SIZING UP LEGISLATURES

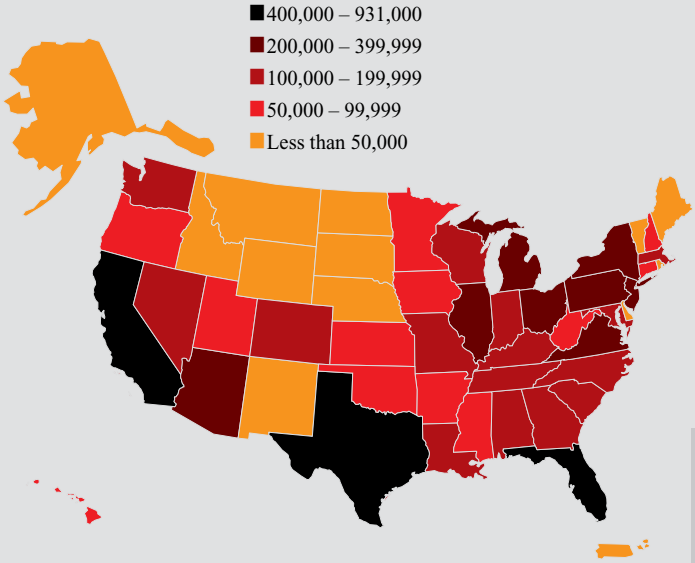
The United States added a little more than 27 million people (an increase of 9.8 percent) over the last 10 years, according to the Census Bureau. The populations of state legislative districts have also increased, but the number of state legislators has not. In Rhode Island, the House actually shrunk (from 100 to 75) in 2004.

Over the last 10 years, state house districts, on average, grew by 6,887 constituents and state senate districts by 13,824. Today, our elected officials represent more people than at any other time in history.

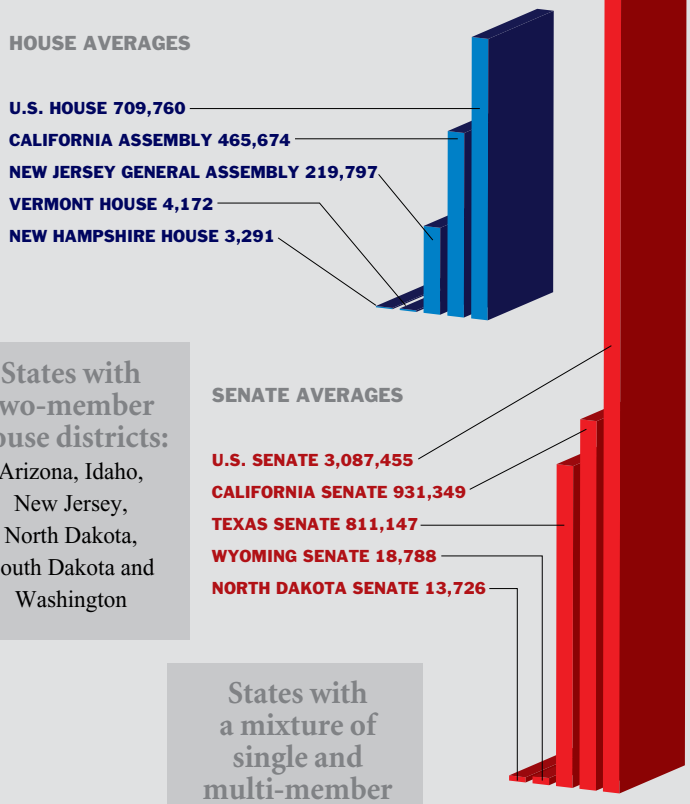
States in the South and Southwest have seen the most growth. Nevada's population skyrocketed by 35 percent, adding an average of 16,722 constituents to each house district. Texas representatives each gained about 29,000 constituents. On average, a state senator in the Lone Star Legislature now represents 811,000 constituents—more than the state's U.S. representatives in Washington, D.C., who represent 710,000 constituents.

Is there an ideal size of legislative districts? "No," says NCSL's Karl Kurtz, director of the Trust for Representative Democracy. "As with so many other issues of government organization, each state needs to find its own solution that best fits its circumstances and traditions."

Constituents per State Senate District, 2010



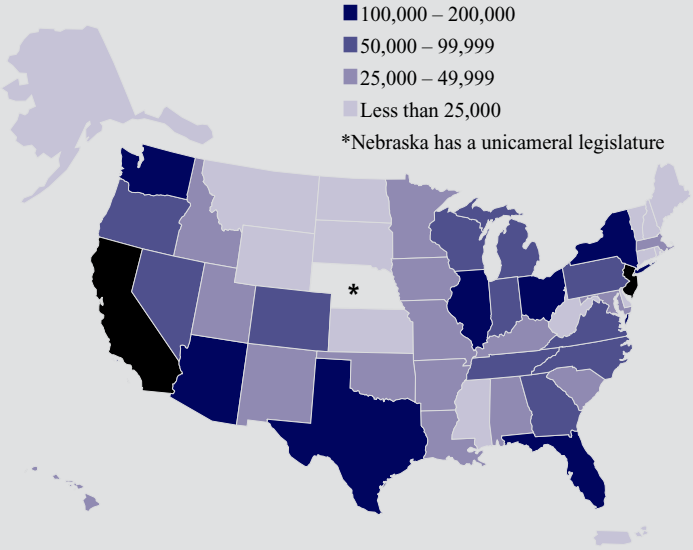
Supersized to Lite (District Populations)



States with two-member house districts:
Arizona, Idaho, New Jersey, North Dakota, South Dakota and Washington

States with a mixture of single and multi-member districts:
Maryland, New Hampshire, Vermont and West Virginia

Constituents per State House District, 2010



SL ONLINE

For the average number of constituents in all state legislative districts in 2010, go to www.ncsl.org/magazine.