



He's running around the state for redistricting - no fooling

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Paul Mathison looks runner-fit, like he could do 20 miles easily, which is what he set out to do Friday morning from in front of Wayne's War Memorial at South Wayne and Runnymede avenues.

"This is April, and I'm your fool," he quipped as large snowflakes fell as if to ensure that April Fool's Day would be noted.

Mathison hopes to be back in Wayne in about 50 days. That's at a pace of 20 miles a day.

Mat[h]ison was cheered on by a crowd of three friends and two members of the press as he set off to make his statement about the upcoming Pennsylvania redistricting effort created by the 2010 census figures and the loss of one representative in the U.S. House. His jog will take him around the entire state as an effort to draw Pennsylvanians' attention to openness,



Paul Mathison speaks about redistricting reform and The Run. Photo: Pete Bannan.

transparency and the logic of compact , homogenous, un-gerrymandered districts from which Federal and state legislators can be fairly elected.



New running shoes (one of four pairs) already soaked before the start of The Run.
Photo: Pete Bannan.

The PennUltimate Run, as it has been named according to the run's main Web page, "is a 1,000-mile one-lap human trek around Pennsylvania whose purpose is to place a spotlight on 2011 congressional and legislative redistricting and to inspire Pennsylvania citizens to push the legislature and governor to conduct this effort in an open and transparent manner and produce compact districts."

The argument is that, controlled by state legislators, the system has become more and more gerrymandered over the years as politicians have strayed from retaining solid, regional, homogenous districts and have over the years, created some that look like the legislators had thrown wet or snowy confetti onto a map.

As an example or perhaps a result, Radnor Township is part of three Pennsylvania House districts, the 161st, the 165th and the 166th. Tredyffrin Township's 157th House District also includes Phoenixville, Schuylkill Township and two little chunks of Montgomery County.

Mathison started up South Wayne at around 9:15 and turned left, heading west on Lancaster Avenue. He was pushing a jogging stroller packed with his gear and a press release explaining his mission and was carrying an "official relay baton." His goal was to be somewhere around Coatesville at the end of his first day's run.

Mathison said he had contacted legislators and has invited them to put on their shoes and join him for a while although Harrisburg is not on the route. To pass the baton, perhaps.

But Mathison will be doing the complete circuit himself, which runs from Wayne to Pittsburgh, north to Erie, then back across the state to Scranton, south to the Liberty Bell and, finally, back again to Wayne. There is no support crew or vehicle.

Financial support raised by the run will result in “a charitable contribution,” according to Web-site information. Official sponsors were being sought. More information about the run is at www.pjmathison.com. Updates will be posted on Facebook and Twitter.

The run had been intended to involve Radnor Middle School students, weather permitting, on an initial lap around the RMS school grounds, but that didn’t materialize in the snow and April chill. Mathison said that principal Anthony Stevenson’s interest in the event had created a “civics lesson on redistricting” along with, apparently, a focus on physical conditioning.

Mathison said he had once tried to run 100 miles in two days, from the steps of the Capitol building in Harrisburg to Philadelphia, but that he “got to Ardmore and hopped on the train.”

So, if you weren’t in the crowd that saw Mathison off on Friday as he jogged up South Wayne and turned left onto Route 30, you can see the exciting finish – in about 50 days, more or less.

Or, better yet, put on your jogging shoes.



Mathison sets off on the 1,000-mile run around the state.
Photo: Pete Bannan.