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Redistricting 101

Senator Stan Rosenberg
U.S. Census

- US Constitution requires a population count every 10 years
- Every resident is counted (without regard to citizenship)
- The Census count is used for:
  - Apportionment — the allocation of the number of seats in a legislature
  - Redistricting — drawing the boundaries (which communities will be included in each district)
- State constitutions usually determine the number of state legislative districts and who draws the boundaries for both the state legislature and Congress
Who does redistricting?

- In most states the state legislature does redistricting.
- There is a growing redistricting reform movement (driven by public frustration with gerrymandering and violation of traditional redistricting principles).
- The use of commissions is growing:
  - Commissions with primary responsibility (13 legislative / 7 congressional)
  - Advisory commissions (5 legislative / 5 congressional)
  - Back-up commissions (5 legislative / 2 congressional)
Redistricting Principles (1 of 3)

• The U.S. Supreme Court requires EQUAL DIVISION based on the concept of one person one vote.
  • For the U.S. House, zero deviation is permitted (in so far as possible)
  • For legislative districts, deviation of plus or minus 5% is permitted (with exceptions)
Redistricting Principles (2 of 3)

- **CONTIGUITY** — all parts of the district must touch another part of the district even if by water

- **PRESERVING LOCAL POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS** — try not to divide communities, wards, precincts

- **PRESERVING COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST** — bring together like-minded people, communities served by the same regional governmental entities such schools districts, water districts, economic zones, etc.

- **PROTECTING INCUMBENTS** — try not to have incumbents running against each other, minimize disruption for people by not moving them to another district arbitrarily thereby protecting their relationship with the elected officials representing them
Redistricting Principles (3 of 3)

• The Voting Rights Act applies to redistricting.

• Certain racial groups and language minorities are protected against diluting their votes by either:
  • PACKING them into fewer districts OR
  • CRACKING them by dispersing them into more districts than would naturally occur

• Where the demographics warrant, maps may include MINORITY MAJORITY or MINORITY INFLUENCE districts
Court Challenges

• Following the 2010 census more than 240 court challenges were filed.

• 40 states went to court:
  • Congressional maps of 22 states were challenged
  • State Legislative maps in 34 states were challenged

• Based on court action, so far, reform models are not producing fairer maps than legislatures are.
Other Considerations

- What data will you use?
- Will you hire outside staff, or use current legislative staff?
- What software will you use?
- Will the public have input, and of what kind?
- Many, many more questions will arise.
Contact Senator Rosenberg:

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