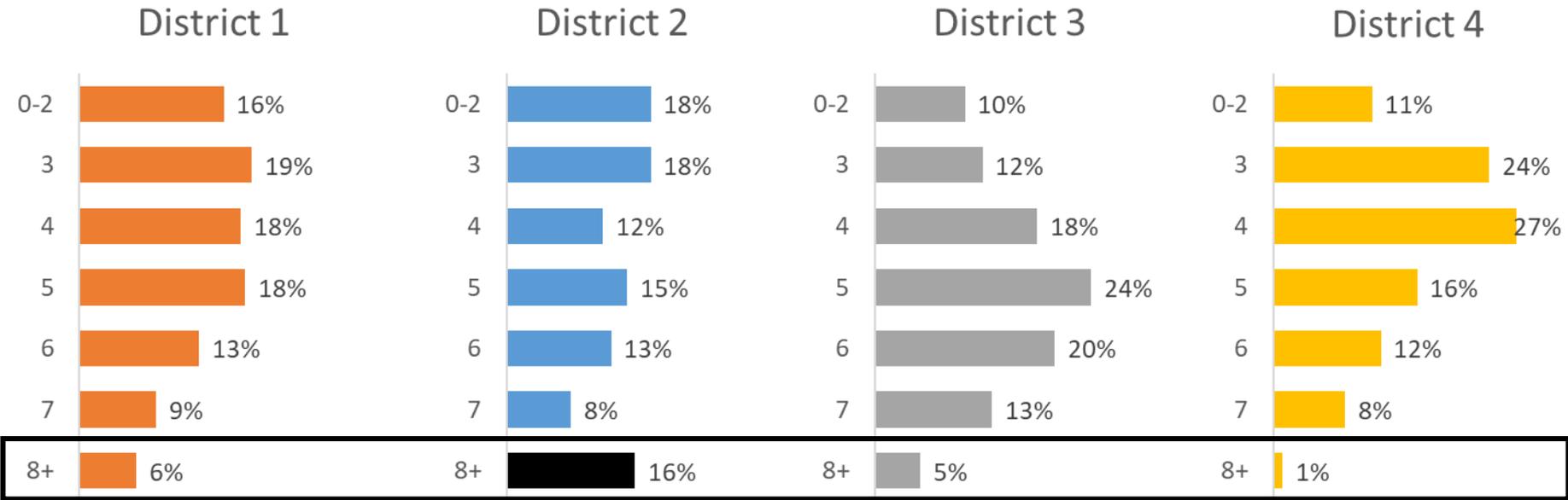
Despite Districts 1, 2 & 3 being designed as “equal” districts, District 2 cast up to 29% less votes for Town Council members in the last municipal election.

Votes Cast for Town Council in 2019



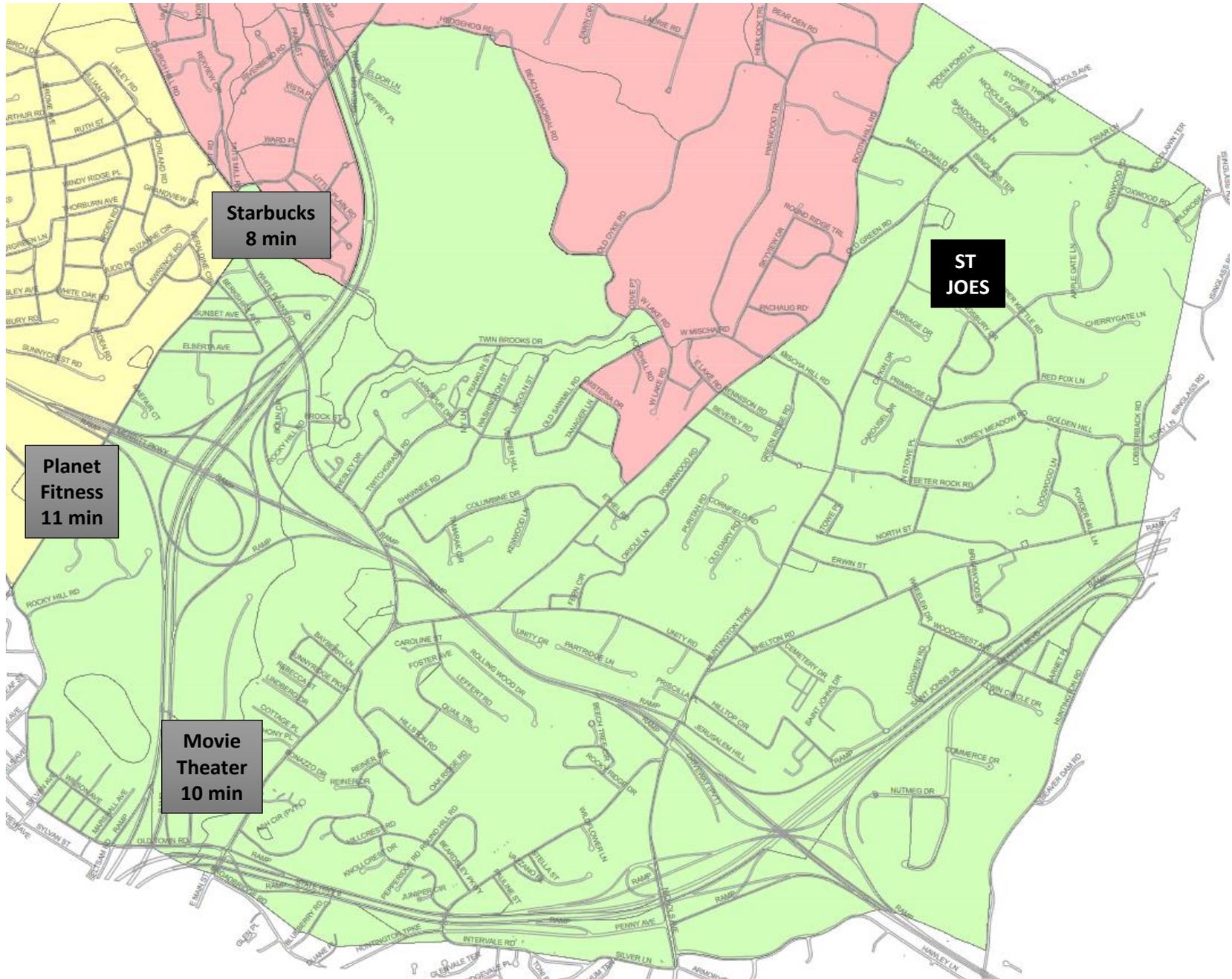
CONSIDERATION: District 2 Voters have to drive longer to get to their polling place

Driving Time (Minutes) to Polling Place



D2 has the most voters who need to drive 8+ minutes to get to their polling place – 4x the other Districts

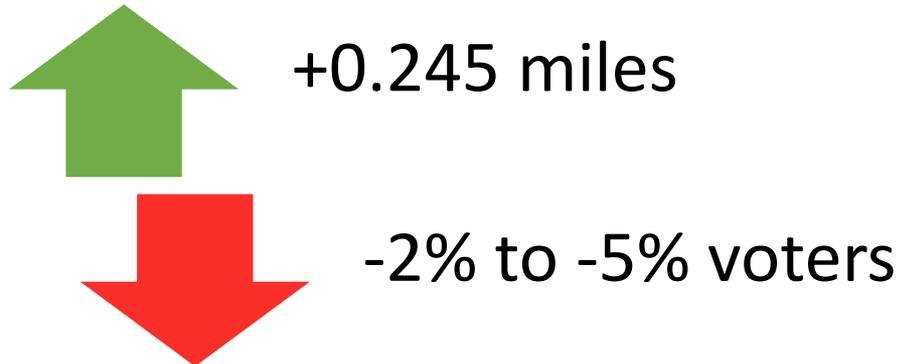
D2 Drive Times



Does distance to polling places really matter?

MIT says *YES IT DOES!*

- The MIT Department of Economics conducted a study that was released in November, 2016
- The findings of the study confirms that just a 0.245 mile increase in the distance to polling places reduces the number of ballots case by 2-5% (based on the type of election)



A Precinct Too Far: Turnout and Voting Costs

Enrico Cantoni*

November 11, 2016

Latest version available at <http://economics.mit.edu/files/11936>

JOB MARKET PAPER

Abstract

I study the effects of voting costs through a novel, quasi-experimental design based on geographic discontinuities. I compare parcels and census blocks located near borders between adjacent voting precincts. Units on opposite sides of a border are observationally identical, except for their assignment to different polling locations. The discontinuous assignment to polling places produces sharp changes in the travel distance voters face to cast their ballots. In a sample of nine municipalities in Massachusetts and Minnesota, I find that a 1-standard deviation (.245 mile) increase in distance to the polling place reduces the number of ballots cast by 2% to 5% in the 2012 presidential, 2013 municipal, 2014 midterm, and 2016 presidential primary elections. During non-presidential elections, effects in high-minority areas are three times as large as those in low-minority areas, while no significant difference emerges from the 2012 presidential election. Finally, I use my estimates to simulate the impact of various counterfactual assignments of voters to polling places. I find that erasing the effect of distances to polling places would increase turnout by 1.6 to 4 percentage points and reduce minority participation gaps in non-presidential elections by 11% to 13%. By contrast, the optimal feasible counterfactual boundaries, holding polling locations constant, would result in small changes in the minority participation gap.

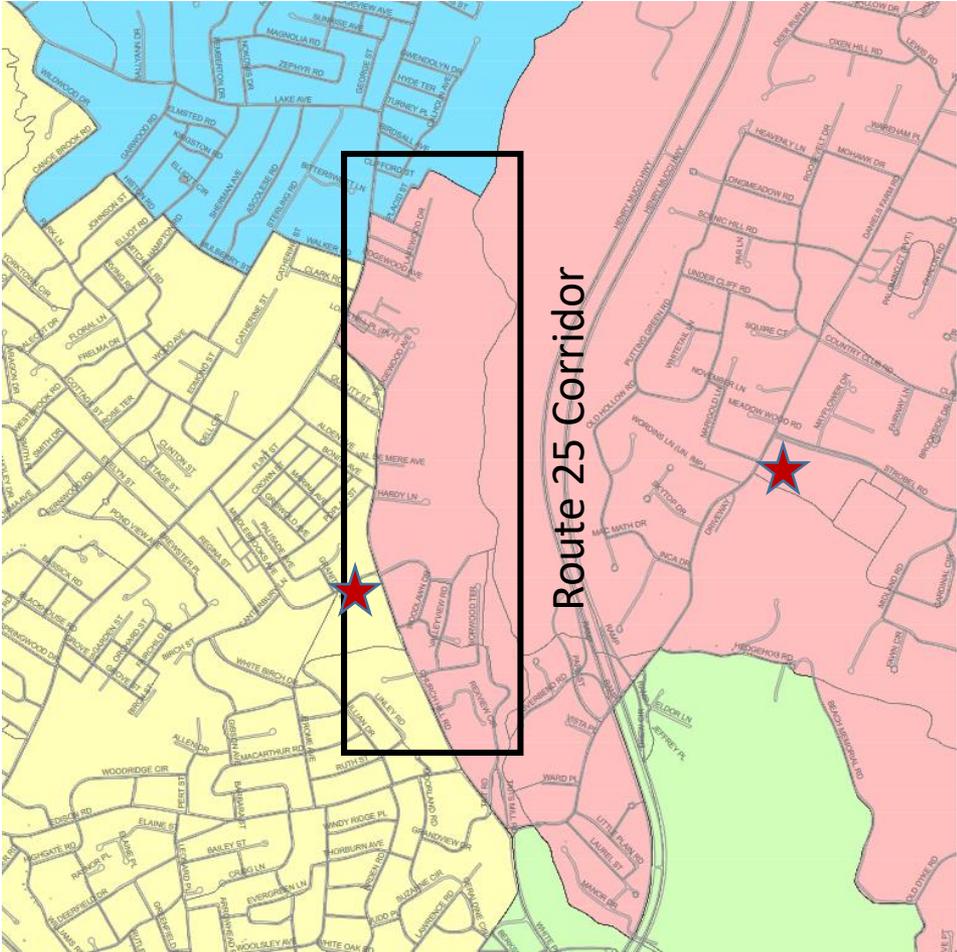
*Department of Economics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. E-mail: cantoni@mit.edu.

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In addition to distance, the 4 District boundaries have ‘quirks’ where voters who live less than a mile from one of the polling places are assigned to a polling place 2+ miles away.

As an example, streets within easy walking distance of Middlebrook School (District 4), have been assigned to vote at Hillcrest (District 1).

Examples...	Miles to Middlebrook	Miles to Hillcrest (assigned polling place)
Lakewood Dr.	1.3	3.1 (+2.4x)
Hardy Ln.	0.5	2.3 (+4.6x)
Woodlawn Dr.	0.3	2.0 (+6.7x)



THE 7 DISTRICT GOAL

BRING BACK CONVENIENT VOTING LOCATIONS

Reduce congestion at polling places

Bring voters closer to their polling places

Increase voter turnout

of Voters Per Polling Place
(2018 Statewide Election)

