

Proposal for Legislative Redistricting Procedure

Prepared for the Districting and Apportionment Commission
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1. Preliminary staff visits involve Commission member input, county contacts, and site visits to certain counties.
 - Staff will make a telephone or written contact with each County Clerk and Recorder/election administrator, tribal governing body, and county central committee. Others who may be notified of opportunity for input: legislators and County Commissioners (Any others? Do you want a public notice for other interested parties?).
 - Because it may not be possible to visit every county, staff will attempt to visit any county that expects to be split by more than one house district. Site contact persons include County Clerk and Records/election administrators, tribal representatives, and each party county central committee. Public meeting?
2. Upon return, staff will prepare three or four plans per region. Approximately 10 regions will be composed of a combination of the number of districts and a manageable number of counties. Regional plans will be sent to the Commission members and persons who provided input. Regional plans include maps, district descriptions, and population reports. Plans will be made available to the public on the Redistricting Website and upon request. Plans will be sent out approximately 2 weeks prior to a public hearing.
 - The Commission may want to adopt a general policy on how staff should treat plans submitted by a third party. Do you want a third-party plan to have to come through a Commission member? Do you want staff to accept third-party plans as ideas for use in development of staff plans, to be processed using census population and geographical data and Commission criteria or to be presented by the third party separately? Because we are dealing with an unknown element, it may be necessary to be flexible as this may or may not become a resource issue of whether staff has time to process requests, which will depend on the number involved. Plans submitted in appropriate computer format would be simpler to deal with than plans submitted in paper form, but not all parties will have access to the technology.
3. The Commission will hold a public hearing in each region to gather input on the plans. Considerations include the choice of afternoon or evening meetings or multiple hearings in a 2- or 3-day schedule. The Commission will try to use public meeting spaces to mitigate cost. The Commission will not adopt plans at the public hearing, but will allow time for public comment and additional member consideration. At each public hearing, the criteria will be reviewed for the public, plans will be presented, and public testimony will be received.

- In the 1990 redistricting procedure, the Commission did not immediately adopt a plan, but allowed time for written comment to be submitted. Written comments were submitted through staff and copied to all Commission members. The Commission often adopted a plan in a Commission meeting held the afternoon before the public hearing on the next region. The Commission "tentatively" adopted a plan, leaving the possibility for reconsideration.

4. A final public hearing on the Proposed Legislative Redistricting Plan will be held in Helena to fulfill the statutory requirement.

- This hearing could be held in November/December 2002 to complete the Commission's work. Senate district proposals could be prepared, and the Commission could seek public comment following the election so that any "holdover" senators could comment prior to the final public hearing.

5. A Proposed Legislative Redistricting Plan will need to be submitted to the Legislature by January 16, 2003. Within 30 days, the Legislature must return the plan to the Commission with the Legislature's recommendations. The Commission has 30 days to consider the recommendations and to submit the Final Legislative Redistricting Plan to the Secretary of State, at which time it becomes law.

Proposed Work Plan

April 2001	Commission meeting: congressional district, data review, process considerations.
May and June 2001	Staff work on population data analysis. Set up redistricting office. Prepare data, software, and initial formal, written contacts with Clerk and Recorders, tribal governing bodies, central committees.
July and August 2001	Preliminary staff visits in first regions. Development of plans.
September 2001 - September 2002	Begin public hearings and continue staff visit cycle.
September 2002	Complete public hearing schedule on Proposed Legislative Redistricting Plan for house districts. Perform verification of data and prepare presentation materials for legislative process. Prepare senate district proposals for distribution.
November 2002	Legislative districts election completed. Hold hearing on senate districts and statutory public hearing in Helena on Proposed Legislative Redistricting Plan. Finalize proposed plan and documents for presentation to Legislature.
January 2003	Present Proposed Legislative Redistricting Plan to Legislature.
January - March 2003	Receive legislative recommendations and make any desired adjustments. Adopt Final Legislative Redistricting Plan and submit to Secretary of State. Commission dissolved.

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