

Special Initiative Plan Proposed to Break Redistricting Deadlock

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State Representative Wilbur G. Hallauer, Democrat, Oroville, Okanogan County, proposes a plan he hopes will break the deadlock over redistricting the state for legislative and congressional purposes.

Although the State Constitution provides for periodic redistricting to give equal representation to all residents, the Legislature never has seen insufficient agreement to carry out the mandate as far as the legislative districts are concerned.

The individual lawmakers don't like the idea of their district boundaries being changed, particularly in view of the fact that some of them would find themselves without districts.

The Republican majority in the 1953 Legislature had the votes, and a friendly ally in Gov. Arthur B. Langlie, to carry out a congressional redistricting.

But to their belated sorrow, they got into a row among themselves and failed to get the job done. This made the Democrats happy, since under a Republican-devised congressional redistricting, Congressman Don Magnuson probably would have had

considerable difficulty being re-elected next fall.

• **HALLAUER WOULD** have the Legislature give up its prerogative of redistricting. He proposes to do this through an initiative-to-the-Legislature, a little-known power of the people to make laws.

The process calls for an initiative bearing 50,000 signatures to be presented to the 1955 Legislature. The Legislature would have two courses open: It could vote the initiative directly into law or propose a substitute measure dealing with the same problem. But if a substitute measure is proposed, it and the original initiative must be presented to the voters at the next general election.

Hallauer intends to set the process in motion immediately with a petition filed with Secretary of State Coe. He then would have until mid-December to get the 50,000 signatures. And the 1955 Legislature would be faced with making a decision next January on whether to accept Hallauer's program or letting the people vote on the question.

• **WHILE THE PROCESS** seems long and cumbersome, it appears to Hallauer the best method of breaking the deadlock and requiring the Legislature to

fulfill the constitutional mandate to redistrict the state.

Hallauer's initiative would provide for a commission of five members to do the redistricting. The commission would consist of two state senators and two state representatives and a fifth member to be a "neutral" selected by the four.

If the four failed to agree on the "neutral" member, the Speaker of the House or a lawmaker designated by the Speaker would become the fifth or "neutral" member.

The commission would be empowered to devise redistricting plans for both the Legislature and Congress. The State Senate would consist of 49 members, three more than at present. The House would have 98 or 99 members. The House now has 99.

These senators and representatives would be elected from districts representative of 49 districts in the state, each district to embrace about 1/49th of the state's population.

Hallauer proposes that the districts' boundaries be made up of "convenient and contiguous" territories—a qualification obviously aimed to guard against gerrymandering.