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## **Background of the California Redistricting Commission A New Experiment in Direct Democracy**

Every 10 years, after the federal census, California must redraw the boundaries of its Senate, Assembly, and State Board of Equalization districts, to reflect the new population data. In the past, those boundary lines were drawn by members of the California Legislature; now they will be drawn by a new Citizens Redistricting Commission.

California voters authorized the creation of this commission when they passed the Voters FIRST Act (Proposition 11) on the November 2008 general election ballot. The commission will have 14 members; five members who are Democrats, five members who are Republicans, and four members who are neither Democrats nor Republicans.

The act designated the California State Auditor to initiate an application process for selecting the members of the commission. The application process will be open to every registered California voter who will have been continuously registered in California with the same political party, or with no political party, for the five years immediately prior to being appointed to the commission; and who has voted in at least two of the last three statewide general elections. Other requirements for membership are spelled out in the act and are clarified in the regulations being developed by the California State Auditor.

Once selected, the Commission will draw the new districts in conformity with strict, nonpartisan rules designed to create districts of reasonably equal population that will provide fair representation for all Californians. The commission must also consider the Voting Rights Act, current geographic boundaries, and other criteria when drawing the new lines and the new district lines must not be drawn to favor any particular political party or incumbent elected official.

The creation of the Citizens Redistricting Commission will be an exciting new experiment in direct democracy that encourages participation by all registered voters in California. The process for selecting the members of the commission and the redistricting process itself, will be open to public participation by all citizens. Applications for the Commission will be available online December 15, 2009 through February 12, 2010. The final Commission members will be selected from the pool of applicants. The California State Auditor encourages everyone interested in serving on the commission to apply.

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