



## **Redistricting FAQ's Redrawing the Lines for California**

### **What is redistricting and why is it done?**

Redistricting is the process where electoral district lines are redrawn within a state according to shifts in population. Every ten years following the census, states use census data to determine how many voters should be in each kind of voting district. Each district must have reasonably equal populations.

### **Why is redistricting important to me?**

Fair, representative redistricting maps help ensure that elected officials will be responsive to the voters in their communities. Redistricting ensures every person has equal representation by drawing districts with approximately equal numbers of people – one person, one vote.

### **What state-level district maps are redrawn?**

Election districts include state Assembly, state Senate, State Board of Equalization and members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

### **How are local districts drawn?**

Local redistricting also follows the once-a-decade census. Local jurisdictions include county boards of supervisors, city councils, school boards, and some special district boards. The timeline for local redistricting varies, with some local redistricting not being finished for a year or more still.

### **How has state-level redistricting been done in the past?**

Before 2011 the California State Constitution required the State Legislature to redraw the electoral maps. The new districts became law after the Legislature passed a redistricting bill and the Governor signed it.

### **What were some objections to this system?**

There were two objections. When a party controlled the legislature and the Governor's office, it was possible for that party to draw district lines to maximize its control of seats and minimize the other party's ability to win seats. At other times, both parties might agree upon safe seat districts for incumbents, whatever their party. The district boundaries created under this system sometimes sliced through parts of communities. Concerns were raised that some minority voting areas were divided to reduce their political influence.

During five election cycles since the 2001 redistricting, only five seats changed parties out of a total of 765 election seats that were up for election.

### **What has changed with Propositions 11 (2008) and 20 (2010)?**

A new 14-member Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC) was created. The CRC is responsible for drawing the maps for State Senate, Assembly, Board of Equalization, and California's Congressional Districts.

### **What were the redistricting criteria the CRC had to use in redrawing the maps?**

- Draw districts with equal population.
- Comply with all requirements of the federal Voting Rights Act
- Form contiguous districts that should be connected at all points.
- Keep intact where possible: counties, cities, communities of interest, and neighborhoods.
- Districts should be compact, but only when the other criteria above have been met.
- Districts should be nested where possible: e.g., two Assembly districts fit within one Senate district.
- There can be no consideration of incumbent addresses and lines cannot be drawn to favor or disfavor a party, candidate or incumbent.

### **What are communities of interest?**

A community of interest is defined as a group of people in a geographical area, which share similar interests and priorities: social, cultural, ethnic, economic, religious, or political, such as:

- Shared interests
- Housing patterns
- Living conditions
- Neighborhoods
- Economic status
- Education

### **How can I find out what my new districts are?**

For a handy way to look up your State Assembly, State Senate, and Congressional districts, *click* on **[Find Your District](#)**, enter your zipcode or address and ReDrawCa gives you your list of districts.

**What are deferred voters?**

In 2012 voters will elect new state senators in odd-numbered districts for new four-year terms. State Senators in even-numbered districts were elected in 2010. Some voters may find themselves moved from an odd-numbered district to an even-numbered one. For these individuals, voting in a state Senate race will be deferred until 2014. The Citizens Redistricting Commission did attempt to create districts that caused as few voters as possible to defer voting for another two years.

**Have there been objections raised about the CRC maps?**

In a unanimous decision in October 2011, the California Supreme Court denied two petitions challenging the validity of the State Senate and Congressional redistricting maps that had been certified by the CRC.

A referendum challenging the State Senate maps has qualified for the November 2012 ballot.

To avoid uncertainty about which maps should be used in 2012 elections, the California Supreme Court has ruled that the Commission's maps will be used this year.

A legal challenge to the Congressional maps was dismissed in Federal court in February 2012 when it found the CRC's process had complied with the law and was fair and representative.