

# Redistricting Facts

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## *What is redistricting?*

Redistricting is the process of redrawing political district boundaries. Using new U.S. Census Bureau data, legislative and congressional district boundaries are realigned every 10 years to accommodate population increases and decreases within the state.

## *What is reapportionment?*

Reapportionment occurs every 10 years to reallocate congressional seats among the 50 states in order to reflect population changes since the last census. The United States Constitution establishes 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each state receives at least one congressional seat and the remaining 385 are apportioned according to population. The Census 2000 population count indicated that Washington has nearly 5.9 million residents – enough to have nine congressional seats. However, even with our significant growth, Washington did not gain a 10th congressional seat in 2001.

## *Why do we have to redistrict?*

Redistricting is done to ensure that every Washington citizen is represented fairly in the Legislature and Congress. The U.S. and state constitutions require that each congressional and legislative district be represented by an equal number of people to ensure fair distribution of political power. Births, deaths and migration contribute to statewide and district population shifts from one decennial census to the next. Redistricting adjusts political boundaries to reflect these changes.

## *How many people will each legislative and congressional district contain?*

As a result of the 2001-2002 redistricting process and Washington's 5.9 million residents, each of the 49 legislative districts has approximately 120,288 persons. Each of the nine congressional districts had approximately 654,902 persons.

## *Who is in charge of redistricting in Washington?*

The Washington State Redistricting Commission is the bipartisan commission charged with preparing a legislative and congressional district plan after each U.S. Census. The five-member Commission must submit a redistricting plan to the Legislature no later than December 15, 2001. The new districts will be used beginning with the 2002 congressional and legislative elections.

## *Has Washington always redistricted by commission?*

No, the Legislature established the boundaries of Washington's election districts until 1980. In 1983, the voters of the state approved a constitutional amendment that established the independent Redistricting Commission. Legislative and congressional redistricting by commission was first done in 1991.

## *How were the commissioners appointed and who may serve?*

Each House and Senate caucus leader appointed one voting member to the commission in January. The four commission members, in turn, appointed the nonvoting commission chairperson. A commissioner may be any registered state voter who 1) is not a current registered lobbyist, or former lobbyist within one year before appointment; or 2) is not a current elected official, or an elected state, district, or county party official, or has not held such a position for two years prior to appointment. Commissioners may not campaign for elective office or actively participate in or contribute to a state or federal candidate running for office. A commission member must refrain from holding or campaigning for a state legislative office or for Congress for two years after the effective date of the plan.

## *How does the Commission adopt a redistricting plan?*

### *Can the plan be changed by the Legislature or vetoed by the Governor?*

A redistricting plan must be approved by three of the four voting Commission members. This plan becomes final unless it is amended by the Legislature within 30 days after the beginning of next regular or special session. A legislative amendment, however, can affect no more than 2 percent of a district's population and must be approved by two-thirds of the members of each chamber. The Governor may not veto the redistricting plan. There is no final vote of approval on the redistricting plan, and it takes effect after the 30-day period elapses. If the commission fails to meet the submission deadline, the state Supreme Court must prepare a plan by April 30, 2002, of years ending in two.