

Redistricting 101



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Census Information

- A Census of all residents is taken every 10 years
 - Residence as of April 1 of the year ending in zero
- Mandated by the U. S. Constitution
 - Article I, Section 2
- First taken in 1790

Census Information

- Apportionment data typically provided by December 31
 - Deadline missed this cycle
 - Date still uncertain
- Delay in apportionment most likely means a delay in the redistricting data
 - Usually arrives to states by April 1

What's the difference?

Reapportionment

- Reallocation of United States Congressional districts following a decennial Census
- Uses formula to redistribute the 435 House seats among the states
- Established in U. S. Constitution Art. 2, Sec. 3

Redistricting

- Redistricting is the redrawing of district boundary lines
- Occurs at all levels of election districts

Getting Involved in Redistricting

- Get to know the legislators AND the legislative staff working on redistricting
- Attend public hearings both before and during the legislative session. Be sure to sign up to speak!
- If possible, submit suggested plans to committees or commissions responsible for redistricting.
- Become familiar with the legislative “rules” and make suggestions before they are adopted.
- Follow redistricting activities on the legislature’s / redistricting commission’s website.
- Educate yourself on the process and then educate policymakers. Offer to review plans, if possible, for precinct anomalies and other concerns.
- Refer to the National Conference of State Legislatures – www.ncsl.org

Understanding GIS

- GIS = Geographic Information System
 - Mapping software that connects geography with data- a smart map!
 - Connects PL 94-171 census data with TIGER geographic layers
- Prior to the 1990s, redistricting was done with paper maps and calculators
 - Took longer to do!
 - Deviations were broader since detailed accuracy was more difficult
- By 2000, GIS and computer technology more widely used
 - Immediate results of changes to districts
 - Ability to create more maps and options

Initial Analysis of Data

- Release of State Totals
 - Calculate your new ideal district sizes for each map
 - *Ideal Size=Total population divided by the number of districts*
- New 2020 Census redistricting data received
 - Import the new data into your software
 - Plug in the new ideal size
 - Note the changes in the district populations
 - Note the range of deviations
 - *Deviation is the amount above or below the ideal size (can be in number or percentage)*
- Create reports to distribute with this information

Redistricting Principles

- Legal Requirements
 - Compliance with U.S. and State Constitution
 - Compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965
 - Equal Protection Clause (14th Amendment)
 - “One Person, One Vote”

Redistricting Principles

- Traditional Redistricting Principles
 - Compactness
 - Contiguity
 - Respecting political boundaries
 - Communities of interest
 - Preserving the cores of prior districts
 - Incumbent protection
- Emerging Criteria
 - Competitiveness
 - Prohibition on using partisan data
 - Prohibition on favoring a political party, incumbent, or candidate

Redistricting Principles

- Other Considerations:
 - Acceptable population deviations of congressional and legislative districts from the “ideal” population. These deviations are less strict at the local level.
 - The use of “nested districts” or “multi-member” districts.
 - Other statutory requirements and relevant case law

MAP DRAWING



SO IT BEGINS...

Implementation of Maps

- Determine the method for sharing new maps with local election officials
 - Mail; email; digital download
- Know what information will be provided
 - Maps, data reports, descriptions, GIS files
- Be prepared to give assistance where needed

Challenges States May Face

- Shifts in population – growth AND loss
 - Can be difficult to adjust districts when some need to gain large amounts and others need to be reduced significantly
- Potential for splitting precincts and creating multiple “ballot styles” due to overlapping, non-coterminous district boundaries
- Compressed time frame amid other important legislative issues
 - Impact from the pandemic may affect more than just a delay in data arrival
- New methods or processes for redistricting
 - Several states will be using Commissions for the first time in 2021

How can I prepare?

- Gather files and needed information
 - Precincts or other geography
 - Incumbent information
- Review the maps
- Attend Public Hearings
- Reach out to election officials at the local and state levels
- Understand the steps in the process in your state
- Prepare for the unexpected!

Questions?

