

Joel Pritchard was a member of the Washington State House of Representatives in 1963. As part of the House Republican leadership, he helped shape the contours of the 1963 redistricting battle. [Joel Pritchard's oral history](#) is accessible online from the Oral History Program's home page.

Ms. Kilgannon: The other simmering issue that colors this session of 1961 and then spills over into the year of the coalition was redistricting. 1960 had been a census year and the Legislature was supposed to redistrict. But you didn't.

Mr. Pritchard: Yes, and then we got into the '63 session and that was really the underlying reason for the coalition. What with a Democratic governor and a Democratic House and Senate, we'd be redistricted right out into the street. We were already way short of our percentage of votes; in other words, we'd get fifty percent of the votes but only forty percent of the legislators.

This was Greive's great thing—he was Machiavelli on redistricting. He was too smart for everybody in that respect, until he ran into Gorton. Gorton ran our redistricting and he knew every jot, diddle, corner, whatever it was. He could tell you how everything worked, and went at it in a very sophisticated way as far as getting past voting records, where it was, and all that. We won some of those battles in redistricting.



Joel Pritchard

Ms. Kilgannon: Is this when the move towards representing the suburbs was starting to be corrected, because they were so underrepresented?

Mr. Pritchard: Yes, underrepresented. That was because they grew rapidly, and the redistricting lagged behind. And we felt that hurt us and we were not happy about it.

Ms. Kilgannon: Would these be the same years when Republican-leaning people were leaving the city, as we discussed?

Mr. Pritchard: No, that was later. Our crew didn't come out of the suburbs, it came out of Seattle. It came out of Queen Anne, out of Laurelhurst, the University area. Slade lived further north, out past the University, out there.

Ms. Kilgannon: But it did help your party when these areas were redistricted?

Mr. Pritchard: It helped in that we got a better split, yes. And it helped in that the incumbents got turned around, and you got a shot. That's how I went to the Legislature, was redistricting, when Magnolia got put in with Queen Anne. And there's a tendency also, when you have redistricting, sometimes you have people say, "Oh, I was going to

quit, but now with this new district, forty percent is new, so I'm going to have to campaign. No, I think I'll get out." So, it was helpful, no question about it.

But we would never have done this coalition if it hadn't been for redistricting. That was the underlying thing. We got forty seats in the '62 election and we had more than fifty percent of the votes.

Ms. Kilgannon: Yes, Evans says you got fifty-three percent.

Mr. Pritchard: And we got only forty-eight in '63 because of Greive's redistricting. Greive was the master at redistricting.

Ms. Kilgannon: And you were afraid he would do it again?

Mr. Pritchard: Of course, because if they had O'Brien as Speaker, and they had the governorship, there was no way to stop it. We would not have gone to such—whether you want to call it extremes, or what have you—we would not have gone down that road, but we had to get some protection. So, we were prepared. We put Gorton in to write the redistricting bill against Greive, and Gorton was just as smart, and just as tough. I don't think we got any redistricting through that time, because anything we wanted, they didn't want, and back and forth. Oh, it was contentious, yes, you bet.



Congressman Joel Pritchard and U.S. Senators Dan Evans and Slade Gorton, pictured here in their later political years. The three band together as "new breed" Republicans to play an instrumental role in the redistricting battles of the 1960s.

Ms. Kilgannon: Well, it's everybody's home base.

Mr. Pritchard: Yes, and our pitch was that we wanted it to reflect the vote. We weren't trying to turn it around to where it was to our advantage, we were just trying to reflect the vote. Well, we couldn't sell that to Greive, and so that was the deal.