



## **Redistricting – Never an Easy Plan**

When it comes to drawing new electoral district boundaries (redistricting) in an effort to balance district populations, the process can be laborious to say the least. Various elected bodies require redistricting, including state, county, municipal, and school districts. The need to change district lines dates all the way back to the 1960s when the United States Supreme Court found that decades of maintaining the same districts had led to great disparity in district populations. On Friday, July 8, 2011, the House & Senate Redistricting Committee released its proposal for dividing North Carolina into the 13 congressional districts allocated to the state. Year-after-year, political forecasters report that certain politicians are seemingly favored when redistricting plans are presented, while the elected-fate of others is left hanging in the balance.

Most often, a legislative body is responsible for redrawing its own lines and over the years, both the Republican and Democratic parties in NC have feuded over the fairness of establishing district territories. Because of North Carolina's history of restraining minority voters, under the 1965 federal Voting Rights Act the state must design two of its districts such that minority voters can elect a candidate of their choice. Some Democrat U.S. congressional representatives have made claims that the proposed congressional redistricting plan could lead to legal challenges about possible gerrymandering, or violation of the Voting Rights Act, but Republicans say the proposal complies with laws and attempts to provide for fair and competitive districts; thereupon the feuding rears its ugly head. Over the course of the next few weeks, you will hear politicians make their case for why they agree or disagree with the proposed plan.

Without question, redistricting is important; districts need to be comprised of neighborhoods that have similar interests and concerns. It is important for NC citizens to be active redistricting participants because redistricting is directly responsible for a lot of what goes into each and every community across the state. Congressional redistricting is not a process that political leaders look forward to settling because like everything else in politics, not everyone will be pleased. One can only hope that once redistricting lines are drawn, those elected to represent their population will do so in a manner that is beneficial to the people.

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