

Mandatory Criteria for Congressional Districts

- Districts must be as equal in population as is practicable (Article 1, Section 2, U.S. Constitution).
- Protection of minority voting rights are guaranteed in Article II, Section 4 of the Montana Constitution and through compliance with the Voting Rights Act. No district, plan, or proposal for a plan is acceptable if it affords members of a racial or language minority group “less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice.” (42 U.S.C. 1973). Race cannot be the predominant factor to which traditional redistricting criteria are subordinated. (Shaw v. Reno, 509 U.S. 630 1993).
- Each district shall consist of compact territory. (Article 5, Section 14 of the Montana Constitution). The Commission shall consider the district’s functional compactness in terms of travel and transportation, communication, and geography.
- Each district shall be contiguous, meaning that a district must be in one piece. (Article 5, Section 14 of the Montana Constitution). Areas that meet only at points of adjoining corners shall not be considered contiguous. Areas separated by natural geographical or artificial barriers that prevent transportation by vehicle on a maintained road shall be avoided when not in conflict with the commission's adopted criteria and goals.

Goals for Congressional Districts

- No plan may be drawn to unduly favor a political party.
- The commission shall attempt to minimize dividing cities, towns, counties and federal reservations between two districts when possible.
- Keeping communities of interest intact. The Commission may consider keeping communities of interest intact. Communities of interest can be based on Indian reservations, urban interests, suburban interests, rural interests, tribal interests, neighborhoods, trade areas, geographic location, demographics, communication and transportation networks, social, cultural, historic, and economic interests and connections, or occupations and lifestyles.
- The commission may consider competitiveness of districts when drawing plans.