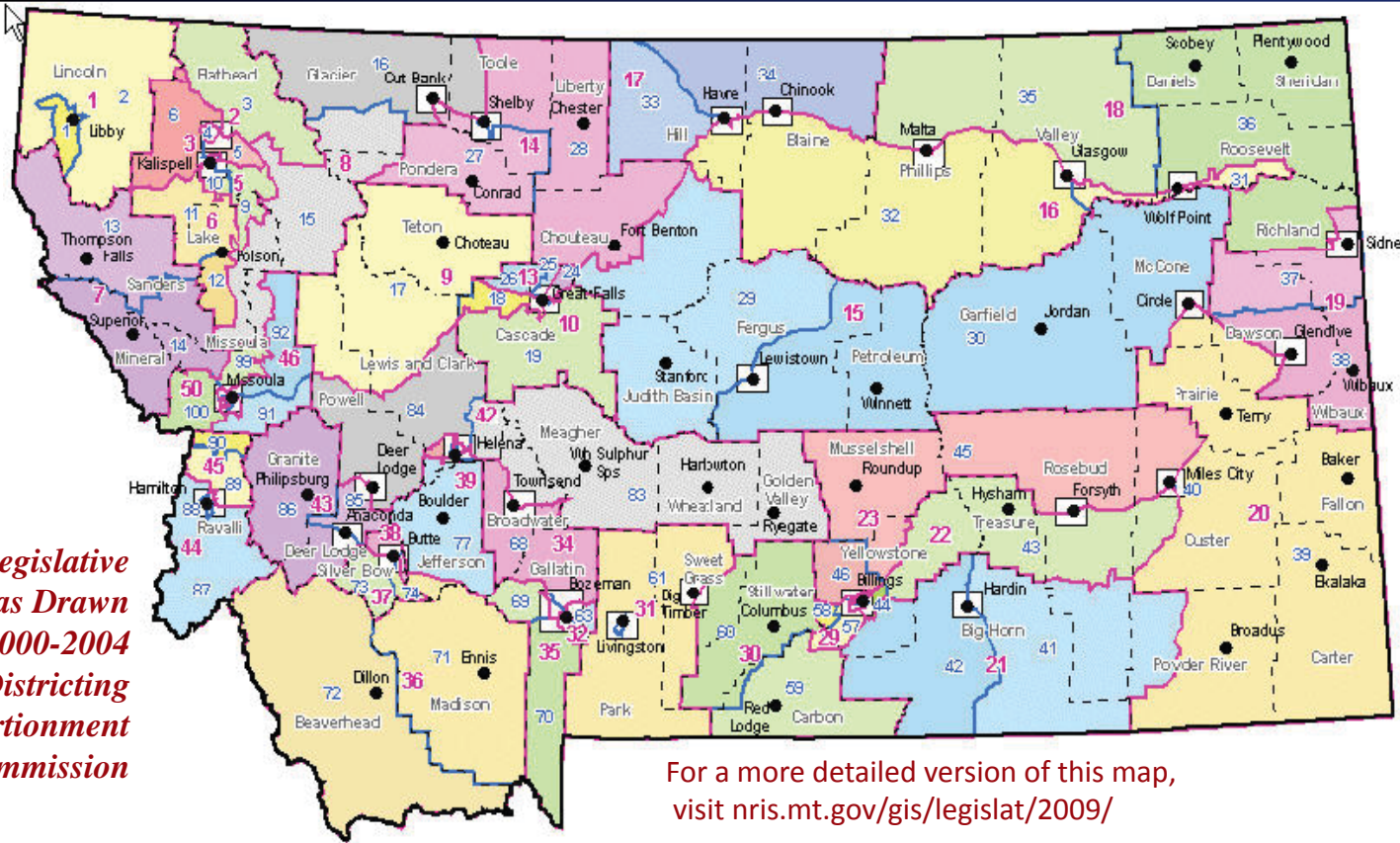


One Person One Vote

A Citizen's Guide to
Legislative Districting
& Apportionment

October 2011

*Current Legislative
Districts as Drawn
by 2000-2004
Montana Districting
and Apportionment
Commission*



For a more detailed version of this map,
visit nris.mt.gov/gis/legislat/2009/

Timeline of Events

April 1, 2010: U.S. Census occurs

April 1, 2011: U.S. Census data available to commission

April 2011: Commission staff prepare congressional plans; commission holds public hearings, adopts congressional plan, and files plan with Secretary of State's Office

May 2011-Dec. 2012: Commission staff analyzes Census data and population changes and public comments, commission begins legislative redistricting, holds public hearings, adopts a plan to submit to the Legislature

Jan. 2013: Commission submits legislative redistricting plan to Legislature for review (by the 10th session day); Legislature must return plan with recommendations within 30 days of submission

Feb.-March 2013: Commission acts on recommendations if desired, files plan with Secretary of State's Office; plan becomes law and commission is disbanded

2014: Candidates for legislative office run to represent constituents in the newly adopted legislative districts

To sign up for email updates on upcoming meetings and commission activities, visit leg.mt.gov/district

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A Districting Primer

“One person, one vote” is a basic concept of our American form of government. It means that, in our representative democracy, every citizen of voting age is entitled to have an equal say in how we’re governed. It ensures that every citizen’s vote will count the same.

Districting and **apportionment** are processes used to make sure that each of us has an equal voice. Although the processes can be baffling and cumbersome, they’re obviously important because they shape the districts we use to elect our state and federal leaders.

During districting, each state is divided into **districts** for the purposes of electing representatives to Congress and the state legislature. Each state redraws its districts every 10 years, using population information collected during the U.S. **Census**.

In most states, the legislature is responsible for redistricting. Montana is one of only 13 states that use a separate commission to prepare redistricting plans.

The Montana Constitution calls for a Districting and Apportionment Commission made up of five citizens, none of whom may be public officials. The majority and minority leaders of the two chambers of the legislature each choose a commissioner. These four commissioners then choose a fifth to serve as their presiding officer. If the four can’t agree, the Montana Supreme Court appoints a presiding officer.

The commission uses the latest census data to create districts that are **compact** and **contiguous** and that are as nearly equal in population as practicable. Although this may sound simple, there are many criteria that commissioners must consider. These include requirements laid out in the U.S. and Montana constitutions and in various court rulings over the years.

Once the commission adopts a plan, it presents the map to the Legislature, which may recommend changes. The commission may amend the plan to include the Legislature’s recommendations, but

it’s not required to do so. The commission files its final plan with the Secretary of State’s Office and it becomes law. At that point, the commission is dissolved.

The commission welcomes comments from the public, especially those that address “communities of interest”.

Districting Terms

Apportionment: The process of assigning seats in a legislative body (such as Congress or a state legislature) among established districts (such as states).

Census: A count of the total population of the nation, conducted every 10 years as mandated by the U.S. Constitution.

Communities of interest: Designated communities whose makeup 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.

Compact: Having a minimum distance between all parts of a constituency (a circle, square, or hexagon is the most compact district).

Contiguous: All parts of the district are connected at some point with the rest of the district.

Deviation: The measure of how much a district or plan varies from the ideal.

District: The boundaries that define the constituency of an elected official.

“**One person, one vote**”: The constitutional standard established by the U.S. Supreme Court that all legislative districts should be approximately equal in population.

Redistricting: The drawing of new political boundaries based on changes in population.

Montana’s Commission



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