



# Redistricting

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# Citizens Research Council

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- Promotes sound policy for state and local governments through factual research – accurate, independent and objective
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## Why is This Important?

- For representative democracy to work, people need to have faith that their vote counts
- Michigan is addressing fundamental questions about taxes, expenditures, public sector compensation, state versus local control, collective bargaining, school reform, etc. – public needs to be confident that they are not disenfranchised during the consideration of these important questions
- Michigan's current redistricting process can make citizens feel like the process is rigged



## What is Wrong with Michigan's Current Process?

- In 1982, Michigan's Supreme Court invalidated the state's constitutional language
- The process is now statutory; legislature enacts bill with legislative and congressional districts and governor signs
- While the state must follow federal guidelines, no state statutory guidelines will be binding, because any statute passed with new districts will trump any guidelines previously enacted into statute
- Michigan nominates Supreme Court Justices in partisan elections; redistricting decisions can undermine faith in judiciary if decisions go along party lines



## Examples of Gerrymandering Techniques

- **Packing** – placing as many voters of one type into a district as possible to minimize the number elections they can influence
- **Cracking** – Spreading voters of one type over many districts so that they do not have a majority in any; example in 1992 Korea Town in Los Angeles split over 5 assembly districts even though Korea town was only a mile square
- **Tacking** – Reaching out from a district to grab a distant area with desired demographics



## Examples of Gerrymandering Techniques

- **Hijacking** – Separating an incumbent from his/her district (alleged that Congressman Bonior was hijacked when moved from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> district. He did not seek reelection.)
- **Kidnapping** – Moving two incumbents into the same district so that they have to run against each other
- **Eliminating Competitors** – Shifting a district boundary to move an incumbents potential competitor to a new district



## How Do We Fix It?

- CRC's paper *Congressional and Legislative Redistricting Reforms* contains our recommendations:
  - **Process should be constitutional** – every Michigan constitution since 1835 had specific legislative apportionment provisions
  - **Maintain as Much of the current constitutional language as possible** – the language in Michigan's current constitution was put in place by elected constitutional delegates; Michigan could fix the unconstitutional piece and keep the rest



## Specific Provisions

- **Recreate redistricting commission** – have balance between parties, including prominent third parties; an odd number of commissioners, and at least one commissioner unaffiliated with a political party
- **Restrict who can serve** – e.g. prohibit commissioners from running for elected office for two years; may include other restrictions
- **Limit process to once every 10 years**
- **Require legislature to fund commission**
- **Maintain right of electors to challenge redistricting plans**



## Specific Provisions

- **Open process:**
  - Hold public hearings around state
  - Allow adequate time for public feedback
  - Maintain proceedings as public records
  - Share tools and processes used



## Do It Now

- Redistricting is central to voters having confidence that their government represents their views
- Changes to the constitution can be made now so that they are in place for redistricting in 2020
- Changes will require a vote of the people – legislature could put changes on the 2012 general election ballot by means of a 2/3 vote



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