

## Congressional Map Redistricting

I've already testified about redistricting at the City and State levels. The principles I advocate for the Congressional level are the same.

*All* redistricting must be led by someone with *at least* an M.A. in Geography. Neither "bipartisan," "non-partisan," nor "independent" commissions guarantee their leadership by someone with at least an M.A. in Geography. I have been saying this for *years* and it's been *ignored* by both legislative bodies and mass media. People with enough education in this discipline can take *all* the required factors into account, and create district maps which satisfy the legal requirements of contiguity, compactness, and certain provisions in the Voting Rights Act.

Mapmaking is called Cartography in academia, and is *entirely* under the aegis of Geography. Geography knows how to take into fair account *all* the factors which are legally required to be recognized, and also *all* the factors which require the districts to deviate from the perfect array of equal-sized hexagons found in a beehive. The geometric manifestation of success – compactness and contiguity - is districts whose perimeter/area ratios are clustered in the narrowest possible range. Contiguity is an obvious pass/fail requirement which is easy to achieve.

We must also respect existing jurisdictional boundaries including counties, cities & villages, and unincorporated places recognized by the Census. Unless local residents say otherwise, the lower-level jurisdictions should have priority over higher-level jurisdictions to be in one district. For example, some Illinois cities are in more than one county. The default decision would be to put an entire city in one district.

In general, I would recommend that Census Tracts be used *first* to tweak the map to achieve equal representation. They should also be tried first to satisfy those requirements of the Voting Rights Act. Subdivision of Chicago into different Congressional Districts should *begin* with keeping each Community Area in a single District. As in the rest of Illinois, tweaking would begin by using Census Tracts. As always, every map iteration must be followed by evaluation and comparison with other possible iterations, until the requirements are best met – and *without* gerrymandering.

Until legislative bodies require redistricting to be led by people with at least an M.A. in Geography, testimony from communities of interest is rarely anything but a request to gerrymander the map along racial/ethnic lines. It's too early to get into these mappable data elements, though they are important to consider. The people who call for districts whose residents are nearly all of a single racial/ethnic group, and say this is the only way they can be fairly represented, might be better served by a system in which Representatives are elected *at large*, on the *assumptions* that voters will *always* choose to be represented by a person of their own racial/ethnic group and that such a person would *always* be the *best* person to represent them. This would require a change in the law, while completely eliminating the gerrymandering problem. While a law authorizing at-large elections of Representatives in Illinois is not going to be adopted in the foreseeable future, it would certainly be refreshing to hear these advocates openly discuss the idea and their assumptions behind it.

People with more education in Geography and Cartography have written about redistricting. I refer you to their works:

Manninen, Diane Lynn, "The Role of Compactness in the Process of Redistricting." Master's Thesis, Department of Geography. Seattle: University of Washington, 1973.

Morrill, Richard L., Political Redistricting and Geographic Theory. Washington D.C.: Association of American Geographers, 1981.

Jean SmilingCoyote  
1823 W. Granville Ave.  
Chicago IL 60660  
(773) 743-8918

B.A. *cum laude* Geography  
California State University, Northridge