



Redistricting Facts

In 2015, Ohio voters overwhelmingly supported state legislative redistricting reform, and in 2018, voters followed up by passing congressional redistricting reform. Both constitutional ballot measures won in all 88 Ohio counties and by more than 70% of the vote. We have a once-in-a-decade chance to protect our democracy, and we need people from across Ohio calling for a transparent, open, and bipartisan redistricting process that results in legislative maps that truly serve Ohio voters, not partisan interests.

What is redistricting? Redistricting is the process of drawing electoral district boundaries. After every decennial Census, Ohio must make new maps outlining Congressional and General Assembly districts.

Why should I care about redistricting? The legislative maps created this year will determine how communities are divided, resources are allocated, and voters are represented for years to come. How and where the district lines are drawn will determine how strong a voice each voter or each group of voters has in coming elections. It also affects how strong a voice each has when lobbying for or against legislation.

What is partisan gerrymandering? [Gerrymandering](#) is a form of voter discrimination in which mapmakers rig legislative districts to intentionally favor one political party or candidate over the other. Gerrymandering allows the party with more control over the redistricting process to artificially inflate the number of seats it gets. Elected officials of both political parties have marginalized the other party through mapmaking, and Ohio has some of the most gerrymandered districts in the country.

Is gerrymandering getting worse? Gerrymandering is as old as the republic. Improvements to computer software and the ability of mapmakers to obtain sophisticated data about voters on a massive scale allows them to draw unfair legislative maps with surgical precision. Fortunately, Ohio voters adopted reforms to curb gerrymandering in 2015 for state legislative maps and 2018 for Ohio's congressional districts by over 70% of the vote. The new rules are not perfect, so the general public must demand an open, transparent process that results in fair, responsive maps that serve voters - not partisan, political interests.

How many Congressional Seats will Ohio now have? Apportionment is dividing up the 435 total Congressional seats, as is directed [in the US Constitution](#) after each decennial Census. Ohio is losing one congressional seat, for a total of 15 going forward.

Do the number of Ohio General Assembly seats change? No. Census 2020 population data will be used to update the state legislative districts, but the number of districts doesn't change. There are [33 Ohio Senate districts](#) and [99 Ohio House of Representative](#) districts.

How do mapmakers conduct partisan gerrymandering? There are two primary ways that mapmakers conduct partisan gerrymandering. *Packing* involves jamming as many voters of the smaller political party into as few districts as possible. When districts are packed, the candidate of the smaller political party will win through a landslide that wastes large numbers of minority-party votes. *Cracking* is spreading the remaining members of the smaller political party across a large number of districts. In cracked districts, the votes for the minority party candidate are so diluted that their candidate has little-to-no chance to win.

How does gerrymandering impact incumbents? Partisan gerrymandering also occurs when maps separate incumbents of the opposition party from their established base to put them into a less favorable district. Mapmakers also can “double-bunk” two of the opposition party’s incumbents into a single district, ensuring that at least one will be eliminated. In 2011, Congressional District 9 was created in order to pit incumbents Marcy Kaptur of Toledo against Dennis Kucinich of Cleveland.

How does partisan gerrymandering hurt every voter? Gerrymandering takes away voter choice. Because partisan gerrymandering causes legislative districts to be won heavily by one party, the primary election becomes more important than the general election. A competitive primary election without a competitive general election leads to the election of extreme candidates who are less likely to compromise or work across the aisle on behalf of their constituents. This system especially disadvantages independent voters who do not vote in partisan primaries and voters who generally do not vote straight-party tickets.

How does partisan gerrymandering make elected officials less accountable? Given that the map is rigged, an incumbent legislator is virtually assured re-election as long as he or she cares to hold the seat. Gerrymandering provides individual legislators, legislative leadership, and the legislature as a whole immunity from changes in voter priorities or sentiments. Such security means that lawmakers do not need to listen to their voters, but instead work just to please extreme partisan interests or major donors.

How does partisan gerrymandering confuse voters? Oddly shaped and sprawling districts create confusion. For 3.6 million Ohioans, the closest Congressional District Office to their home is for the wrong congressional district. In the past decade, even County Boards of Elections have accidentally placed voters into the wrong districts.

What is Racial Gerrymandering? Racial gerrymandering is manipulating the maps to dilute the voting power of racial minorities. Racial gerrymandering privileges predominantly white communities and has been declared unconstitutional by the courts. Drawing equitable district maps with black and brown communities involved in the process is critical to creating more racial equity in Ohio.

What are some of the qualities of a non-gerrymandered legislative map? All voters should be fairly represented, no matter race, background, zip code, or income. Some aspects of fair maps include:

- Population equality: Political districts need to generally have the same number of residents.
- Contiguity: All areas in the district are physically connected to each other.
- Geographic integrity: To the extent possible, local governmental subdivisions should not be divided into different districts. Districts should also minimize the division of communities of interest, which are areas with similar interests (economic, social, cultural, geographic, historic identities, etc).
- Responsiveness: Districts should not be drawn to favor one political party/candidate over another.
- Representational Fairness: The total number of votes cast for each political party should be roughly equivalent to the number of seats each party receives.
- Racial equity: Districts should not harm voters based on their race or ethnicity.
- Compactness: Where practicable, districts should not be too elongated, spread out, or jagged.

Is there concern about meeting mapmaking deadlines? Due to the global pandemic, the Census Bureau had to change the timeline for releasing the 2020 population data to Ohio mapmakers. Data was expected in March but was released August 12th. Deadlines for mapmaking are quickly approaching, but

despite a shorter time frame, maps must be drawn with full public participation and oversight. While deadlines matter, having a fair, open process that results in fair maps is more important.

Who approves state legislative district lines? The Ohio Redistricting Commission will approve districts for state legislators. Commission members are:

- Governor Mike DeWine (Republican)
- Auditor Keith Faber (Republican)
- Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose (Republican)
- Speaker Bob Cupp (Republican)
- House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes (Democrat)
- Senate President Matt Huffman (Republican)
- Senator Vernon Sykes (Democrat)

Who is tasked with approving congressional districts? The principal mapmakers are state legislators. However, the Ohio Redistricting Commission does step in if the state legislature isn't able to agree on new congressional district lines.

Why should I participate in public hearings? The people of Ohio demanded change through the ballot measures in 2015 and 2018, now the people need to demand that those reforms are upheld. We need as many Ohioans as possible to present in-person or submit written testimony. Even if you do not want to testify, you can help by showing up and filling the hearing rooms to send a clear message to mapmakers. Participation in hearings is our most important opportunity to influence the mapping process.

How can I participate in public hearings? The Ohio Redistricting Commission has announced opportunities to give testimony and attend hearings for the week of August 23rd. The primary focus of these field hearings is on state legislative maps, but you can also make comments about Congressional maps in your testimony. There will be at least three more public hearings at the Ohio Statehouse for state legislative maps and two for congressional maps. The hearings must occur after new maps are introduced. [View the current schedule of Ohio Redistricting Commission hearings for the week of August 23rd.](#)

What are the rules for congressional districts and the division of counties? The Ohio Constitution requires that of Ohio's 88 counties, at least **65** counties be contained entirely within a district, up to **18** counties cannot be split not more than once, and up to **5** counties may be split not more than twice.

Congressional mapmaking focuses on creating bipartisan maps but if that fails four-year maps can be created. What are the rules for these four-year maps? Four year maps permit approval without the minority party but require stricter rules against gerrymandering. Unlike the other stages of mapmaking the process, there is a clear rule against drawing districts to favor or disfavor one political party or one candidate over another. Mapmakers must also explain in writing exactly why they made every decision, including why communities are split as well as other further rules that will help rein in gerrymandering.

About Us:

Fair Districts Ohio is led by the League of Women Voters of Ohio and Common Cause Ohio - the leading nonpartisan experts and advocates for fair maps in the Buckeye State.

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