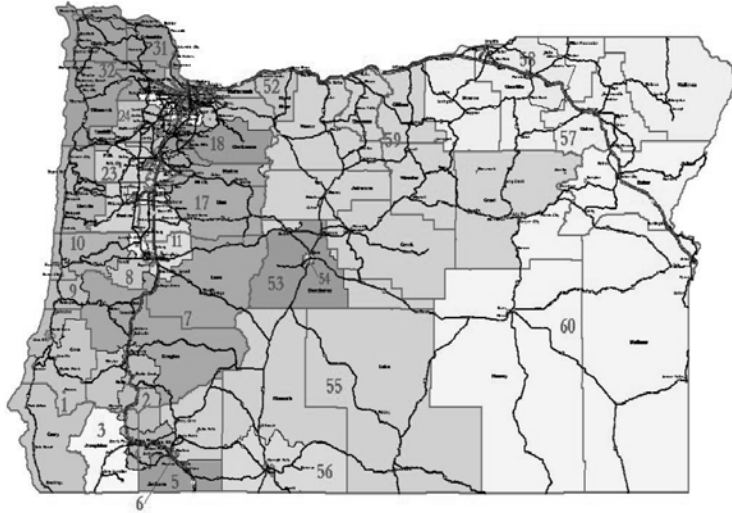


Redistricting in Oregon:

A Quick Review of What it is and Why it Matters



How does redistricting affect you as a voter?

The **voters should be choosing their representatives**, not the representatives choosing their voters.

The districts also need to be drawn in such a way that gerrymandering is avoided. Districts should not be “mines” for legislators (they should not be areas where incumbents or policies are firmly set so that a legislator is no longer accountable to the voters).

If the districts aren’t measured relatively frequently, they won’t match up with the population’s interests as the populations shift in size and makeup. This is important because some districts could end up having more clout than others if the process isn’t constantly revised to reflect the numbers and interests of the constituents.

The districts need to reflect populations’ interests so that they may be represented the way they want and need. Without specialized districts, voters’ voices may not be heard.



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OF OREGON**
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1330 12th St SE Ste 200
Salem OR 97302
(503) 581-5722 phone
(503) 581-9403 fax
lwvor@lwvor.org
www.lwvor.org

Why do we redraw them?

The US Constitution requires redistricting of congressional and state legislative districts after each federal decennial (after every ten years, usually following the year of the census). This is so that the population is adequately reflected even as it shifts over time.



How Oregon Does It:

As mandated by the Federal Constitution, we as a state must redistrict both legislative and congressional district plans. When the Legislature can't agree on how to do it, or when the governor vetoes the plan, the Secretary of State does the legislative districts and the federal courts do the congressional ones.

How other states do it:

Legislative model:

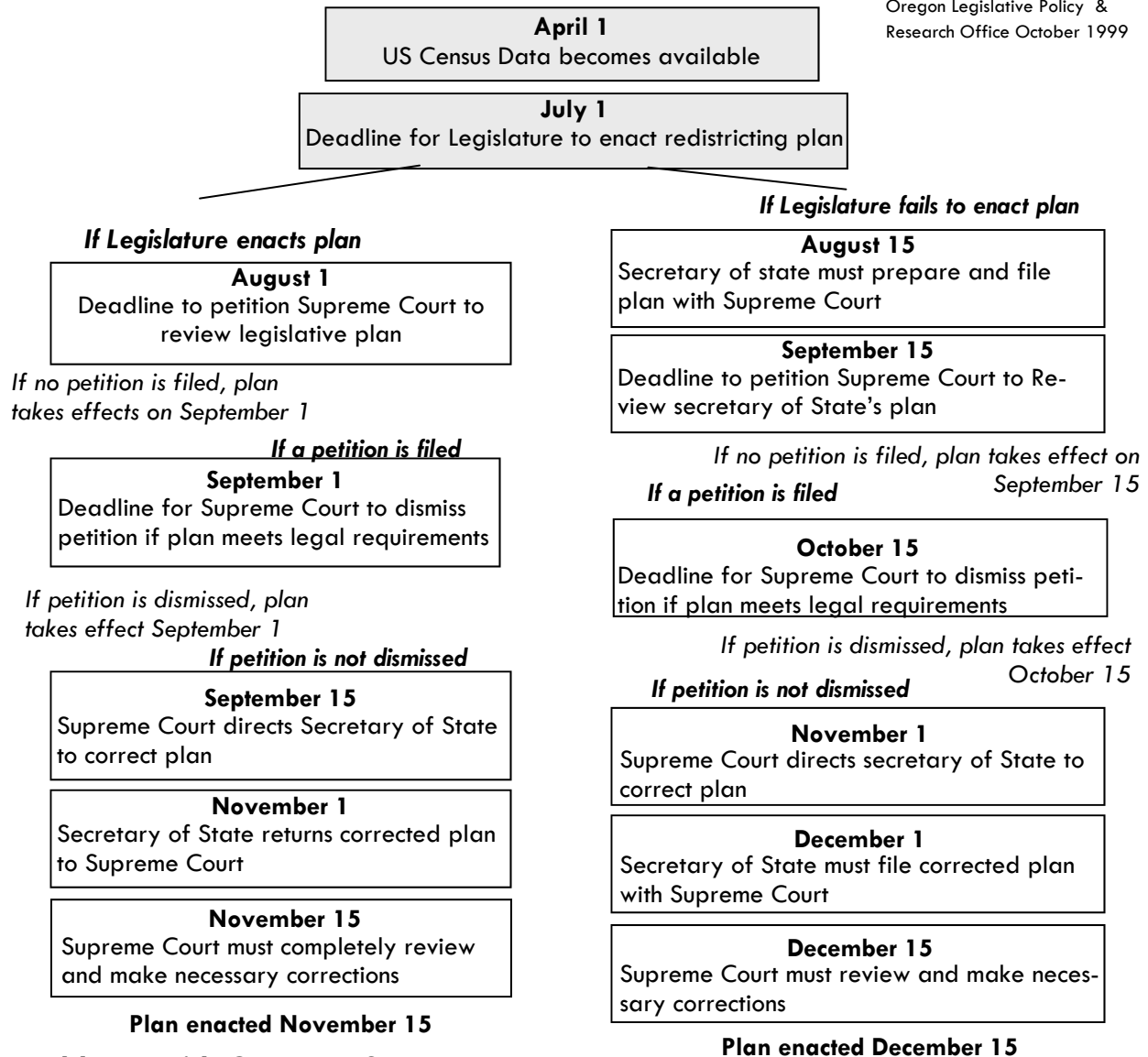
Twenty-six states use this model by which committees in the State Legislature propose maps, hold hearings to gather public input and debate the maps, and then eventually pass a bill instituting the new boundaries. The Governor then either signs the bill into law or vetoes the bill, and the Legislature may override the veto with a supermajority vote. Some states do this and have a separate commission as a backup. Bipartisan gerrymandering (where each group trades to have enough safe districts to protect respective interests) can also be a way to avoid political tension when using methods like this.

Independent Commission model:

There are many different intricacies, but the basic goal of an independent commission is to avoid partisan, bipartisan, or incumbent-protection gerrymandering. Committees are appointed; they review the population data and create the maps. Then a vote is held (how it's held varies by state) and a decision to adopt or make a new map follows. The two biggest issues with this method are the way members of the commission are selected (like whether they are allowed to be partisan or have held office) and how the final vote is counted (like should there be odd numbers with a majority win or even numbers with a tiebreaker). Twenty states use this method, some in conjunction with a legislative process.

How We Redistrict in Oregon: Deadlines given in the Oregon Constitution

Oregon Legislative Policy &
Research Office October 1999



Problems With Oregon's System

- Unrealistic, short timeline for all parties to get plans accomplished and reviewed, especially for the Secretary of State when the legislature does not agree
- Splitting of legislative and congressional redistricting duties and plans
- The review process for the Supreme Court is unwieldy, awkward, and frustrating
- Lack of specific public hearing requirements
- Possibly standardizing the criteria so that the decision-making process is easier and less confusing
- A lack of acknowledgement that the process will always be political, and use that knowledge to limit that politicization

Generally Used Criteria

- Lawmakers try to keep districts as compact as possible, so that representatives can more easily reach constituents.
- They also try to maintain respect for communities of interests (which can be defined by shared ethnic, geographic, socio-economic or other shared interests). There is a risk that communities of interest could be used as a pretext for justifying district boundaries that do not further legitimate objectives. Also, competitiveness can be greatly reduced when too much weight is given to a community of interest because they may be predisposed to voting for a certain party, and so packing them into one area may limit that party's ability to have districts elsewhere.
- Political boundaries are important so that districts may be easily identified, so that communities of interest are protected, and so as not to confuse voters with constantly shifting borders. In the same way, there is a similar respect for geographic barriers as they can divide communities and keep representatives from communicating with all of their constituents. Lawmakers try to avoid having them inside individual districts.
- Connections via transportation links also help determine where districts are because they can help identify communities of interest and promote communication between candidates, officials and constituents.
- In Oregon, those who draw the maps are prohibited from knowing the location of incumbent's or candidates residences in order to prevent gerrymandering. Mapmakers are also not allowed to consider voter registration and voting history data so that they cannot overtly create districts that favor any one political party. This also can be negative because political data is necessary to consider the competitiveness of a district.
- The end goal is for all districts to be competitive, in that representatives are not assured of their positions because the district always votes one way or another. Many believe competitiveness should be followed wherever possible, even if it isn't always feasible.

**How do we
decide how
the districts
should be
drawn?**

Required Criteria

- Each district must be of equal population size (Oregon specifically does not allow a deviation of more than 1%). This coincides with the "one person, one vote" doctrine where the districts must be equal so that each legislator represents the same number of people, and the influence of each vote is as equal as possible.
- The Voting Rights Act requires special districts that have a majority of a minority population group if the population is large enough to constitute a district and if there are voting patterns specific to the communities of interest .
- The districts must be contiguous (all parts must be connected).
- Congressional districts must have a district for each US Representative.

