

A Mirror for the GOP, Please

Editorial

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The decision by Illinois Democrats to drop their chatter about redrawing congressional boundaries in the state was as quick as it was wise.

Democrats control all branches of state government, and there was a temptation to flex their political muscle by hurrying to pass a remap that would add one or two Democrats to the congressional delegation. Normally, a new map would be generated after 2010, when new census figures dictate a change.

Fortunately, U.S. Reps. Rahm Emanuel and Jan **Schakowsky**, who floated the idea, have backed away. They might have gained in Washington, but Illinois voters would have lost. A remap before the next census would be done for only one reason: to gerrymander to the advantage of Democrats, which by definition would have meant creating districts that weren't politically competitive.

Now it's time for House Speaker Dennis Hastert to stop his own party's cynical manipulation of voters.

The Republicans have been merrily pursuing a national strategy encouraging GOP-controlled states to redraw their congressional maps to create more safe seats for the party.

They did so in Texas, where House Majority Leader Tom DeLay successfully reengineered the state's congressional districts to add six GOP seats. They tried to do the same in Colorado, though the move was rejected by the state's Supreme Court. And they're trying in Georgia, where Republicans have gained control of the state legislature and the governor's seat.

So when Hastert spokesman John McGovern scolded Rahm Emanuel for "putting his personal partisan agenda ahead of what's best for the people of Illinois"--well, that was astonishingly hypocritical.

Let's see. ... That would mean Republicans have put their personal partisan agenda ahead of what's best for the people of Texas.

And the people of Colorado.

And the people of Georgia.

When Hastert became speaker he was hailed as someone who works to get things done in a bipartisan manner. But by encouraging this mapmaking mischief around the country, Hastert looks as crassly partisan as ... well, Tom DeLay.

After Illinois Democrats met Tuesday night, Rep. Jerry Costello told Roll Call that the delegation concluded it was better to take the high road.

"Just because this was done in Texas doesn't make it right," he said.

McGovern's response on Wednesday to Roll Call, moved from hypocrisy to comedy: "Rahm Emanuel's ham-handed attempt to push his personal partisan agenda has obviously failed because other Democrats in Illinois recognize the folly of this proposal."

Say this for the Democrats: At least they recognize folly when they see it.