



GENERAL FEDERATION of WOMEN'S CLUBS

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Making Sense of Redistricting

As you know, every ten years, the federal government conducts a census for the purpose of determining the population of each state, county, city or town. The Constitution provides in Article I Section 2 that “Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers”. Apportionment is the process of dividing up the 435 seats in the House of Representatives among the fifty states based upon the state population numbers from the census. Redistricting is the process of redrawing the electoral districts based upon where the population has increased or decreased.

Logically you may think that districts are drawn to follow county lines or city limits, but that is often not the case. Politics slip in, and lines are drawn to benefit one political party over another. Redistricting has also been used to dilute the ability of minority voters to elect candidates of their choice. These tactics are called gerrymandering. Cracking is the gerrymandering tactic to dilute the voting power of the opposing party’s supporters by spreading those voters across many districts. Packing is the gerrymandering tactic to concentrate the opposing party’s voting power in one district to reduce their voting power in other districts.

Several U.S. Supreme Court decisions, led by *Baker v. Carr* in 1962 and *Reynolds v. Sims* in 1964, provided for “one person, one vote” principle. These cases, along with the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, established that each Congressional district has to contain roughly the same population and can’t be drawn to be discriminatory. If there is more than a 10% difference in population between the biggest and smallest Congressional district in each state, those districts will be redrawn or redistricted.

GFWC Resolution 015-190 deals with Election Procedures and was first passed at the 1969 Convention. GFWC supports the one-person-one-vote principle, and advocates for uniform, efficient and equitable election procedures. In thirty three states, the state legislature redistricts the seats, usually subject to concurrence by the state governor. Seventeen states redistrict through an independent or bipartisan commission in order to

minimize the impact of partisan or legislative politics, and a handful of those require that independent commission's plans be approved by the state legislature. You can see how your state redistricts by going to <https://www.ncsl.org/research/redistricting/redistricting-systems-a-50-state-overview.aspx> where there is an interactive map.

The 2020 Census numbers were released in August of 2021. You can view your state's population information by going to <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state.html>. State legislatures, state electoral commissions or independent commissions are now in the process of redistricting. If you live in Texas, Colorado, Florida, Montana, North Carolina or Oregon, you are gaining another seat in the House. Texas is actually gaining two seats. The states that are losing a seat are California, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

Now is the perfect time to review the proposed districts in your state. You may also attend local public hearings that present the proposed districts. Ten states have finalized their redrawn congressional maps. Alabama and North Carolina are already facing lawsuits to challenge the proposed districts as racial gerrymanders. Check out the updating map of redistricting in every state at <https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/redistricting-2022-maps/> with political party data. FiveThirtyEight is a website owned now by Disney, but began as a blog by statistician and journalist Neal Silver in August of 2010.

When you look at the map for your state, what changes do you see? Do the lines make sense? Or are there some crazy shaped districts? Think about who is inside the lines and who is out. Let your voice be heard when it comes to redistricting in your state.

015-190 Election Procedures (Convention 1969; Amended 1980; Reaffirmed 1986; Reviewed 1991; Amended 1995; Amended 1999; Amended 2003; Amended 2007; Amended 2011; Reviewed 2015; Amended 2019)

WHEREAS, The General Federation of Women's Clubs recognizes the democratic principle of one-person-one-vote is endangered by outdated election procedures and equipment; therefore

RESOLVED, That the General Federation of Women's Clubs urges the Federal Elections Commission and the U.S. Elections Assistance Commission to study, develop, and recommend uniform, efficient, and equitable election procedures are adopted by the states.

Gathering Facts and Working for Change