

New voting districts OK'd

By RICHARD W. LARSEN

Political Writer

The federal court ordered today that the new boundary lines drawn recently by a court-appointed "master" for Washington's legislative and congressional districts stand unchanged.

The court ordered that his year's elections be held in those new districts.

The order came down from a three-judge court panel.

The court thus rejected pleas from some leading Democrats and attorneys for labor that changes be made in the boundaries drawn by Richard Morrill, the geographer.

The court affirmed Morrill's plan, with one exception: it changed Morrill's numbering system.

The court essentially adopted a numbering plan offered by Senator Francis Holman, Lake Forest Park Republican, which is close to the present numbering system for districts.

Congressional-district lines as redrawn by Morrill were kept. Thus the new 5th Congressional district in Eastern Washington will run north and south, as will the 4th. A plea has been made by Democratic congressmen to change those into east-west districts.

Congressional districts—although their boundaries change somewhat—keep their present numbers. Thus two Seattle districts remain 1st and 7th.

After reading the 36-page court order, George N. Prince, the man who started it all, said, "This is what I was hoping for." Prince's lawsuit brought the court into the job of doing redistricting.

The Legislature failed in its 1971 and 1972 sessions to enact a redistricting plan. The court took over the job in late February.

There have been months of political struggling over the new boundaries, which could influence whether Democrats or Republicans control the state House and Senate.

Democrats were mostly unhappy with the decision today. Most Republicans were happy.

Attorney General Slade Gorton, a Republican, said he hoped today's court action ends the squabble and there will be no appeals.

A spokesman for the A.F.L.-C.I.O. said today, however, that labor will continue with its redistricting initiative.

The plan is liked by leading Democrats. If it gets enough signatures and is approved by voters next November, it would set

up a new system of boundaries for 1974 elections.

The court said that senators who were elected to four-year terms in 1970 do not have to run again this year.

King and Snohomish County senators who thus have a guaranteed two more years in office include James Andersen, Jonathan Whetzel, George Scott, John Murry, John Stender and Jack Metcalf, all Republicans; Gordon Herr, Pete Francis, Frank Conner, R. (Bob) Greive, Robert Ridder, George Fleming, Fred Dore, Martin J. Durkan and August Mardesich, all Democrats.

The Seattle attorney who filed a suit which led to the proposed federal court redistricting plan believes the plan "would more closely reflect the basic party strength" in the state than existing legislative and congressional districts.

George Prince, in a statement of his views of the political impact of the plan drawn by Prof. Morrill, said he compared it with results of the 1968 general elections. His statement was filed in federal court here Wednesday.

Using a complicated mathematical formula, Prince said the proposal by Morrill, a University of Washington geographer, would

result in Democratic control of 57 per cent of the districts, compared with 61 per cent in the existing system.

Under Morrill's plan, Republicans would control 39 per cent of the districts compared with 35 per cent now, Prince said.

The number of swing districts—with an even 50-50 split of voters—would remain the same, 4 per cent.

Democrats, although losing slightly by Morrill's plan, would have larger, "safer" majorities in the districts they control, Prince added.

The 1968 election showed democrats with a 48 to 45 per cent edge over Republicans, with independents—Alabama Gov. George Wallace—controlling 7 per cent, Prince said.

Morrill's plan has been submitted to a panel of three federal judges for study. The judges will issue an order establishing new legislative and congressional district boundaries.

Two of the judges, William T. Beeks and Walter T. McGovern are to return to the bench here Monday, although there has been no discussion when an order may be issued.