



...Redrawing the boundaries

History

Since 1790, the United States had taken an official headcount to help ensure a government by and for the people, Article I, Section 2 of the United States Constitution mandates this federal census every 10 years.

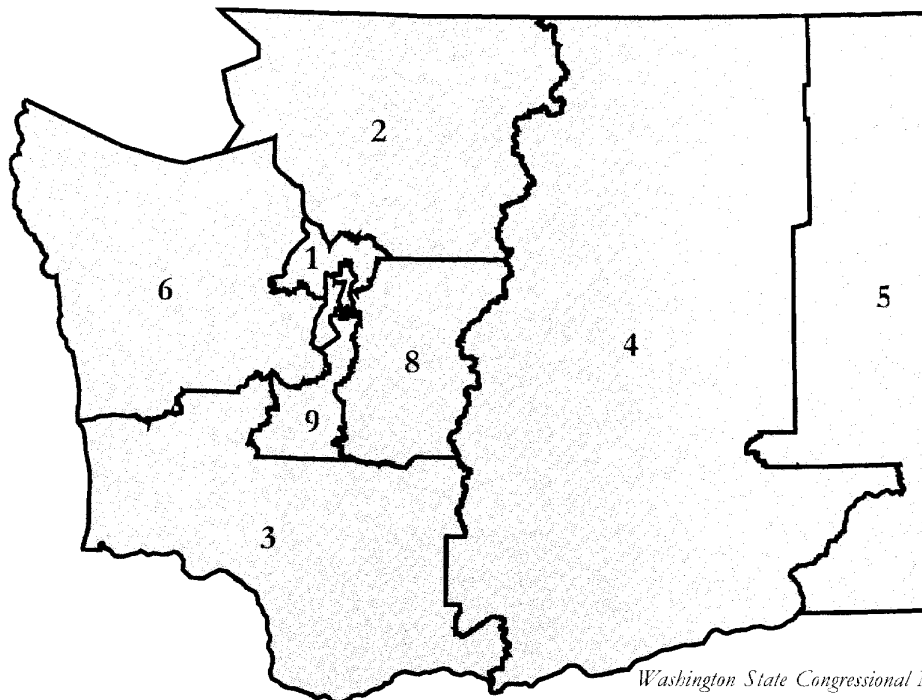
Enter the 22nd Census.

In spring 2001, Washington received its Census 2000 data for redrawing legislative and congressional district boundaries. Today, we count every man, woman and child to guarantee that all people are fairly represented in the political process. The new census information indicates that the state's official 2000 population is nearly 5.9 million people—an increase of about 1 million residents in 10 year's time. This official figure and all accompanying redistricting data, will be used by the Washington State Redistricting Commission to redraw the boundaries for each of the state's 49 legislative and nine congressional districts.

Redistricting Commission

Until the early 1980s, Washington redistricted in the way of most states: by legislative action. For decades, the Legislature redrew political boundaries in an often highly contentious process. After nearly a century of legislative redistricting, including two redistricting efforts by initiative, Washington voters decided it was time for a new approach.

In 1983, the people passed a constitutional amendment giving the decennial responsibility of redrawing political boundaries to an independent, bipartisan commission. The state's first commission, tasked with redrawing legislative and congressional districts, was formed in 1991. During an 18-month period, it completed its mission of drawing a new district map, and disbanded. In early 2001, a new commission was appointed. Majority and minority leaders in the



Legislature selected two Republicans and two Democrats (though they are not elected officials) to serve as voting members. The four voting commissioners then selected a non-voting chairman. This bipartisan approach ensures that neither party obtains an unfair advantage in the way redistricting is accomplished.

After a lengthy public comment period, the commissioners will deliver a new redistricting plan to the Legislature. This plan must be approved by at least three voting commissioners and is due by December 15, 2001. At that point, the Legislature may only make minor changes to the redistricting plan. Proposed amendments must be approved by a two-thirds majority of both the House and the Senate, and must be passed within the first 30 days of the next legislative session.

The plan—amended or not—will then establish the new boundaries for the 2002 elections. Neither the Governor nor the Legislature can reject the commissioner's plan.

While the commission has significant latitude in developing a plan, it must follow established legal standards. The guiding principles for creating a redistricting plan include:

- each district shall have a population as nearly equal as practicable to the population of any other district;
- district lines should be drawn to coincide with local political subdivisions (such as city and county lines) and communities of interest;
- districts should be convenient, contiguous (share a common land border or transportation route) and compact;
- 49 legislative and 9 congressional districts must be drawn based on state law and federal apportionment totals;
- plans should be drawn to provide fair and effective representation and encourage electoral competition;
- plans shall not be drawn to purposely favor or discriminate against any political party or group.

Timeline

2000

April 1 Census Day
Dec. 31 State population totals reported to the President

2001

Jan. 15 Deadline for legislative leaders to appoint voting members to Redistricting Commission
Jan. 31 Deadline for four voting members to select a non-voting Commission Chair
April 1 Deadline for delivery of census data to states for redistricting purposes
May 16 First round of statewide public hearings begins
Aug. 2 First round of 16 public hearings ends (*fall hearings* TBA)
Late Aug. Public may submit plans to commission for review at September 6th meeting*
Dec. 15 Statutory deadline for commission to submit legislative and congressional redistricting plan to Legislature

2002

Feb. 12 Deadline for Legislature to amend the commission's redistricting plan
Jun. 30 Redistricting Commission closes its doors until early 2011

**For specific details contact the commission*