

REDISTRICTING 101 WHERE YOU LIVE MATTERS!

Redistricting 101 shares important information about the way voting districts are created, what that looks like in Detroit and across the state of Michigan, their impact on you and your community, and how you can have your voice heard in the process!



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The Detroit People's Platform works for REAL Community Benefit Agreements, advocates and organizes for truly affordable housing and public transit that responds to the needs of Detroiters. We strive to protect, maintain and empower majority-black Detroit in the face of the city and corporate power broker's relentless effort to re-engineer the nation's largest Black city.

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Michigan is considered one of the most gerrymandered states in the country.



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INTRODUCTION

Redistricting is the process of redrawing the voting district lines across a specific state which determine who we are able to vote for. We may not always hear about it in the news, but where we live can inform a variety of circumstances in our lives such as: the future of our children's schools, our ability to own a home, what stores are in our neighborhood and many other important conditions.

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WHERE YOU LIVE MATTERS!

Our ability to vote about the issues affecting our loved ones, community and ourselves depends on where we live.

We live in a state that is broken down into smaller geographic areas called districts. These districts group us together with others for voting purposes. The people in our district are the people that we will vote with.

Districts include different communities—some are communities where everyone looks pretty much the same and there are other districts where the population is more diverse.

The way a district is drawn determines who has the opportunity to vote for those politicians who will represent us in the local, state and national government.

There are two types of districts:

CONGRESSIONAL and STATE LEGISLATIVE.

Congressional districts are the districts where we can vote for politicians to represent us in Congress.

State legislative districts are the districts where we can vote for the politicians to represent us in the state legislature.

There are actually two types of state legislative districts: one district where we vote for members of the State House of Representatives and one district where we vote for members of the State Senate.

Quick Facts about Districts in Michigan

Michigan has 14 congressional districts. It also has 110 house districts and 38 senate districts.

Congressional districts 13 and 14 include the city of Detroit.

Michigan's second congressional district is the largest in the state with a population over 730,000. This district stretches from the western side of the Michigan's lower peninsula. It includes the following counties: Mason, Kent, Oceana, Ottawa, Lake, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Allegan.

Source: ballotpedia.org/Redistricting_in_Michigan
ballotpedia.org/Michigan%27s_13th_Congressional_District and
ballotpedia.org/Michigan%27s_2nd_Congressional_District

REDISTRICTING

From time to time, there is a need to change the way districts lines are drawn. These changes are known as **REDISTRICTING**. Redistricting changes the way districts are created and, therefore, can change who we vote with, who we vote for and how we can impact the community through our vote.

When does redistricting happen?

The district lines are usually redrawn soon after the national census is completed. The results of the census count are sent to the states. The district lines can be redrawn many times based on the process of a particular state.

In Michigan, the district lines must be redrawn soon after the results of each census. The lines can be redrawn as many times after that since the state legislature decides. They are currently the ones who draw the district maps. Redrawing district lines can be confusing because individuals can be moved in and out of districts each time the redistricting process occurs.

For example, Texas caused a big controversy in 2003 when state legislators decided to do redistricting for a second time after the 2000 census. This decision caused confusion amongst the state's millions of voters and gave favor to one political party over the other.

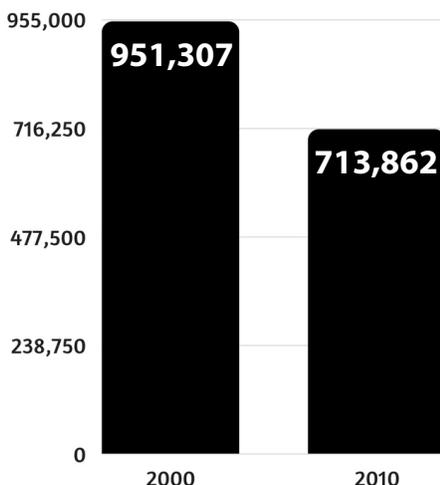
A Citizen's Guide to Redistricting p. 2

THE CENSUS

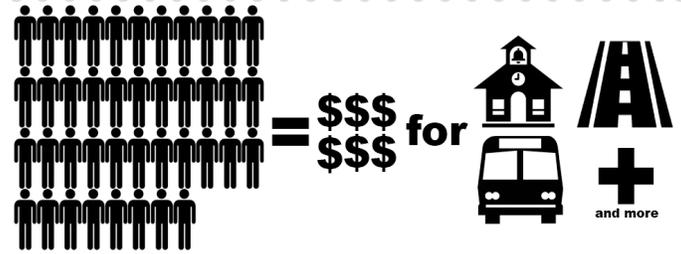
- The census is a mandatory national population survey that is conducted every ten years. The census survey documents the number and type of people who reside in the country along with other details. The results of the census is very important because it can help decide how district maps should be redrawn. States require that districts are redrawn at least once after each census.
- The official name of the census is the American Community Survey (ACS). According to the 2010 census, there are 9,884,129 people living in Michigan and 713,862 people living in Detroit. The population size in 2010 was about 25% less than the population count in the 2000 census. This dramatic decrease in size was often talked about in the media following the 2010 census because the public wanted to know why so many people were leaving the city.

census.gov/quickfacts/MI
nytimes.com/2011/03/23/us/23detroit.html
census.gov/2010census/about/why-important.php

DETROIT CENSUS CHANGES 2000 - 2010



CENSUS NUMBERS INFLUENCE FUNDING



- Historically, data from the census count is used to make decisions about funding for projects and services needed in our community. The following is a quote from one census' official website: *"The information the census collects helps to determine how more than **\$400 billion** dollars of federal funding each year is spent on infrastructure and services like: hospitals, job training centers, schools, senior centers, bridges, tunnels and other public works, [and] emergency services."*

Source: census.gov/2010census/about/why-important.php

Why are the lines redrawn?

District lines are supposed to be redrawn to show how population has shifted over the years. This way districts are supposed to reflect our reality. But, that may not always be the result once the lines are redrawn.

Based on the recent and dramatic changes in Detroit's population, it will be really important to ensure that the next time district lines are redrawn they reflect a true count of who lives in the city.

HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

Redistricting works a little differently in every state. Let's walk through the steps in Michigan.

redistricting.ils.edu/states-MI.php

- The United States Census Bureau is responsible for conducting the census, which is the national population survey, in every year ending in 0 (like 1990, 2000, 2010). The next census will take place in 2020.
- Once the data is collected by the bureau, states are sent the results of the survey that includes the state's population with additional information about age, race and ethnicity among other details.
- In Michigan, districts must be redrawn within a year of the census survey results.
- Currently, the people who decide how to redraw the district lines are members of the state legislative body. They use the census data and other factors, which we will discuss on the next page, to create a plan detailing the new boundaries of each district. The plan must be submitted to and passed by the state legislature. However, the governor can always veto, or refuse to approve it.

- If there is a complaint about the way the districts lines are redrawn, the Michigan Supreme Court is given the power to hear the complaints and rule on the issue.
- The legislature can repeat this process as many times as they like in between each census.

Any Challengers to the Plan?

Following the 2010 census when the 2011 redistricting plan was proposed, the Detroit branch of the NAACP, the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, and Latino Americans for Social and Economic Development (LASED) challenged the plan with a lawsuit. The lawsuit claimed that the plan would silence minority communities by drawing the districts so that minority candidates running for office would be forced to run against each other. If this happened, fewer minority representatives would be able to win and represent the issues of their communities. However, the lawsuit was rejected.

mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2011/12/minority_coalition_files_lawsu.html

Challenges to state redistricting plans across the country are often the result of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which was passed during Lyndon Johnson's Presidency at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The Voting Rights Act was created to prevent states from imposing laws that discriminated or intimidated people away from voting. Under the law, certain states that have a history of gerrymandering and discrimination are watched more closely by the federal government to make sure they make improvements to the voting process.

[Citizen's Guide to Redistricting on pg.46](#)

WHO MAKES THESE BIG DECISIONS ANYWAY?

The State Legislature

Who is that?

The state legislature is the legislative body or the politicians in the state government who make the big decisions for our state.

We choose the people in the legislative body by voting in our districts and they also are the people who decide how the district lines are drawn.

Because they are usually in charge of redistricting, these elected officials can create districts that help them remain in office.



Michigan State Capitol, Lansing

YOUR VOTE MAY NOT MATTER LIKE YOU THINK IT WILL

Redistricting matters because it impacts our power to help our communities through voting. When district lines are redrawn, it decides how many people can vote in a district, the types of communities included in a district and even what types of politicians can represent us.

When politicians create weirdly shaped districts to keep certain people in while keeping other people out, that's called gerrymandering.

Michigan is considered one of the most gerrymandered states in the country, meaning that the districts are often drawn in ways that favor certain politicians over others.

Source: thenation.com/article/michigan-suffers-from-some-of-the-most-extreme-gerrymandering-in-the-country/

When districts are drawn proportionately they have the following characteristics:

- About the same population as other districts
- Minorities are represented
- All parts of the border are connected so that no part of the district is separated from the rest
- Have a normal shape that is not spread out too far and has smooth edges

Based on the above list, would you say the following districts were gerrymandered?



Source: Citizen's Guide to Redistricting p. 44-60

A Bit of History

Back in 1812, a politician named Eldridge Gerry signed a plan to redistrict his home state of Massachusetts. The way he drew the district lines on the map looked like a dragon so much so that the media named map it 'Gerrymander' and the name stuck.



Source: fairdistrictspa.com/the-problem/about-gerrymandering

Eldridge Gerry + Salamander = 'Gerrymander'

What can happen when a state is gerrymandered?

- When legislatures redraw the district lines, they are often able to draw districts so more people who are likely to vote for them are in the district. **This means your vote can be silenced. By removing some people from the district, politicians can silence certain members of the community. Some community members end up not being represented appropriately**
- Redistricting lines can be drawn to exclude where a potential candidate or incumbent lives to prevent them from running for office in particular district. **This means that a politician that knows and cares about you, your family and your community concerns may be drawn out of the district they are best able to represent.**

- By drawing districts that split minority communities, their combined voting power lessens and it can become impossible for them to have their voice heard by politicians. **This means that your voice to say how you are taxed, what school options your children have, what economic development is available in your neighborhood and how much your rent is able to increase may not be heard.**

CHANGES ON THE HORIZON

Although legislatures across the nation have usually drawn the district lines, there is a growing movement to allow for outside, independent groups to redraw the district lines. States like Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho and Montana have people outside of the government come in to help redraw the district lines.

Here in Michigan there is a movement to replace the current process. It proposes a new process where state politicians work with an independent group to create the redistricting plan and draw the district map. The independent group will assume responsibility for drawing the districts. Enough signatures will need to be collected to put this question before Michigan voters in the 2018 statewide election.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Here are a few different ways you can help make the way we redraw the districts lines more fair and equitable:

Complete the 2020 Census Survey

It is really important for those who receive the population survey to complete it. The survey is mailed to your usual place of residence. Do not be alarmed if the survey is addressed to 'Resident' and does not mention your name specifically. You can also take the survey on the phone, in-person and sometimes on the internet. We want to make sure that there is an accurate count of people in Detroit and across the state Michigan.

Stay Informed about Redistricting

Although redistricting is often not talked about in the media, it is important. Make sure to pay attention when Michigan announces its plan for redistricting and understand how potentially you and your community may be impacted.

VOTE!

If the question to change the way district lines are drawn in Michigan appears on the statewide ballot in November 2018, it will be important that you know the facts about the issue and vote your choice.

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