



Frequently Asked Questions about Redistricting

What is redistricting?

Redistricting is the process of redrawing the lines that define political districts. For legislative and congressional districts, this typically occurs after the completion of the federal census every ten years. Redistricting should change districts to more accurately reflect the changes in population and interests of constituents.

How does the census impact redistricting in Oregon?

Every 10 years the U.S. Constitution requires that a census be taken and that congressional districts be reapportioned between the states. The census does this by collecting population and demographic data with surveys that are sent out throughout the U.S. Communities benefit the most when the census counts everyone. When you respond to the census, you help your community get its fair share of the more than \$675 billion per year in federal funds spent on schools, hospitals, roads, public works and other vital programs. This is why it is very important to participate in the census in 2020.

In Oregon, the constitution specifies that redistricting of the 60 seats in the Oregon House of Representatives and the 30 seats in the Oregon Senate shall be performed at least every ten years in the odd year after census and designates the Legislature as the entity responsible for drawing the legislative district boundaries.

As a practical matter, the Legislature also conducts redistricting for Oregon's five United States congressional representatives, even though there is no express provision in the Oregon or federal constitutions on how congressional redistricting should be done.

Why do we need redistricting reform?

Reform could make our system less susceptible to gerrymandering, abuse and unrepresentative distortions. With an independent redistricting commission, we would take the process of redistricting out of the hands of partisan politicians and into the hands of voters. This will make the process much more transparent, fair and inclusive.

Why now?

With the coming census in 2020, we believe now is the best time to advocate for fair representation and for a process that lets voters hold their elected officials accountable by creating fair districts and put an end to partisan gerrymandering.

Another factor is that Oregon may receive a 6th congressional member after the 2020 census. This will impact our existing five congressional districts. It is always important at these critical junctures to examine current processes to make sure that it is as fair as possible.

What is the Coalition's proposal?

The current proposal would remove the process of drawing congressional and legislative districts out of the hands of the Oregon politicians and into the hands of registered Oregon voters in the form of a 12-member independent redistricting commission.

Where are we in the process of getting reform? What is the timeline to get the amendment adopted?

Several respected good government groups have collaborated to complete a draft constitutional amendment to propose to voters. The necessary Oregon constitutional amendment would be on the November 3, 2020 general election ballot so that the new process could be used immediately in the

2021 redistricting after the 2020 census. This means the initiative petition would have to qualify for the 2020 ballot by July of 2020.

Why do we need such an elaborate reform process? Why is the proposal so long and why should all of that be in the Oregon Constitution?

To insulate the redistricting process from partisan politics. Voters should have control of the process, not politicians who have a built-in conflict of interest.

The current process for redistricting is imbedded in the state's constitution, supplemented with a statute, so a constitutional amendment will be required to change the process. The detail is necessary in this case to get all required features into one proposal for consideration by the voters.

How are commissioners chosen?

A three-person Judicial Review Panel, consisting of Administrative Law Judges selects 50 Democrats, 50 Republicans, and 50 other voters from those who have applied. They will assess for those who have the most relevant analytical skills, the ability to be impartial and promote consensus, and an appreciation for and are representative of Oregon's diversity.

Why were Administrative Law Judges chosen to be on the Applicant Review Panel? Why only judges?

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Administrative Law Judges have experience in evaluating both qualitative and quantitative questions without regard to partisan considerations and are trusted by Oregonians to carry out this process. Additionally, because they are government employees we don't anticipate that there will be any added costs, as there would have been had we used other third-party organizations or associations.

How are cities, school districts, and community districts redistricted and does this reform address them?

Where such entities have districts, they also have their own processes in their charters or bylaws.

Who would be eligible to serve on the commission? How would they be compensated?

In other states with similar commissions, tens of thousands of voters have applied to be commissioners.

We believe the similar would happen in Oregon. Commissioners would be provided a per diem, but only while they are working on the commission.

Why is this commission disproportionate to the make-up of registered voters?

The commission aims to provide balanced input to the process in order to give no party a clear advantage and to ensure participation from those voters who are not registered in either major party.

How would the requirements on commissioners, such as not being allowed to receive communications about redistricting from anyone outside of a public hearing, be enforced? Can a commissioner be removed from their position?

If a commissioner were to be caught doing unethical or prohibited activities, there is a process for removing a commissioner for cause built into the Coalition's proposal.

Since the commissioners serve a term of 10 years, is there a system in place to fill vacancies in the commission in case of something like someone dying or moving?

Yes, any vacancy would be filled by the remaining commissioners by selecting a new commissioner from the original three pools of applicants.

How is "competitiveness" being defined in this reform?

Competitiveness means that voting blocs, including partisan and non-affiliated voters, must be substantially and similarly able to translate their popular support into representation in an elected body and that such representation is substantially and similarly responsive to shifts in the electorate's preferences.

Aren't some districts in Oregon always going to be uncompetitive?

Yes, some districts in eastern Oregon will likely always be Republican and some districts in Portland will likely always be Democratic; the competition in these districts will come in primary elections. However, other areas in the Willamette Valley and perhaps on the Pacific coast could have more fair and competitive districts.

Doesn't this process of filtering out applicants with a conflict of interest eliminate everyone who would qualify until no one would fit the requirements?

No, the purpose of the Applicant Review Panel of three administrative law judges is to select applicants with relevant skills, education, background and representation. There are thousands of politically engaged and informed voters in Oregon who meet the screening requirements, will apply, and do not have conflicts of interest.

Can you really select truly nonpartisan people on the commission?

No, everyone has their own opinions, and so cannot be completely nonpartisan. However, with the proposed rigorous process for selecting a commission and the public nature of the commission's work, the politics of commission membership can be balanced with people without conflicts of interest. Furthermore, the proposed procedures require at least one vote for a final map from each of the three pools of commissioners.

Where would the money for this commission come from? Would this require more money from the general fund?

Money is always budgeted by the legislature to perform redistricting. For the first implementation of the redistricting commission proposal, the legislature's budgeted redistricting funds would be reallocated to the commission. For later decades, the legislature would be required to budget the necessary funds.

If this reform qualifies for the November 2020 ballot, where would the money come from to pay for this campaign?

Our coalition will be raising funds by like-minded and supportive individuals and organizations who believe an independent redistricting commission in Oregon is the best approach for the future of our political process. We will be raising money through our Political Action Committee and the contributions and expenditures will be publicly disclosed using the Oregon Secretary of State's campaign finance system, ORESTAR.

Is my contribution to People Not Politicians tax-deductible?

Contributions to political action committees are not tax-deductible. However, Oregon offers an income tax credit to Oregon tax filers who contribute to qualifying state, federal or local political campaigns. The total credit is limited to \$100 on a joint return or \$50 on a single or separate return. Please see [Oregon Secretary of State](#) for details.

Who would likely oppose this reform?

Whomever now has the power to redistrict the state congressional and legislative districts will be unlikely to want to give up that power. However, gerrymandering is a process issue, a double-edged sword, and any dominant political party could unfairly use it. In the long run, everyone will benefit from a fair, unbiased and transparent redistricting process.

Who currently supports reform efforts?

A continually developing and growing coalition of good government groups, influential individuals, current and former legislators and elected leaders, the business community, rural Oregonians, representatives from multiple Parties, and more who want to see a better system for Oregonians.

Is the Secretary of State involved in redistricting reform? Is there a task force or a committee?

Dennis Richardson, the late Secretary of State, organized a "Redistricting Reform Task Force" in 2017. It was composed of representatives from all major and most minor political parties and several nonpartisan groups. Many of the Coalition's leadership served on that Task Force. That Task Force produced a report, a draft bill based on the California statute, and other materials that can be found at <https://sos.oregon.gov/Pages/independent-redistricting.aspx>. That draft bill was incomplete. The People Not Politicians Coalition has used elements from the original draft in the creation of the new measure. The current Secretary of State, Bev Clarno, is not involved with this campaign, but does endorse the coalition's efforts.

Why can't we set up a nonpartisan computer system or AI to draw district lines?

The short answer is that computers are not that smart (yet) and require software written by humans to do their work. A computer could perhaps handle one or two concrete criteria such as equal population and contiguous areas; however, computers cannot handle more subjective criteria such as communities of interest, partisan fairness and competitiveness. Redistricting is inherently a political process and requires humans to use judgement in making such subjective decisions. Artificial Intelligence (AI) computer systems require training using thousands of good examples; we have only a handful of good redistricting examples.

What is gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering is when elected or appointed officials in charge of redistricting reconfigure districts to favor a political party, incumbent, or candidate. Often the purpose of gerrymandering is to also create uncompetitive races or “safe districts” where districts are drawn to give one party or interest a clear advantage and secure incumbency.

There are 3 common types of gerrymandering:

Partisan: Where parties who are in control of redrawing the districts, do so in a way that solidifies or even increases the number of seats of their party in the legislature or congress.

Bipartisan: Where typically both parties are equally represented in the decision-making process and negotiate or trade in order for each party to have safer districts to protect their respective interests or incumbents.

Racial: Refers to a process in which district lines are drawn to prevent racial minorities from electing their preferred candidates.

There are two ways that gerrymandering is often implemented with the help of recent technology:

Cracking: Spreads opposition voters across districts comfortably favoring the gerrymandering party, wasting opposition party votes in districts that their party can't possibly win.

Packing: Places as many opposition party supporters into as few districts as possible such that the opposition wins as few seats as possible.

Notice that none of these gerrymandering techniques says anything about the shape of the district boundaries. Although a miss-shaped district is often an indicator of gerrymandering, it is the voters in a district, not its shape, that determines gerrymandering. It is possible to have well shaped districts that are still gerrymandered.

Does Oregon have a problem with gerrymandering?

We live in a state where partisan elected officials may be tempted to distort the districts they represent for their personal or partisan advantage. Whenever partisan elected officials are in charge of redistricting, we allow a system where gerrymandering can take priority over fair representation. According to the 2012 City Club of Portland study report ([link](#)), every attempt by the legislature to redistrict the state between 1910 and 2010 has failed in some way. Oregon often has had both bipartisan and partisan examples of Gerrymandering.

Who should I contact for more information?

If you are interested in joining the movement, have other questions or would like more information, please contact the Coalition by email at info@peoplenotpoliticiansoregon.com. For other resources and information, please visit our Coalition website at www.PeopleNotPoliticiansOregon.com