



PEOPLE — OVER — POLITICIANS

2021 Redistricting Guide

presented by | **The Urban League of
Metropolitan Seattle**

WHAT ARE DISTRICTS?

Districts are geographical boundaries established by state and local government. Washington state is divided into congressional and state legislative districts, which is a geographical area that anyone who lives that area votes on who represents them. Depending on how big the county and city you live in, you may also have a county council district and city council district. All eligible citizens have the right to vote for an elected official to represent the district they reside in. **Districts determine who you vote for and how powerful your vote is.**

WHAT IS REDISTRICTING?

Redistricting is the process of redrawing voting district boundaries, based on population growth or change. It is mandated by the United States Constitution that each district must be as equal in population to all other districts as possible. The redistricting process is used to ensure there is an equal distribution of voting power and representation in our legislative chambers. This year, the Washington State Redistricting Commission will use the 2020 Census data to redraw the voting districts.

WHY IS REDISTRICTING IMPORTANT?

Every ten years, using the new Census data, voting district boundaries are adjusted. **Historically, discriminatory political practices, such as gerrymandering*, were used to manipulate district boundaries to favor political parties and wealthy people.** This was done by splitting communities of color and low-income communities, particular parties, or groups into separate districts to gain an unfair political advantage. In result, these communities are left with little to no voting power and representation in state government and Congress.

**Gerrymandering is the process of manipulating how districts are drawn to gain a political advantage.*



WHAT ARE OUR REDISTRICTING GOALS THIS YEAR?

Our goal is to ensure that when the districts are redrawn, they represent people, rather than politicians. We can achieve this by ensuring that our communities' voices are heard by the State's Redistricting Commission. We need the Redistricting Commission to be accountable to communities of color and tribal nations by keeping them together. Keeping communities of interests together in the same district ensure these communities can have equitable and powerful representation and voting power.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF REDISTRICTING?

In 1787, Article 1, Section 2 of the United States Constitution established the **equal protection principle ("one person, one vote")**, mandating that each citizen must have **equivalent voting power**. This principle influenced the population equality requirement for drawing U.S. Districts, ensuring that each congressional and legislative district must be equal as possible in population. Article 1, Section 2 also required that the nation must have an "actual enumeration" of people every ten years, which is the Census count. In result, after the U.S. Census Bureau collects the ten-year census count of the American population, states use the updated Census data to redraw districts. Each state governs their own redistricting process. As of today, Washington is one of only seven states to have a redistricting commission.

Although Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution implies that equal population in a district ensures equal representation, the redistricting process has been manipulated by politicians for an electoral advantage.

HOW CAN I FIND MY DISTRICTS AND REPRESENTATIVES?

Washington State has 10 congressional districts and 49 legislative districts. The Washington State Legislature has created an online District Finder tool on their website: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/>

HOW TO GET INVOLVED?

- Subscribe for updates
- Sign up to attend or testify at the Redistricting Commission's Public Outreach Meetings (we provide workshops and testimony support)
- Sign up to support RJW (Redistricting Justice for Washington Coalition)
- Attend RJW's local mapping sessions for your region (check on website)

REFERENCES

Draw Your WA

(<https://www.redistricting.wa.gov>)

Redistricting Justice for Washington

(<https://www.redistrictingjusticewa.org>)

THE URBAN LEAGUE OF METROPOLITAN SEATTLE

With a vision of equity for all, the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle (ULMS) empowers those we serve by providing programming and services designed to support and encourage self-sufficiency in all aspects of life. Our five areas of focus include public health, civic engagement, education, housing, and workforce development.

To learn more about ULMS or to find out how to get involved in our efforts, please visit: <https://www.urbanleague.org>.



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