Getting Ready to Redistrict: A Checklist

Redistricting (also sometimes called districting, line-drawing or mapmaking) is the process of dividing a jurisdiction into electoral districts. The checklist below, an excerpt from NCSL’s Into the Thicket: A Redistricting Starter Kit for Legislative Staff, will help legislators and staff.

When preparing for the upcoming redistricting cycle, legislators and staff should plan to have on hand:

- The state’s constitutional provisions, statutes and guidelines that relate to redistricting.
- A chart or spreadsheet summarizing important data (the ideal population of a district, where is population growth or loss happening, etc.).
- Court precedents under state and federal law for the state, including legislative privilege.
- A history of the state’s procedures and action for at least the last two decades.
- A planning timeline starting perhaps with the release of census data (no later than April 30, 2021) and continuing through the first election in which the new districts will be used.
- The status of any legislative or congressional redistricting commissions in the state, and what the legislature’s role is in terms of appointments to the commissions or review of their work.
- Information on whether the state reallocates prisoners from their prison address to their last known address and, if so, any guidelines for the prisoner reallocation process, which probably need to be developed in conjunction with state prison officials.
- Guidelines for how to treat college students and military personnel if the state has special rules for these transient populations.
- Contact information for those who can provide legal guidance, authorize or approve portions of maps, talk to the media, etc.

For more information on the practicalities of redistricting, check out the entire Into the Thicket: A Redistricting Starter Kit for Legislative Staff