Legislative Redistricting

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Montana Association of Counties
Rachel Weiss
Joe Kolman
The Basics

- What is redistricting?
- Why do we have to redistrict?
- Who’s in charge of redistricting in Montana?
- When will redistricting occur?
What is redistricting?

- Drawing new political boundaries.
STOP!

Why do you care?
The law says you care

13-3-102, MCA

(1) The county governing body may change the boundaries of precincts, but not within 100 days before any primary or between a general election and the primary for that election. When the changes are required to make precinct boundaries conform to legislative district boundaries following the adoption of a districting and apportionment plan under Article V, section 14, of the Montana constitution or other district boundaries changed by the districting and apportionment plan, the changing of precinct boundaries must be accomplished within 45 days of the filing of the final plan.

(2) All changes must be certified to the election administrator 3 days or less after the change is made.

(3) The officials responsible for preparing a districting and apportionment plan shall consider the problems of conforming present precinct boundaries to the new districts as well as existing boundaries of wards, school districts, and other districts. The election administrator of counties involved in the plan must be consulted before adoption of the final plan.
Why do we redistrict?

• Federal and state constitutions
• U.S. Supreme Court rulings in 1960s
  o (“one person, one vote”)
Who’s in charge of redistricting?

Five-member Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission.
- Legislature reviews plan and suggests changes
- Commission has discretion to make amendments
When will redistricting occur?

NOW

- Commissioners appointed 2009
- Present legislative plan to 2013 Legislature
- New districts in effect for 2014 election
The Puzzle and its special rules
The Mandatory Rules

Population Equality -- Legislative Districts should be nearly equal in population as practicable.

* Ideal Population—9,894 per House District
* Commission Decision – Plus or minus 3% from ideal
  * 297 people on either side of 9,894
The Mandatory Rules

Compact and Contiguous Districts

* Looks Matter – You know it when you see it
  * Commission compactness considerations include:
    * General appearance;
    * Functional Compactness:
      * Travel and Transportation
      * Communication
      * Geography
Getting around in Florida SD27

- By car
- By boat
- By foot
The Mandatory Rules

Protect minority voting rights

* No district, plan, or proposal for a plan is acceptable if it affords members of a racial or language minority group “less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice.”

Race cannot be the predominant factor to which the traditional discretionary criteria are subordinated.
The Discretionary Rules

Following existing political boundaries
  * Counties, cities, school districts, reservations, neighborhoods
Use geographic boundaries from Census
  * Blocks, block groups, tracts
Keep communities of interest intact
  * Reservations, urban/suburban/rural, occupations, trade areas
Local officials can help

- How can district boundaries could be drawn in a way that follows their criteria?
  - Should a community be split or kept together? Why?
Putting the pieces together
For fun, let’s say District 83 has 300 too many people.
Looking for people, not cows
Split Wheatland County along the river? The highway?
No Way, Says Joe's Dad

Harlowton City Council – 18 years
Wheatland County block group population
What about Judith Gap?

Population: 147 very nice souls

Judith Gap plays sports with Moore and Hobson – Go Titans
Still Looking for 153 People

Hello? Anybody out here?
Block by Block

Keep clicking until you find 153 people
What did we just do?

- Obtained ideal population – in one district
- Split Wheatland County – Didn’t follow line of political unit
- Compact?
- No effect on minorities?
- Retained rural community of interest? Kept Judith Gap intact
What about the other 99 districts?
SEND HELP

- Send comments
  - Reference criteria

- Send a map
  - Label maps clearly
    - Include relevant boundaries such as mountains, rivers, county lines, and roads.
How do I find out more?

- www.leg.mt.gov/districting
- districting@mt.gov
- Rachel Weiss – 444-5367
- Joe Kolman – 444-9280