



Illinois African Americans For Equitable Redistricting

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Illinois African Americans Respond to Legislature's Redistricting Proposals: *"Trust, But Verify"*

CHICAGO – The Illinois Senate and House Redistricting Committees released a proposed map of new legislative boundaries on May 21, 2021 in advance of public hearings to be held on May 25th and May 26th. This will be the last opportunity the public will have to weigh in on redistricting plans before the Legislature develops and approves final maps.

Legislative leaders have indicated that the new maps incorporate suggestions gathered from “more than 45 public hearings held across the state... to best ensure communities across Illinois receive fair and equal representation.” They have also indicated that the mapping proposals were drawn within the parameters of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Illinois Voting Rights Act of 2011 and the Illinois Constitution as they relate to drawing district boundaries and the timeline for drawing the maps.

Although the Illinois Constitution is silent with respect to which data set to use for redistricting purposes, the State Legislature has opted to use the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) data released in 2019, as opposed to waiting for more detailed 2020 Census data. The Census Bureau will deliver the final redistricting data toolkit to all states and the public by September 30, 2021.

Unforeseen circumstances related to the COVID-19 Pandemic have delayed the release of the Census data by several months. Normally, the Census Apportionment Data would have been released in December and the final Census Redistricting Data would have been released in April, in time to be incorporated into legislative redistricting plans to be approved by June 30th.

The Illinois Constitution indicates that, if Legislative maps are not approved by June 30th, then a Legislative Redistricting Commission, consisting of 4 Republicans and 4 Democrats, will be established to develop a redistricting proposal. Illinois' redistricting timeline, developed taking into account the schedule outlined in the state's constitution, is shared on page 2.

Illinois Legislative Redistricting Timeline

December 21, 2020	State Populations and congressional apportionment delivered to President Biden. Illinois loses one of its 18 Congressional Districts.
January 12, 2021	Inauguration of 102 nd General Assembly
June 30, 2021	If no redistricting plan becomes effective by this date, a Legislative Redistricting Commission shall be constituted.
July 10, 2021	Deadline for formation of Redistricting Commission. The Commission shall consist of eight members, no more than four of whom shall be members of the same political party.
August 10, 2021	Deadline for Redistricting Commission to file an approved plan with the Secretary of State approved by at least five members.
September 1, 2021	If the Redistricting Commission fails to file an approved plan, the Supreme Court shall submit the names of two persons, not of the same political party, to the Secretary of State no later than this date.
September 5, 2021	No later than this date the Secretary of State shall draw by random selection the name of one of the two persons to serve as the ninth member of the Commission.
October 5, 2021	Last day for Redistricting Commission to file a redistricting plan with the Secretary of State approved by at least five members.

Illinois House and Senate Redistricting Committee Chairpersons have indicated in their press release that, in order “to fulfill this constitutional obligation and prevent the redistricting process from being turned over to a committee of partisan, political appointees, the proposed map was drafted using population information from the American Community Survey’s (ACS) 5-year estimate for 2019, in addition to robust public input. The ACS estimate varies by just 0.3 percent from the state’s official population count released by the U.S. Census Bureau in April.”

Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting has participated in 6 public redistricting hearings, providing written and oral testimony and presentations. The hearings provided opportunities to explore questions surrounding which data set to use to develop the maps; the impacts of the various approaches etcetera. In essence, the question that was asked repeatedly is, “which data set should we use- ACS data, which are available now, or, the complete 2020 Census redistricting data, which won’t be released until September?”

Generally speaking, the ACS data are perceived to be less accurate than complete Census data. They are based on random sampling and don’t go down to the block level. In contrast, the Census data sets are derived from door-to-door canvassing, which allow users to access data to the block level. Some people have requested that the Legislature seek relief in the Courts to have

the redistricting timeline pushed back so they can incorporate the more detailed 2020 Census data into their redistricting plan.

As an aside, it should be noted that ACS data are used by the State, federal and local governments to fully engage in community planning, make major investments and allocate resources for things like healthcare, roads, schools and community development. To the best of our knowledge, there are no requests to hold up allocation of those resources until such time as the 2020 data are finalized. Our state's needs are too great to wait for perfection. Our state and local leaders are making decisions now, based on the most recent and comprehensive data that are available. In this case, 2019 ACS data are certainly among the data sets that are the most likely to be used. We believe that if ACS data may be relied upon to work with mapping software for community planning and resource allocation, they should be considered sufficiently reliable to develop redistricting proposals.

We support the General Assembly's decision to keep the original redistricting schedule outlined in our state's constitution. We have gone on record as recommending that the Legislature work with experienced demographers to draw the maps using the 2019 ACS as a baseline, and incorporating assumptions made from their projections and other sources. Mapping professionals have the capability to use these data to make inferences regarding growth patterns down to the Census block level.

It should be noted that the margin of error for the 2010 Census was 1.65% (Census.gov). The 2019 ACS estimate for Illinois was 12,671,821. The actual figure reported for the 2020 Apportionment Data released in April was 12,812,508, with a difference of 140,687 people statewide. Given that these are statewide figures, it is likely that the variance is spread throughout Illinois, and not concentrated in a single geography. On the face, we do not believe that any one locale or ethnic group in the state has been more adversely impacted than others due to the variance between the 2019 ACS data and the 2020 Census Data.

Our calculations indicate that the variance between the 2019 ACS data and the 2020 Apportionment data translates into a 1.1% difference and is within the margin of error of the 2010 Census. While we don't know specific breakouts, we believe that the final numbers for individual districts will not be that far off from the Census data that we will receive in September. If there is a significant variance that results in the apparent infringement upon the voting rights of any minority group, the Illinois Voting Rights Act of 2011 makes provision for the Legislature to remedy the situation by amending the redistricting plan.

The mapping proposals the Legislature shared with the public do not provide enough information to be objectively evaluated by people who didn't have a hand in creating them. There are no demographic data that would help us verify whether these maps have been drawn within the parameters of the various voting rights acts or whether the maps were drawn to optimize opportunities for minorities to elect candidates of choice. The lack of underlying street maps makes it hard for the reader to visualize specific locations to know whether or not communities of interest have been kept intact.

When examining the boundaries of the proposed Representative District 9, which is majority Black, it is apparent that a cluster of African Americans within North Lawndale, as defined by Chicago's Community Area 29, has been removed from the District, and will be placed in Representative District 23, which is Majority Latino. Underlying Street maps could help us determine whether this is true or not. The underlying demographic data could help determine whether or not the voting power of African Americans in this section of North Lawndale could be effectively diluted relative to the current District boundaries, drawn in 2011. We believe there is sufficient Latino population in Representative District 23 to allow for the cluster of Black residents of the area commonly known as "The Triangle" (the area between City Limits, Ogden Avenue and Cermak Road) to be moved back to District 9 without negatively impacting Representative District 23 in terms of population or ability to elect candidates of their choice.

We appreciate the fact that the Illinois Senate and House Redistricting Committees have made their mapping proposals public, and they will host a series of hearings on May 25th and May 26th to solicit feedback from interested parties. Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting intends to participate in as many of the hearings as possible. However, we will not be able to make informed commentary unless the Redistricting Committees provide the data that underlie the boundaries depicted in their mapping proposals.

We have submitted a FOIA request, asking that the Legislature provide the data sets that support their maps in electronic format, through files that might be read by persons that do not have access to GIS tools. The list is found below.

1. Metes and Bounds descriptions of each district
2. A List of Census Tracts and Blocks for each district
3. Racial/ethnic composition of each district, including raw numbers and percentages for each group, including voting age and citizenship
4. Counts of people in each district
5. Variances in each district
6. Underlying street map for each district

Once we get the requested information from the State we will be able to compare the Legislators' proposals with the Unity Map designed by the United Congress for Community and Religious Organizations. Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting participated in the development of the Unity Map and have urged the Legislature to adopt it in their final redistricting plan because the underlying data set and related documentation demonstrate that the map:

1. Optimizes opportunities for Minorities around the State of Illinois to elect candidates of their choice
2. Was designed with input from leaders within the Black, Latino, Asian and Muslim communities around the State
3. Was drawn within parameters set by state and federal voting rights acts
4. Is the most comprehensive proposal put forth by any community group in the State of Illinois

Links to the Unity Map Senate proposal (12 renderings) are found at <https://ilga.gov/senate/committees/RedistrictingPublicMaps.asp?CommitteeID=2742&Description=Redistricting&Code=SRED&GA=102>.

Neighborhood Development Services NFP has created a community dashboard, which allows people to view the Unity Map proposal and leave public comment. The posts may be found at the NDS Virtual Technology Center, www.support.ndsnfp.com. Public posts are listed at the bottom of the page. For full access to the Community section of the site, it is recommended that visitors sign up with the button at the top of the page. All comments are moderated and must be approved. The only restrictions are that visitors must be polite, meaning, no extreme profanity, no personal attacks, no spam. Open, adult conversation is allowed.

We appreciate the fact that the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee has posted all mapping proposals submitted by the public on the ilga.gov website. We respectfully request that the Illinois House Redistricting Committee do the same.

In summary, Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting agrees in principle with the Legislature's approach to redistricting under unprecedented circumstances. However, when it comes to impact upon our communities, the jury is still out. At this juncture we will follow the advice made famous by the late President Ronald Reagan are most appropriate: "...Trust but verify..."

Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting is an ad hoc group of Black people from around the State of Illinois who have come together to ensure that the voices of African Americans are taken into consideration when the Legislature creates new political districts. The 85-member group is growing and includes people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and geographic locations in the State of Illinois. Questions regarding this statement may be directed to

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