



2020 Citizens Redistricting Commission FAQs

1. Why should I care about redistricting?

One of the greatest powers that the people of California have is to elect their own representatives to conduct the business of their government. How the district boundaries are configured can make the difference between empowering and maximizing the voters' voices or minimizing and muting those voices. The independent California Citizens Redistricting Commission ("Commission") is committed to drawing fair districts that reflect the best interests of the people, not the incumbent politicians.

Speaking up about your community is critical to ensuring district lines are drawn to keep your community whole to the extent possible, and grouped with nearby communities with similar interests. This ensures that your voice is heard by your elected leaders when making such decisions as the quality and funding of your child's education or determining your tax rates.

Your input is valuable in shaping the new political boundaries.

2. How do I get involved?

There are several ways to provide input to the Commission.

During a Public Meeting:

The Commission will hold hearings where you can provide input by phone during the meeting or electronically prior to the meeting. You can find out more about upcoming public input meetings by visiting the *Meetings* section of our website.

Electronically:

You can also provide input to the Commission via the website by emailing: VotersFirstAct@crc.ca.gov or by drawing your map using the "Draw My Community" tool and submitting it to the Commission by visiting: DrawMyCACommunity.org.

By Phone:

(916) 323-0323

In Writing:

You can mail your input to:
California Citizens Redistricting Commission
721 Capitol Mall, Suite 260
Sacramento, CA 95814

Through a Community-Based Organization (CBO):

There are many CBOs that are working with communities and presenting input to the Commission in a collaborative manner.



3. How do I describe my community?

The Commission needs to know four key things from you about your community:

- The economic, social, and/or cultural interests that bind your community together.
- Why your community should be kept together for fair and effective representation.
- Where your community is located.
- What nearby areas does your community want to or not want to be grouped with?

Use the “Draw My Community” tool to draw a map and describe your community by visiting: DrawMyCACommunity.org.

4. What is a community of interest?

The California Constitution defines a community of interest as a population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation. Examples of such shared interests are those common to an urban area, a rural area, an industrial area, or an agricultural area, and those common to areas in which the people share similar living standards, use the same transportation facilities, have similar work opportunities, or have access to the same media of communication relevant to the election process. Cultural communities can also be communities of interest. Communities of interest do not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates.

5. Why do we have a Commission?

Every 10 years, after the federal government publishes updated census information, California must redraw the boundaries of its Congressional, State Senate, State Assembly, and State Board of Equalization districts, so that the districts correctly reflect the state’s population.

6. What is the Commission?

The Commission is a group of California citizens selected every ten years through a public application and review process that is charged with drawing district lines for Congress, State Senate, State Assembly, and State Board of Equalization. Prior to 2010, California legislators drew their own district lines.

Prior to 2010, legislators in California drew the lines. In 2008, California voters authorized the creation of the independent Commission when they passed the Voters FIRST Act. It authorized the Commission to draw the new district lines for the State Senate, State Assembly, and State Board of Equalization. In 2010, the Voters FIRST Act for Congress added the responsibility of drawing the Congressional districts to the Commission’s mandate.

Taking the redistricting power away from elected officials is meant to ensure a fair and transparent process that eliminates political influence from the process. Gerrymandering is a practice intended to establish an unfair political advantage for a particular party or group by manipulating district boundaries. Two principal tactics used in gerrymandering are “cracking” (i.e.: diluting the voting power of the opposing party’s supporters across



many districts) and "packing" (concentrating the opposing party's voting power in one district to reduce their voting power in other districts).

7. Who can serve on the Commission?

The Commission is comprised of 14 members – five members who are Democrats, five members who are Republicans, and four members who are from neither of those parties.

Registered voters are eligible to serve on the Commission if they 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 they have voted in at least two of the last three statewide general elections.

Within 10 years preceding the date of application, a voter may not serve on the Commission if the voter or a member of their immediate family has been appointed to, elected to, or been a candidate for a California congressional or state office; served as an officer, employee, or paid consultant of a California political party or of the campaign committee of a candidate for California congressional or elective state office; or has been a registered lobbyist.

8. How were Commissioners selected?

The initial and supplemental applications were forwarded to an Applicant Review Panel (panel) consisting of three independent auditors from the California State Auditor. After the panel reviewed all the applications, the panel selected 120 of the "most qualified applicants," divided into three equal sub-pools according to party affiliation, who were then personally interviewed. The pool was then narrowed down to 60 applicants in three equal sub-pools.

The panel presented those 60 applicants to the California State Legislature, where the leadership had the option of removing up to 24 names from the list—eight from each sub-pool. The names of the applicants not removed from the sub-pools were then submitted to the California State Auditor.

The California State Auditor randomly drew from the names remaining in the three sub-pools: three Democrats, three Republicans, and two from neither of those parties. These eight applicants became the first eight members of the Commission.

The first eight members of the Commission then selected the final six members of the Commission by selecting two commissioners from each of the three sub-pools.

9. How much time do commissioners spend performing their duties?

While there is no minimum or maximum amount of time that members must spend performing Commission-related work, typically such work consumes 10 to 40 hours a week, with less time committed initially and more time committed as the deadline to finalize the maps approaches.

The Commission operates as its own entity and hires staff to assist in its duties. Further, the Commission sets its own schedule—it determines where to meet to conduct



business; how often it will meet; when and where to hold public meetings to solicit public input; how much staff to hire and for what purposes; and other determinations, as necessary.

10. How many public input meetings will be held?

The Commission is subject to the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act, which requires that any meeting consisting of nine or more members of the Commission to decide issues or even to receive information must be conducted in public. With that in mind, the number of public hearings the Commission will hold is entirely at the discretion of the Commission. Similarly, whether the hearings will be attended by all Commission members, or just a subset of members, will be up to the Commission to decide.

11. What are the laws regulating the Commission?

1. California Constitution, Article XXI
2. Government Code (Sections 8251 - 8253.6) and Elections Code
3. [California Code of Regulations](#)
4. U.S. Constitution
5. US Code
6. Voting Rights Act

12. What is the Voting Rights Act and why is it important?

Before the federal Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965, the practice of many states was to require qualified African Americans to pass literacy tests in order to register to vote. Other states only allowed a person to register to vote if his or her grandfather was allowed to vote. The Voting Rights Act outlawed these practices.

In the 1970s, Congress heard extensive input about how state and local governments drew district lines and manipulated elections rules to prevent newly-registered African American voters from being able to elect candidates of their choice. Today, the Voting Rights Act protects all racial and language minorities, including African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders.

The Commission will consider public input and legal and expert advice to ensure its final maps meet the Voting Rights Act requirements.

For a more detailed description of how the Voting Rights Act works, visit the U.S. Department of Justice at: <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/vot/redistricting.php>.

13. What criteria are used when drawing maps?

In accordance with California's state constitution, the Commission must follow these criteria, in this order, when drawing district maps:

1. Districts must be of equal population to comply with the U.S. Constitution.
2. Districts must comply with the Voting Rights Act to ensure that minorities have a fair opportunity to elect representatives of their choice.
3. Districts must be drawn contiguously, so that all parts of the district are connected to each other.



4. Districts must minimize the division of cities, counties, neighborhoods and communities of interest to the extent possible.
5. Districts should be geographically compact, such that nearby areas of population are not bypassed for a more distant population. This requirement refers to density, not shape. Census blocks cannot be split.
6. Where practicable, each Senate District should be comprised of two complete and adjacent Assembly Districts, and Board of Equalization districts should be comprised of 10 complete and adjacent State Senate Districts.

In addition, the place of residence of any incumbent or political candidate may not be considered in the creation of a map, and districts may not be drawn for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against an incumbent, political candidate, or political party.

14. How will new district boundaries be approved?

The Commission is required to define the geographic boundaries for the Congressional Districts, State Senate districts, State Assembly districts, and State Board of Equalization districts so that they contain reasonably equal populations. The 2010 Commission engaged in meetings throughout the State to identify communities of interest. Many of the meetings occurred during the evenings and on weekends to make them more accessible to all Californians.

Once the Commission has agreed on the geographic boundaries of the districts, the districts will be displayed on four maps: one map displaying the revised Congressional districts, a second map displaying the revised State Senate districts, a third map displaying the revised State Assembly districts, and a fourth map displaying the revised State Board of Equalization districts.

To be approved, each map must receive the affirmative vote of at least three Commissioners who are Democrats, three Commissioners who are Republicans, and three Commissioners from neither of those parties. Once the Commission has approved the final maps, the maps are submitted to the Secretary of State with a report explaining the basis on which the Commission made its decisions.

15. When Will the Commission Complete the Maps?

Although the California Constitution sets a deadline to certify the maps of August 15, 2021, the California Supreme Court ruled on July 17, 2020, that the Commission should have until December 15, 2021, to submit its maps to the California Secretary of State due to the expected delay in the release of census results. If census results are delayed beyond July 31, 2021, (which the Census Bureau has already indicated is likely), the Commission's deadline will be adjusted accordingly.

