

Providing Public Input on Draft Maps to the Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission

⇒ **What is redistricting and what role does the commission play?**

Redistricting is the act of drawing new political boundaries, including the districts for the Montana Legislature. The five-member Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission has authority under the Montana Constitution to draw the boundaries of congressional and legislative districts every 10 years. Using population data from the most recent U.S. Census, the commission must draw districts with approximately the same number of people in them. Because Montana has only one congressional district, the commission is now focused on redrawing state legislative district lines.

⇒ **How does the commission decide how to draw the new map lines?**

The commission is bound by the U.S. and Montana Constitutions and has adopted the following criteria based on state and federal laws. Mandatory criteria are set out by law, while the discretionary criteria are traditional redistricting principles selected by the commission to provide further guidance on where to draw lines.

Mandatory districting criteria for legislative districts

- Population equality and maximum population deviation (The ideal size for each legislative district is 9,894 people. The commission further agreed that any deviation from this ideal may not exceed plus or minus 3%).)
- Compact and contiguous districts
- Protection of minority voting rights and compliance with the Voting Rights Act
- Race cannot be the predominant factor to which the traditional districting criteria are subordinated

Discretionary districting criteria for legislative districts

- Following the lines of political units
- Following geographic boundaries
- Keeping communities of interest intact

⇒ **What should I tell the commission?**

The commissioners need input from you to help them understand which of the draft maps best fit your view of your area and the state, while still complying with the districting criteria. Consider providing the commission with answers to the following questions:

- ❖ What do the maps do right?
- ❖ What should or could be changed or adjusted in the maps?
- ❖ How do the various draft maps affect your community of interest?
- ❖ Which map do you feel the commission should use when it adopts a final plan?

When providing comments, keep in mind the commissioners must follow their criteria when judging where to place district lines. Also, when you suggest a change, remember that state and federal law requires that each district have approximately equal population. If your suggestion will add or remove people from a district, consider if the changes will result in the district being over or under the 3% deviation from the ideal population for each district. Be sure to suggest ways the commission could move the district lines to keep the district population within the required deviation.

⇒ **What is a “community of interest”?**

According to the commission’s criteria it “will consider keeping communities of interest intact. Communities of interest can be based on Indian reservations, urban interests, suburban interests, rural interests, neighborhoods, trade areas, geographic location, communication and transportation networks, media markets, social, cultural and economic interests, or occupations and lifestyles.”

⇒ **What happens to my comments when I mail or e-mail them to the commission?**

All comments received by mail or e-mail are copied and sent to each commissioner and posted on the commission’s website. The comments also become part of the commission’s permanent public record, which is available for everyone to view.

⇒ **Can I send a map?**

Maps are helpful to illustrate points you want to make about your suggested district or community. Be sure to label the maps clearly and include relevant boundaries such as mountains, rivers, county lines, and roads.

⇒ **Will you visit my area for a public hearing on the draft maps?**

The commission will travel the state to take public comment on several draft maps in the spring and summer of 2012. The commission must finalize a draft map by the end of 2012 in order to submit the plan to the Montana Legislature in early 2013 for additional comments. More information about public hearings on draft maps can be found at the commission’s website, www.leg.mt.gov/districting.

⇒ **How do I contact the commission with my thoughts?**

If you can’t participate in one of the many public hearings on redistricting in 2012, there are other ways to make sure the commissioners hear from you.

By mail: Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
 PO Box 201706
 Helena, MT 59620-1706

By e-mail: districting@mt.gov

By fax: 406-444-3036

⇒ **How can I find out more about the commission, draft maps, and public hearings?**

To find out more about redistricting, the commission, or its work, visit www.leg.mt.gov/districting. As draft maps, public hearing recordings, and other documents become available, they will be posted to the site for you to access. The site also allows you to sign up for e-mailed updates to stay informed about the commission’s work in the future.