



Notable Redistricting Reform Efforts in the States

Florida

On January 29, 2009, the Supreme Court of Florida ruled that two constitutional amendments to change redistricting standards in Florida can be placed on the 2010 ballot if the amendments' sponsor, FairDistrictsFlorida.org, collects enough signatures from the state's voters. To make the ballot, each amendment will need 676,811 signatures.

Currently, decisions about redistricting for both state and congressional districts are controlled by the Florida state legislature. The reform effort in the state comes in reaction to redistricting practices that have traditionally focused on drawing congressional and legislative districts that avoid competition. As a result, incumbents are rarely successfully challenged.

The proposed amendments state that congressional or legislative districts:

- Shall not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party
- Shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice
- Shall be contiguous
- Shall be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

If the amendments are passed in November 2010, the Legislature will reset boundaries in 2012 for the 40 state Senate seats, 120 state House seats and probably 26 or 27 congressional seats, up from 25.

The members of FairDistrictsFlorida.org include Common Cause, the League of Women Voters, AFL-CIO, Florida Education Association, Florida ACLU, Planned Parenthood and People for the American Way.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania currently uses two different processes for redrawing legislative and congressional seats as required for each decennial census. State Senate and House districts are handled through a process set forth under the Constitution that takes the redrawing out of the hands of the legislature and places it in the hands of a bipartisan Legislative Reapportionment Commission. Congressional boundaries are drawn by the state legislature. Changing the redistricting process for both the congressional and state legislative districts will require an amendment to the Pennsylvania state constitution. A proposed constitutional amendment must be passed in two consecutive sessions (4 years total) of the general assembly. Once passed, the amendment must be voted on at the first subsequent primary or general election.

State Senator Michael O’Pake (D) has introduced legislation that seeks to place the power to redraw Congressional districts in the hands of an **independent bipartisan reapportionment commission**. Under SB 69, the commission would consist of five members: four of whom would be the majority and minority leaders of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The four members would then select a fifth member, who would serve as a Chairman. Senator O’Pake introduced the same legislation last session, but it was never acted on.

The previous session of the Pennsylvania State Legislature also saw the introduction of bills in the House and Senate which sought to place congressional redistricting in the hands of a **Reapportionment Bureau**. SB 346, introduced by State Senator Lisa M. Boscola (D), and HB 84, introduced by State Representative Thomas Tangretti (D) proposed defining parameters for compactness and for dividing political subdivisions. The bills also would have prohibited political considerations in drawing district lines. In addition, the bills would have created a **five-member temporary redistricting advisory commission** appointed by the legislative leadership who would then select a fifth member to serve as chair. Commission members would have been barred from holding public office. This temporary advisory commission would have been responsible for holding public hearings on any plan submitted to the General Assembly. These bills died at the end of the session, but are expected to be reintroduced in the current session.

Another redistricting reform proposal introduced last session was offered by then-State Representative Daylin Leach (D). His bill, HB 81, sought to take the power to draw the congressional lines away from the legislature and place it in the hands of a **nine-member multi-partisan commission**, which would conduct all deliberations in public. The bill stated that the commission could not utilize any political or personal considerations in drafting any reapportionment plan. The bill also addressed standards for defining compactness and divisions. Now-State Senator Leach anticipates introducing this legislation in the current session.

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| Texas | State Senator Jeff Wentworth and State Representative Mark Strama have reintroduced their redistricting bills, SB 315 and HB 104. Both bills seek to remove the power to draw congressional districts from the state legislature and place it in the hands of a nonpartisan commission. The bills also address standards that each commission would be obligated to adhere to when creating districts. |
| Kansas | The State Senate Committee for State and Federal Affairs introduced SB 291 which would place the responsibility of developing new maps in the hands of nonpartisan legislative research staff members and a new five-person commission. |
| New Mexico | State Senator Rod Adair introduced Senate Joint Resolution 15 which proposes an amendment to the New Mexico State Constitution to establish a bipartisan redistricting commission to determine congressional and state legislative district. |