

The background of the entire page is a close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a map. Numerous yellow pushpins are stuck into the map, each with a small white ball at the top. The pushpins are scattered across the map, which shows various geographical features and text.

We Draw the Lines

***"Because the people
should have the power"***



Holding Power Accountable

Table of Contents

Redistricting Overview - Page 3

How Gerrymandering Hurts Minority Communities - Page 5

Steps in Participating - Page 6

Get Involved & Understand the Process - Page 7

Rules of Redistricting: Overview - Page 8

Rules of Redistricting: [Voting Rights Act](#) - Page 10

Rules of Redistricting: [Communities of Interest](#) - Page 12

Get Involved: [Core Strategies for Impact Maps](#) - Page 14

Get Involved: [Preparing Your Testimonies](#) - Page 17

Get Involved: [Strategies for Different Redistricting Processes](#) - Page 20

Redistricting Key Terms - Page 24

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Redistricting: Overview

What is Redistricting and why is it done?

Redistricting is the process used by governments to redraw political district boundaries. Redistricting applies to all levels of government where district elections are held, including the U.S. House of Representatives, state legislatures, city councils, school boards, county boards, judicial, water districts, and more.

Who counts in redistricting?

Redistricting is based on the idea of “one person, one vote”, which makes sure that each of our voices can be represented fairly, by creating districts that have the same number of people. Census data that is collected every ten years is used to draw new maps to account for the ways that populations have changed and moved across the states and districts.

What is gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering is when elected or appointed officials in charge of redistricting reconfigure districts to favor a political party, incumbent, or candidate. Often the purpose of gerrymandering is to also create noncompetitive races or “safe districts” where districts are drawn to give one party or interest a clear advantage and secure incumbency.

There are three common types of gerrymandering:

- **Partisan:** Where parties who are in control of redrawing the districts, do so in a way that solidifies or even increases the number of seats of their party in the legislature or congress.
- **Bipartisan:** Where typically both parties are equally represented in the decision-making process and negotiate or trade in order for each party to have safer districts to protect their respective interests or incumbents.
- **Racial:** Refers to a process in which district lines are drawn to prevent racial minorities from electing their preferred candidates. Partisan gerrymandering is often a proxy for racial gerrymandering.

Redistricting: Overview

Why is redistricting important?

How district lines are drawn influences who runs for public office and who is elected. Elected representatives make decisions that are important to our lives, from ensuring safe schools to adopting immigration policies. Who lives in a district can influence whether elected officials feel obligated to respond to a community's needs. The district boundaries are in place for the next ten years, and their policy impacts can last well beyond that.

Why should I get involved?

Redistricting has been used at times to exclude communities from political power. By fully participating in and monitoring the upcoming redistricting process, underrepresented communities, such as African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans will have the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice and voice their needs and interests. District boundaries are generally drawn once every 10 years, so this process has long-term effects on community representation.



Redistricting: Overview

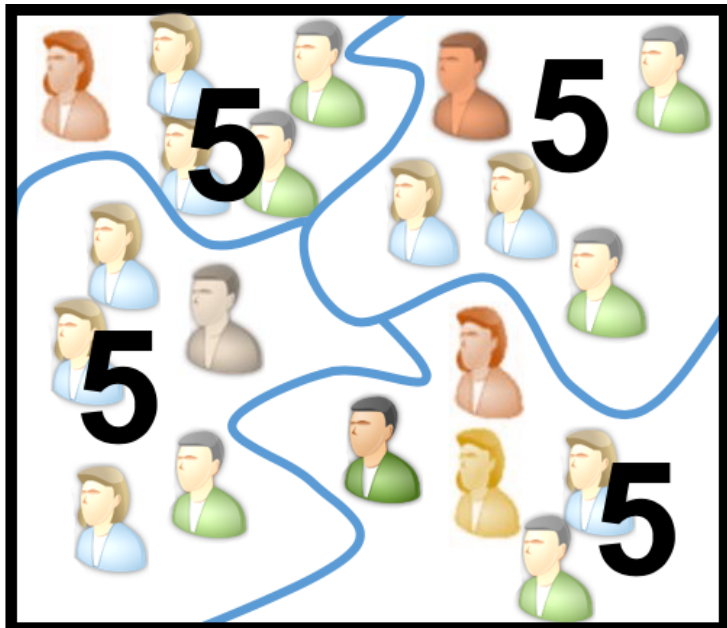
Who is in charge of redistricting?

In most states, the state or local government is responsible for redistricting. Most state legislatures are responsible for drawing congressional districts and state legislative districts. Local governments are responsible for redistricting their own districts.

Increasingly, states and local areas are using some form of commission to carry out redistricting responsibilities. Commissions are smaller groups of people that are often not elected officials. In some places, the process is not always transparent, so it is important to become familiar and pay attention to which process your area uses. Contact your elected officials to get the most updated information.

When does redistricting take place?

Redistricting takes place every 10 years in accordance with the statute mandated by the United States Constitution concerning reapportionment. Every 10 years, a nationwide census take place to count every resident as prescribed by the Constitution. Once the data is compiled by the US Census Bureau, the data is released to the states to begin their redistricting cycle.



How Gerrymandering Hurts Minority Communities

A Deluge of Problems for a Divided Watts

On November 12, 2003, a freak storm dumped over 5 inches of rain and hail on Watts, a neighborhood of Los Angeles, overwhelming storm drains and flooding the community. The community, predominately Black and Latine had over 150 buildings and homes that were heavily damaged, with over 50,000 people lost power, and about 6,000 people sought aid from the county's emergency center. Firefighters reported rescuing over 100 people from waist-deep waters. Many people had lost everything; however, the government was slow to aid the people. FEMA refused to act when California's then Governor Gray Davis declared a state of emergency (six days after the flood).

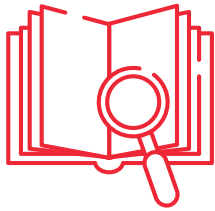


Watts was divided into three Congressional Districts (35, 37, and 39) and three State Senate districts (25, 27, and 30). Romulo Rivera, former Congressional staffer: "Residents weren't sure who actually was their member of Congress. [...] Residents who live on the same street may live in different districts. There was a lot of unnecessary frustration for constituents during a difficult time. This would have never happened if all of Watts belonged to one district." Los Angeles Times, 11/17/2003, "Storm Victims Face Long Wait for Aid"

What would the response have been if this neighborhood were in a single district?

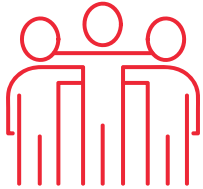
Redistricting: Steps In Participating

If you expect your elected officials to represent you and the best interests of your community, you need to start by ensuring mapmakers draw fair districts. It is easier to influence the redistricting process if you approach map drawing in a collective manner. The voice of many people who share traits and concerns is stronger than the voice of one. Here are the steps to take to participate in redistricting -- and to have your voices heard on your issues after the process is complete.



Learn The Rules

- Understand the basic rules and concepts affecting redistricting.
- The rules and criteria used will vary among different states and levels of government.



Organize Your Community

- Find neighbors or organizations interested in redistricting, especially those sharing your views.
- Create a coalition with a set of principles. Redistricting can be a divisive issue, where groups can be manipulated and pitted against each other.



Clarify Your Goals

- What issues do you and your neighbors care about?
- What level(s) of government impact those issues?
- Are you advocating for a community of interest or a whole map plan?
- How does influencing the maps help your cause?



Define Your Community

- Engage your neighbors or coalition on creating community profiles.
- Collect community impact stories.



Testify at Hearings

- Research the process to draw the maps: who makes decisions about the maps, when are the hearings and deadlines, what are the rules to testify
- Provide testimonies about your community (the more the better).
- Present maps, community profiles, and impact stories.



Advocate

- Your strategy will vary depend on who is responsible for drawing the maps (legislators, independent commissioners, etc.).
- Understand what motivates the decision makers.

Getting Involved: Understanding the Process

When considering involvement in redistricting, it is important to understand how the process unfolds. While the rules and timelines vary for each state and local area, there are some common stages where the public can participate in the process.

Census Data

- Redistricting starts with the once-in-a-decade census count. Community organizations engaged in census outreach begin educating neighbors now about why being counted is important for drawing political districts. Collecting stories, issues and contact information is a way to start preparing for redistricting.
- The U.S. Census Bureau is expected to release population counts to the states for map drawing throughout the month of July 2021. This is later than usual due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Community organizations should pay attention to any population shifts and collect stories from residents that demonstrate communities identities and needs.

Public Hearings

- The redistricting body, whether a legislature or some form of commission, will likely announce its process and public hearing dates in the spring or summer of 2021. The announcement may come without much notice or fanfare. Staying attentive to the decision makers is important.
- The public hearings are the best opportunity for community members and organizations to tell their stories to the redistricting body and present a case for keeping their communities united. Public hearings may be held before and/or after maps are drafted.

Draft Maps

- If legislators are in charge of redistricting, constituents can directly contact those decision makers to educate and advocate on behalf of their communities prior to the maps being adopted.

Map Approval

- After the maps are approved by the redistricting body, they can be assessed for potential legal challenges. If the maps are unsatisfactory, and a case can be made that they violate the Voting Rights Act, they can be challenged in the courts.
- The final maps will be used in elections until the next once-in-a-decade census triggers the next round of redistricting. The long-lasting effects of redistricting is one of the most important reasons for communities to be involved.

Draft Maps Again

- The new maps will be used in the following elections for the next ten years. The long-lasting effects of redistricting is one of the most important reasons for communities to be involved.

Learn the Rules of Redistricting: Overview

Every 10 years, designated decision makers redraw legislative maps to even out the population in each district, a process known as redistricting. It is meant to ensure that every person has fair representation. How the new maps are drawn can be done in several ways depending on the rules used. The rules, or criteria, guiding a redistricting process are shaped by traditional practices, court decisions, and the priorities set by state and local governments. Some rules of redistricting like “one person, one vote” and the Voting Rights Act must be followed. Other rules, unless specifically required by local laws, are open to interpretation regarding their importance.

Required Redistricting Criteria

- **Equal Population** – Each district should have the same total population. The principle of “one person, one vote” is fundamental to our democracy, and is embedded in the U.S. Constitution. It means that every resident should have equal importance.
- **The Voting Rights Act** – This law addresses the history of discrimination faced by communities of color by protecting them during all stages of the electoral process, including drawing maps. In redistricting, the Voting Rights Act provides protections to these communities to be able to elect candidates of their choice.

Common Redistricting Criteria

There are also several other commonly used redistricting criteria. Many areas use a combination of the following redistricting principles when drawing their maps. The criteria below may have competing mandates, however, none of these criteria are more important than the required criteria above.

- **Preserve Communities of Interest** – A community of interest is a community, neighborhood, or group of people who have common concerns and traits and would benefit from staying together in a single district. This rule is one of the most important tools a community can use to preserve their community’s ability to stay in a single district. Providing community stories and examples of historical discrimination can also provide important evidence to support Voting Rights Act claims in the future. (See Rules of Redistricting: Communities of Interest)

Learn the Rules of Redistricting: Overview

Common Redistricting Criteria

- **Be Compact** – Compactness refers to the shape of the district. It describes boundaries that are drawn closely and neatly packed together unless there are good reasons such as Voting Rights Act (VRA) compliance or following oddly shaped boundaries, like city boundaries or rivers.
- **Be Contiguous** – Contiguity means that the boundaries of a district are a single, uninterrupted shape.
- **Follow Existing Political Subdivisions and/or Natural Boundaries** – This means maps minimize splitting cities and counties, or crossing natural or urban boundaries (rivers, mountains, highways, etc.).
- **Respect Existing Legislative Boundaries** – This means drawing new districts as closely to the existing lines as possible or preserving the cores of prior districts.
- **Respect Incumbency** – New districts include the current elected official's house.
- **Achieve Political Goals** – State and local districts may be drawn for political reasons, such as to ensure the success of one political party over another. This may not be explicitly stated but is commonly considered a traditional redistricting criterion.

Emerging Redistricting Criteria

- Other criteria exist that are less common, including nesting state House Districts within state Senate Districts, prohibiting districts that are drawn to favor an incumbent, candidate or party, and creating politically competitive districts.



Learn the Rules of Redistricting: Voting Rights Act

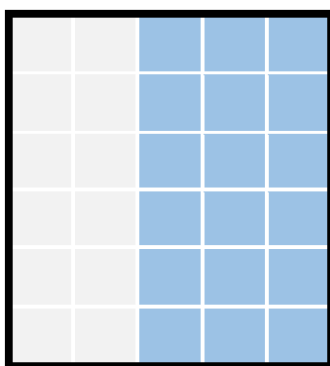
Passed at the height of the Civil Rights Movement in 1965, the [Voting Rights Act](#) prevents the systemic and widespread voter discrimination experienced by people of color. In recent years, the Voting Rights Act has been used to block voter suppression laws, such as demands for voter identification, voter registration purges, and making voter registration harder.

The process of voting also includes rules and processes that determine who is eligible, how to register, how to vote, when polls are open, and whether people are put in districts that give them a fair chance of electing their candidate of choice. [Section 2](#) of the Voting Rights Act protects voters from discrimination based on race, color, or membership in a language minority group in all these election procedures.

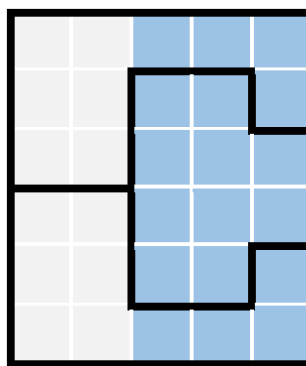
Despite these protections, redistricting has been used at times to prevent minority voters from gaining political power by drawing districts in a way that resulted in those voters having less of a chance of electing their candidate(s) of choice. This is known as [minority vote dilution](#), and it commonly occurs in two ways, packing and cracking.

Packing

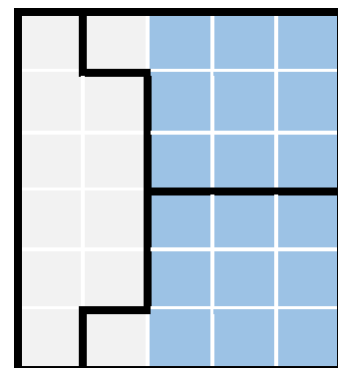
[Packing](#) is the term used when minority voters are compressed into a small number of districts when they could effectively control more. An example of packing is when mapmakers draw one district that is over 90% of a single minority group (BLUE), when they could draw at least two districts with 50% single minority group.



60% Blue Wards
40% Grey Wards



3 Districts: 2 Grey, 1 Blue
Blue wards are "packed"
into one district

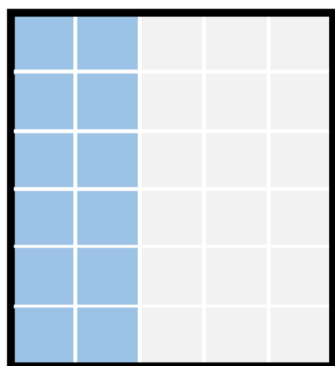


3 Districts: 2 Blue, 1 Grey
Proportional Outcome

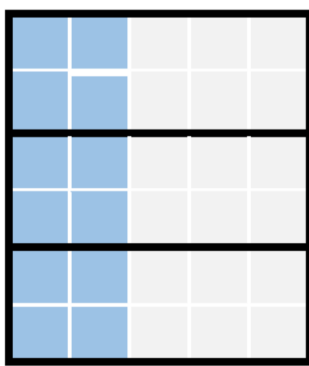
Learn the Rules of Redistricting: Voting Rights Act

Cracking

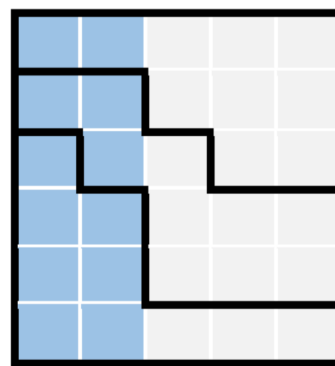
Spreading minority voters thinly into many districts is known as **cracking**, splitting, or fracturing. An example of cracking can occur if three districts are created that have 40% of a single minority population in each. If the minority population (BLUE) were placed within one district where they are 70%, the minority community would have an opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice.



60% Grey Wards
40% Blue Wards



3 Districts: 3 Grey, 0 Blue
Blue wards are "cracked" into
one district



3 Districts: 1 Blue, 2 Grey
Proportional Outcome

Criteria for majority-minority districts:

(Protected under VRA, section 2)

To ensure people are in districts that give them a fair chance of electing candidates of their choice, Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act protects certain criteria for drawing majority minority districts.

- The minority group is sufficiently large and geographically concentrated to make up a majority in a district.
- The minority group is politically cohesive. This means that the individuals that make up the group vote in similar patterns, e.g. they usually vote for the same candidates.
- The white majority votes together to defeat the minority-preferred candidates.
- Given the “totality of circumstances” listed above, the minority group has less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the electoral process and to elect representatives of its choice.
- Other types of districts include: [minority-coalition districts](#), [crossover districts](#), [influence districts](#)



Learn the Rules of Redistricting: Communities of Interest

What is a Community of Interest?

A community of interest is a neighborhood, community, or group of people who have common policy concerns and would benefit from being maintained in a single district. Another way of understanding a community of interest is that it is simply a way for a community to tell its own story about what neighbors share in common, and what makes it unique when compared to surrounding communities. Communities of Interest are defined by the local community members.

Why is a Community of Interest important?

Keeping communities of interest together is an important principle in redistricting. It can be especially helpful to communities that have been traditionally left out of the political process. Community members can define their communities by telling their own stories and describe their concerns to policy makers. Without this, those who may not have their best interest in mind will define the communities for them.

What are examples of a Community of Interest?

A community of interest can be defined in many ways. Race and ethnicity can play a role in defining a community of interest but cannot be used as the sole definition. Residents may have a shared ancestry, history, or language.

- **Residents** who have been working together to advocate in hopes of keeping a local health clinic open
- **Community members** in an area who came together around the idea of getting assistance to repair their neighborhood after a natural disaster
- A **neighborhood** organizing to have a high school built closer to their area
- A **community** that advocates for having a special recognition for cultural holidays, like Lunar New Year



Learn the Rules of Redistricting: Communities of Interest

How can I define a Community of Interest?

Communities of interest are self-defined and create a common story. They can be described by creating maps and narrative profiles and providing community stories. The strongest arguments contain both qualitative (stories) and quantitative (data or statistics) information. While there are no clear rules on how to define a community of interest, the following are the basic elements.



Personal Testimonies

Personal stories are powerful.

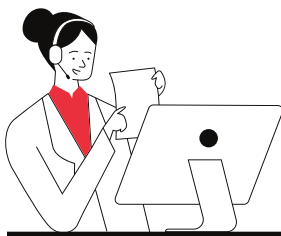
- Does your neighborhood share certain celebrations or traditions?
- Are there important places where your community gathers?
- What is the history of how your community came together?



Written Description

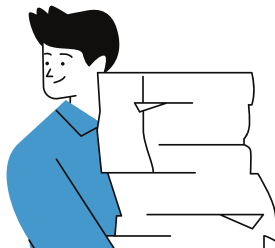
A written description can be used to tell a community's story.

- Describe what connects the people and why it's important that they be kept together.
- Whenever possible include statistics to support your testimonies
- Reliable sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau to find data.



Community Issues

- Talk about problems that were not adequately addressed by their elected representative.
- Highlight community issues in personal stories and written narratives to help demonstrate the importance of having elected officials who understand and respond to community needs.



Boundary Maps

- Create a map of your neighborhood or area.
- Mark the street names and significant locations.
 - They can include significant landmarks such as gathering places, community centers, shopping districts, schools, and religious places.
- Create a name for your community area to be a reminder about what makes your community unique.

Get Involved: Core Strategies for Impacting Maps

As you begin to create a redistricting plan, consider the following strategic elements that will help you influence the maps in your favor. It should be noted that the redistricting process can move very quickly. Many of these steps can be done before the census data is released and can begin immediately.

Organize Your Community

There are many stakeholders in the redistricting process. For your voices to be heard, it is important that you organize your community members, your message, and your partners. This work can begin immediately.

- Start by recruiting and organizing people in your area with shared experiences, concerns, or visions. Learn about how redistricting can make your communities better and strategize together.
- Organize large numbers of community members to attend hearings and present a united front. This will signal that many people are paying attention to the outcomes—too many to ignore.
- Coordinate a unified message to make your advocacy more effective. Your message should describe your community and its issues and make your goals clear.
- Consider creating a coalition with a set of principles you will follow throughout the process.



- Identify potential partners from the communities around you. Find out who else is working on redistricting in your area, especially those who are drawing full maps. Ask groups to keep your community together in their maps.

Get Involved: Core Strategies for Impacting Maps

Clarify Your Goals

There can be benefits to working on redistricting beyond creating a map that will help hold elected officials accountable, such as giving your issues a wider audience through the media, helping to organize more people to work together, or gaining the attention of more legislators.

These larger goals will help determine which level(s) of redistricting (state, city, or school board, etc.) in which you will participate. Another decision you will need to make is the kind of map you want to present. The things that will impact your choice are your resources, partnerships, and the larger interests of elected officials. There are two main options: a community of interest map or a regional or full plan map.

- A community of interest map outlines the borders of your community that you want incorporated into a single district. This map will involve less work to research, create, and organize around.
- Regional or full maps will have the district lines for a significant area or the entire state or local area and must follow its redistricting rules. This kind of map is harder to develop but will best show how your community can be respected at the same time as other communities.

Define Your Community & Testify at Hearings



- Shape the future of your community by telling its story.
- Use a variety of technology, like mapping tools.
- Utilize the expertise of political scientists, GIS or mapping experts, or historians if you have access at a local university.
- Present your stories at public hearings and meetings (see Rules of Redistricting: Communities of Interest and Getting Involved: Preparing Your Testimony).

Get Involved: Core Strategies for Impacting Maps

Advocate for Your Community

Community members can attend and participate in redistricting hearings. Here are some ways to prepare:



- Research who the final decision-makers are. Several states and local areas have changed the way they carry out redistricting. In most areas, legislators are still the primary decision-makers. The strategies to influence them are like those used to pass a law. Other kinds of redistricting processes include independent commissioners and advisory commissions. (See *Getting Involved: Strategies for Different Redistricting Processes*.)

- Research the timelines, rules, and process type of redistricting your state or local area is using. Federal and state redistricting often starts before local efforts.
- Find out the hearing schedule and the rules for testifying, such as registering, time limits, and submitting written testimony into the record.
- Be prepared to participate early and often. Being at hearings early in the process will let decision makers know you are serious.
- Connect with civil rights groups who are drafting maps for your area. Make your concerns known and work with them to keep your community together in their maps
- Staying engaged will let you respond quickly to proposed ideas and maps. Since this can be a long process, organizing more people to cover the different hearings will spread the workload to more than a small set of people or organizations.
- Monitor the process and give feedback on the maps as to whether they meet your (or your coalition's) goals.

Get Involved: Prepare Your Testimony

An important way for your community to have your voices heard during redistricting is by providing testimonies. Use the questions below as prompts to prepare your testimonies.

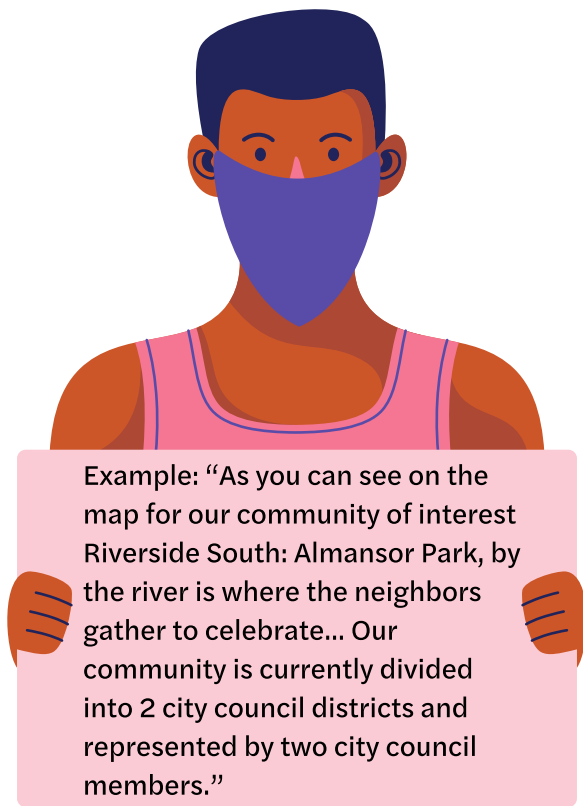
Introduction

Introduce yourself, your organization, and/or coalition:

- Describe yourself, the organizations with which you are working, and with whom you work.
- What are your goals? Keeping your community together, uniting your communities, or recommending a larger map with coalition partners?



Example: "My name is ____.
I've been a resident of
[neighborhood,
place] for ____ years. I'm
here with a group of my
neighbors. I would like
the [Commission,
Committee, etc.] to keep
my community together."



Example: "As you can see on the
map for our community of interest
Riverside South: Almanson Park, by
the river is where the neighbors
gather to celebrate... Our
community is currently divided
into 2 city council districts and
represented by two city council
members."

Describe A Map of Your Community

Describe the boundaries, significant landmarks, and gathering places.

- What are the streets or boundaries that mark your community borders on each side?
- What are the significant landmarks: rivers, parks, shopping areas, or historic sites, etc.?
- What are the gathering places: shopping districts, schools, community centers, religious places, and social service agencies?
- Do the current political district boundaries divide your community? Or do they keep your community together?

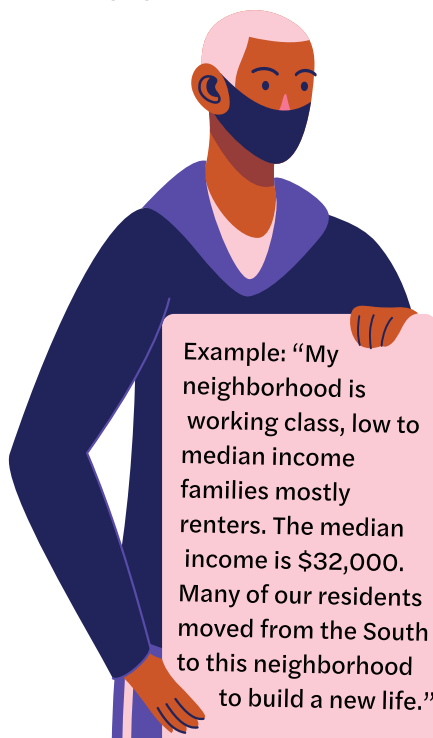
Get Involved: Prepare Your Testimony

Describe Your Community

Describe your community by including social and economic demographics, and narrative information about its history and culture. Describe what connects the people and why it's important that they be kept together.

Include stories.

- Imagine describing your community to a visitor from out of town.
- Who lives in your community? What kinds of things do they do for a living?
- Does your neighborhood have celebrations or traditions, like street festivals or parades?
- Are there important places where people gather, like shopping areas, places of worship, parks or community centers?



Include data from reliable sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau as this will make the case stronger.

- What is the average level of education or graduation rates? What is the average income level?
- What kind of housing is common? Do people rent or own their homes?
- Are neighbors mostly immigrants? Is there a common language?
- What are the different ancestries, races, and ethnicities of the neighborhood? (Race and ethnicity may be one factor, but it cannot be the predominant reason that a community is unique and needs to be kept united during redistricting.)

Get Involved: Prepare Your Testimony

Describe Your Community

Description of how your community is different or alike from the communities around you— Highlighting community issues in personal stories and written narratives help demonstrate the importance of having elected officials who understand and respond to community needs. Share stories and data about community concerns and if you feel like your voices have been heard and your needs have been met.

- Has your community come together to advocate for important services?
- Have you worked for more recognition or support of your community?
- What harms have been caused because your voice has been ignored? What are the barriers to solving these issues?
- What kind of relationship do you have with elected officials in your area? Are you able to meet with them?
- Use data on income, education, housing, etc. to compare your neighborhood to ones nearby.

Example: “A few years ago, my neighbors and I started complaining about the lack of affordable healthy food. We found that there were ten liquor stores, and the closest grocery store was almost two miles away...”



Example: “I believe my neighborhood should be kept together for the many reasons our coalition members have outlined. I want to thank the commissioners for their consideration of keeping my neighborhood together.”

Closing

- Thank the members of the redistricting body (city council, school board, commission, committee, etc.)
- Provide them with written testimony and exhibits.
- Restate your goals, acknowledge your community members and partners in attendance, and thank the members.

Know Your Audience

Knowing your audience and how to reach them are key parts of your strategy. Research the decision makers to understand their influence and relationships. Also research the importance of public hearings and how to participate and monitor them.

- Who are the decision makers?
- How are they selected or who selects them? What relationship does the commissioner have to the person or entity appointing them?
- What relationships do you or people you know have with them?
- How important are hearings or lobbying to making an impact?
- How will you be able to participate?

Use the descriptions and suggestions below to refine your strategies to best impact the decision-making group. A basic strategy starts with these activities (See Getting Involved: Core Strategies for Impacting Maps):

- Organize your community.
- Build your coalitions.
- Set your goals, including whether you are presenting a community map or whole map.
- Prepare your testimony (See Getting Involved: Preparing Your Testimony).

Legislative Process

Who Decides:

- Lawmakers, such as city council members or county commissioners, draw and vote to pass new district lines. In some cases, the maps also require the Governor/Mayor's approval.

Key Features:

- Behind the scenes lobbying often takes place (not always transparent).
- Notice for public hearings may be difficult to find, or not posted timely or distributed widely.

Strategies:

- Organize people to testify at hearings with a common message.
- Advocate to keep your community together.
- Advocate for a transparent and open process.
- Use legislative advocacy tactics like ones used to pass a law:
 - Find decision makers who are allies.
 - Meet with key lawmakers and influencers (committee chairs, donors, community leaders).
 - Advocate to the Governor or Mayor on if s/he should approve the maps.
- Exert external pressure (traditional and social media, letters of support, phone banking, rallies).

Independent Commission

Who Decides:

- An independent commission is composed of individuals selected by an appointment or screening process conducted by an independent entity, like a state supreme court. They can be elected officials, but not from the body for which the map is being drawn.

Key Features:

- Commissions usually have clearly stated redistricting criteria.
- Public hearings are the main way to have community voice heard.
- Many people are giving input, which may make it harder for your message to break through.
- Hearing notices and maps should be publicly posted and available.
- No lobbying behind the scenes takes place.

Strategies:

- Encourage your community members to apply to become commissioners.
- Organize as many people as possible to testify at hearings with a common message. Hearings are more important, because it is unlikely that you will be able to talk to a commissioner directly about your proposal.
- Exert external pressure: traditional and social media, op-eds, letters of support, rallies, etc.

Variations on Redistricting Processes

There are other types of redistricting process. If your area uses a variation like the ones listed below, use the previous questions to understand who holds the decision-making power. Effective strategies may be a combination of the above activities, because hearings may be an important feature, and the commissioners are often elected officials. A final strategy to keeping your community together may be to consider challenging the maps in court.

Variations on Redistricting Processes

Advisory commission – A commission that draws a map for consideration by another body such as a legislature. Unlike other commissions, an advisory commission does not have the legal power to pass a binding map. Membership of an advisory commission may consist of legislators, non-legislators, or a mix.

Backup commission – A commission that draws plans only if the legislature cannot agree on a map or when the governor vetoes a proposal and no new map is passed.

Political appointee commission – A commission composed, in whole or in part, of individuals who are directly appointed by elected officials or party leadership. In some states, the membership of a political appointee commission is evenly divided between parties but, in other states, there could be more members of one party than the other.

Politician commission – A commission composed entirely of lawmakers or other elected officials. Politician commissions usually are appointed by the legislative or party leadership, the governor, or chief justice of the state supreme court.

Redistricting: Key Terms

Census

- The counting and survey of every person in a population. In the U.S., a census is taken every ten years. The census is required by the Constitution for reapportionment and is used in the redistricting process.

Census Bureau

- The federal government agency that administers the census.

Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP)

- Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) is the total population age 18 and over and a citizen. (Related to VAP) (CVAP and VAP should not be used for redistricting and could be subject to legal challenges.)

Coalition District

- A district where the combined racial minorities make up a majority of the population and where the voters from these different racial groups vote together to elect the minority-preferred candidate. Coalition districts are not legally required by the Voting Rights Act. (Also called Minority Coalition District)

Community of Interest

- A neighborhood, community, or group of people who have common policy concerns and would benefit from being maintained in a single district.

Compactness

- Compactness refers to the shape of the district. It describes boundaries that are drawn closely and neatly packed together unless there are good reasons such as VRA compliance or following oddly shaped boundaries, like city boundaries or rivers.

Contiguity

- A characteristic describing a boundary's single and uninterrupted shape (i.e. all areas in the district are physically connected to each other).

Redistricting: Key Terms

Cracking

- A splitting of a racial minority community into two or more districts so that the minority community is not a significant portion of any district. For example, cracking occurs when a minority population is big enough that it can make up 50% of one district but, instead, is divided into two or more districts so that the minority community makes up a small percentage in each district.

Crossover or Opportunity District

- A district where some majority voters “cross over” to vote with racial minorities to elect the minority-preferred candidate. Crossover or opportunity districts are not legally required by the Voting Rights Act.

Deviation and Deviation Range

- A district’s Deviation is the difference of a district’s population from the Ideal Population. The redistricting plan’s Deviation Range is the plan’s largest deviation to the plan’s smallest deviation.

Ideal Population

- The total population goal for districts in a redistricting plan. It is computed by taking the total population of the jurisdiction and dividing it by the total number of districts in the redistricting plan.

Incumbency Criteria

- Making sure the current elected official’s house remains in a district.

Influence District

- A district where a racial or ethnic minority group does not make up a majority of voters but does have enough members of the minority group to influence substantially an election or the decisions of an elected representative.

Gerrymandering

- Drawing of district lines to give one group an unfair advantage over another group. Gerrymandering is not the same as redistricting, but gerrymandering can occur during redistricting. Drawing majority-minority districts to comply with the Voting Rights Act is not gerrymandering.

Redistricting: Key Terms

GIS (Geographic Information System)

- Computer software used to create redistricting maps.

Majority-Minority District

- A district where one racial minority equals 50% or more of the citizen voting-age population. In combination with a few other factors, a majority-minority district may be required by the VRA. ([See Rules of Redistricting: The Voting Rights Act](#))

Minority vote dilution

- Drawing districts which result in minority voters having less of a chance of electing their candidate(s) of choice. This is often done by “[packing](#)” or “[cracking](#).”

Nesting

- A redistricting rule where each upper house (such as the state senate) district is made up of two lower house districts (such as the state assembly).

One Person, One Vote

- The Equal Population rule. A phrase that describes the constitutional requirement that each district be substantially equal in total population. Typically, this means that every district in a redistricting plan should contain the same number of people, regardless of age or citizenship.

Packing

- An overconcentration of a minority population into a suboptimal number of districts. For example, packing occurs when a minority population makes up 90% of the district instead of two districts where the minority population makes up 50% of each district.

Reapportionment

- The redistribution of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives based on changes in a state’s population. This occurs so that a state’s representation in Congress is proportional to its population. Reapportionment is not redistricting, although some states use the terms interchangeably.

Redistricting: Key Terms

Redistricting

- The process used by governments to redraw political district boundaries and applies to all levels of government where district elections are held. Maps are redrawn every ten years after the Census to create districts with substantially equal populations to, at minimum, account for population shifts. There are many types of Redistricting Processes (see Strategies for Different Redistricting Processes)

Totality of circumstances

- A consideration of all the circumstances to decide a case, rather than any one factor or rule.

Unity Map

- A proposed map drawn by a coalition of multiple community groups that demonstrates their multiple communities of interest can be simultaneously respected.

Voting Age Population (VAP)

- The total population ages 18 and over. (Related to CVAP) (CVAP and VAP should not be used for redistricting and could be subject to legal challenges.)

Voting Rights Act (VRA)

- The federal legislation passed in 1965 to ensure state and local governments do not pass laws or policies that deny American citizens the equal right to vote based on race. Section 2 of the VRA protects voters from discrimination based on race, color, or membership in a language minority group in all election procedures.