

Connecticut General Assembly Redistricting Project

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is the General Assembly redrawing Congressional and legislative district lines?

Federal and state laws require it. Federal law requires districts to have about equal populations so that everyone's vote has equal importance ("One person, one vote"). State law requires that Congressional and legislative district lines be redrawn every 10 years. The districts must be based on the federal census and consistent with federal constitutional standards.

Who draws the lines?

A bipartisan Reapportionment Committee is charged with preparing the plan and the General Assembly must approve it by September 15, 2011 with a two-thirds vote in each chamber. The committee is made up of eight legislators (two from each party's caucus in the Senate and House of Representatives).

If the General Assembly does not approve a plan by the September 15 deadline, a nine-member Reapportionment Commission is formed. The commission must prepare a plan by November 30, 2011. The four top legislative leaders designate eight members (two each) to the commission, whom the governor appoints. The eight appointees must select a state elector as a ninth member.

The 2011 committee members were: Senate President Pro Tempore Donald Williams (Co-chair), House Minority Leader Lawrence Cafero (Co-chair), Senator Majority Leader Martin Looney, Senate Minority Leader John McKinney, Senator Leonard Fasano, House Speaker Christopher Donovan, Representative Sandy Nafis, and Representative Arthur O'Neill.

The 2011 commission members were the same as the above committee members with two exceptions. During the first commission meeting on November 3, 2011, members unanimously chose Kevin Johnston as the ninth member. And on December 1, 2011, Representative Brendan Sharkey replaced Representative Donovan, who resigned from the commission on November 30, 2011.

When does it have to be done?

The Reapportionment Committee must complete its task by September 15, 2011. If it does not agree on a plan by that deadline, the Reapportionment Commission must prepare a plan by November 30, 2011. The first general election held in the new districts will be in November 2012.

What happens if the Reapportionment Commission does not agree on a plan?

If the commission cannot agree on a plan, the constitution empowers the state Supreme Court to make them do the job. Alternatively, the court can draw the district boundaries itself, which it must do no later than February 15, 2012. (See the 2011 Timeline for information on state Supreme Court proceedings.)

What will be the districts' average population?

Connecticut has 3,574,097 people, according to the federal Census Bureau. The federal government reapportioned the Congressional representatives among the states and determined that Connecticut will continue to have five. Each district's population is one-fifth of the state's population, or 714,819.

The General Assembly (perhaps through the Reapportionment Committee, as part of its plan-drawing responsibility) must determine the number of seats in each chamber of the state house. Under the state constitution, the size of the House of Representatives can range from 125 to 225 and the size of the Senate can range from 30 to 50. If the number of districts remains the same, the ideal populations will be 23,670 for a House district and 99,280 for a Senate district.

In 2002, what was the ideal population in each type of district?

House of Representatives	22,553
Senate	94,599
U.S. House	681,113