



What Hoosiers Have to Say About Redistricting: A Report From the Indiana Citizens Redistricting Commission’s Public Hearings

May 2021

For a long time redistricting was an issue that only politicians and political insiders cared about. Those days are over. We held nine public forums, one in each Congressional District, plus a 10th follow-up, from late February through mid-April 2021. Almost nine hundred Hoosiers participated. We heard several consistent themes at all of the virtual public hearings, revealing the desire for a new redistricting process in 2021 focused on the needs of voters and communities and where voters choose their legislators, instead of legislators choosing their voters.

What the Public Wants

- 1. Draw districts that encourage competitive elections .** The most common complaint heard at our virtual hearings was that too many districts in Indiana, at both the Congressional and state level are not competitive. This leaves people feeling as if their voice isn’t heard in the process. People also complained that their representatives are not responsive to their concerns and they attributed this disregard to “safe” districts.
- 2. Keep communities of interest (COI) together; don’t combine clashing COIs in same district.** We heard from many people, particularly people living in the largest cities in Indiana, that their communities are divided into multiple districts. This is confusing for voters and can make it difficult for communities to get the representation they need. This is particularly problematic in districts that combine rural areas with urban areas. Constituents in these districts often have very different needs and concerns; making it difficult for their legislators to fully represent everyone.
- 3. Divide cities and counties into as few districts as possible.** From Fort Wayne to Greencastle we heard numerous examples of cities and counties divided into far more districts than their population would seem to justify, creating confusion and again serving to reduce the political influence of the community.
- 4. Create a transparent process that gives the public real opportunities to participate.** The public is distrustful of a redistricting process that is opaque and controlled by the same people who will run in the new districts. They want an open and transparent process that gives them real opportunities to help shape the new districts and enough time to consider the legislative proposals and provide feedback. The public wants the opportunity to draw maps and submit their proposals for consideration by the legislature.

How Can the Legislature Give the Public What They Want?

To create a redistricting process that will result in the kind of districts the public wants, the Indiana General Assembly should start with transparency and public participation. Give the public the information they need to evaluate redistricting proposals and provide opportunities for meaningful public participation. Conduct the process in public and explain how decisions about where to draw the lines were made.

- **Transparency: The redistricting process must be fully transparent.**
 1. The public must have access to all the data the General Assembly will use to draw maps.
 2. When proposed maps are introduced, legislators must disclose which redistricting criteria was prioritized.
 3. If consultants are hired to assist with redistricting, the contracts to engage them must be disclosed.
 4. The General Assembly should strive to conduct redistricting in public and avoid caucus or other private discussions that prevent public scrutiny.
- **Public Participation: Invite public participation and make redistricting information and materials accessible.**
 5. Let the public know well in advance when the General Assembly will return for redistricting.
 6. Public hearings should be conducted in each Congressional District both before maps are drafted and after the initial legislative proposals become public. Hearings should be held both virtually and in-person if public health conditions allow.
 7. Adequate time should be given for the public to study redistricting proposals and provide feedback. Thirty days would be appropriate.
 8. The public should be given access to a mapping website and the ability to draw maps and submit them for consideration by the House and Senate Elections Committees.

Fostering Competition and Protecting Communities

It is imperative that the legislature be deliberative about what redistricting criteria it chooses to emphasize and make those decisions public. This is important because redistricting involves making choices among competing interests. Two redistricting criteria that often play against each other are **compactness and competition**.

The Indiana General Assembly has said that it prioritized compactness when drawing districts in 2011. A decade of elections has shown that districts emphasizing compactness have had a negative impact on competition in both Congressional and state legislative races. When called to choose between compact districts or districts that are competitive politically, **a majority of participants in our public meetings said that competition should be prioritized over compactness.**

The ICRC recognizes that seeking to emphasize compactness over competitiveness, or vice versa, can create problems. For example, compactness will often require splitting communities of color in ways that make it hard for minority voters to have meaningful impact on elections. On the other hand, stressing competition as the pre-eminent criteria for map-drawers can mean dividing towns, cities, and neighborhoods to manufacture competition. Neither of these outcomes is in the public interest.

The advice of redistricting policy experts suggests the best way to achieve an increase in competitive districts is to ensure that redistricting prioritizes and respects the needs of voters and communities. To do this, the legislature must ask the public for input specifically on their communities of interest (COI). Allowing the public to identify and having map-drawers acknowledge communities of interest is an essential factor and pledging to respect these groups and not divide them is paramount. **We believe that drawing district maps around communities of interest will help produce districts that encourage organic political competition.**

To facilitate the identification of communities of interest for legislative map-drawers we offer the public mapping website the All IN for Democracy coalition has developed, [Indiana | Districtr](#). The website can be used to both draw districts and map communities of interest. Maps drawn by the public to identify their communities of interest can be uploaded and used by legislative map drawers to inform their decision making and facilitate the drawing of districts that protect communities and encourage natural political competition.

Finally, districts should be drawn with a goal of splitting political subdivisions such as counties, cities, and towns into as few districts as possible. To facilitate this the General Assembly should adopt different population deviation targets for Congressional and state legislative districts. While Congressional districts are required to have as equal population as practicable, more variation is allowed at the state legislative level. If the goal is to prevent dividing a political subdivision, larger population differences should be allowed.

Background

The Indiana Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC) was formed by the All IN for Democracy coalition in early January 2021 after an open application process that yielded nearly three hundred candidates. It is composed of nine Indiana voters: three Republicans, three Democrats, and three who are neither Republican nor Democrat. The purpose of the ICRC is to demonstrate how redistricting could be conducted if Indiana had a citizens redistricting commission. Members of the All IN for Democracy coalition believe that it is important to have a group that is multi-partisan, diverse, representative of all voters and independent of the legislature leading the redistricting process. They are determined to lead a process that is open and transparent and that welcomes public participation.

All of our virtual public forums were recorded and can be accessed at [All IN For Democracy - YouTube](#)

In addition to holding a series of public meetings to educate Hoosiers about redistricting and to take public comment, the ICRC will also sponsor a public mapping competition. We have worked with the redistricting experts at Tufts University to develop the Indiana DistrictR website and will award cash prizes to the citizens who draw Congressional and state legislative districts that our group believes will best fulfill the priorities outlined in this report. Our mapping website can found at [Indiana | DistrictR](#)

Indiana Citizens Redistricting Commission members are:

Republicans: Clara Glaspie of Indianapolis. Ms. Glaspie worked for many years for the State of Indiana and has served on a number of public and private boards, including serving as board chair of the Indianapolis Housing Agency. She was the first Black woman to participate in the Richard G. Lugar Women’s Leadership series.

Leigh Morris of LaPorte. Mr. Morris is a former Mayor of LaPorte and retired as the CEO of the community hospital in that community. He is active in a number of civic and community groups.

Marilyn Moran Townsend of Fort Wayne. Ms. Moran-Townsend is the CEO of CVC Communications and is a co-founder of AVOW: Advancing Voices of Women, an organization that supports and empowers women as civic leaders.

Democrats: Xavier Ramirez of Carmel. Mr. Ramirez just finished his freshman year at Indiana University Bloomington where he works with the Civic Leader Learning Center as a student advisory board member.

Ranjan Rohatgi of South Bend. Mr. Rohatgi is Assistant Professor of Mathematics and Computer Science at Saint Mary’s College where he developed a class called “Mathematics of Voting.”

Missie Summers Kempf of Portage. Ms. Summers-Kempf is active in a number of groups organized around racial justice and environmental issues in Northwest Indiana.

Neither Republican nor Democrat: Christopher Harris of Hammond. Mr. Harris is a project manager for a commercial construction general contractor and participates in the Mitch Daniels Leadership Foundation.

Sonia Leerkamp of Ninevah. Ms. Leerkamp is the former Hamilton County Prosecuting Attorney who serves on the board of the Brown County League of Women Voters. She is also the Chairperson of the ICRC; our rules require that the chair be one of the Neither Republican Democrat members.

Charles Taylor of Muncie. Mr. Taylor is a Professor of Political Science at Ball State University who has moderated numerous political forums and is committed to civic education.

Specific Recommendations from the Public Regarding Communities of Interest and Criteria

Congressional District 1

The Lake Michigan shoreline is a community of interest. Keep those counties that border Lake Michigan in the same district whenever possible.

The Calumet Region is a distinct community of interest. We are “one region” even though we are very diverse.

People in NW Indiana often feel ignored by the state legislature; want districts drawn that allow their community to be heard.

Growing Latinx population in northern Lake County, particularly around Whiting. Perhaps create a majority Latinx district(s) around these communities.

Concerns expressed about how the shifting population in Lake County will impact the demographics of the districts. Declining population in the northern part of Lake County means that CD1 will expand geographically – either to the south or to the east. Consider time zone, metropolitan statistical areas, other ways that NW Indiana is grouped with other parts of the state.

Congressional District 2

There are several universities and colleges in CD2; they are communities of interest and if they are in close geographic proximity, they should be in the same district.

Numerous people expressed frustration that CD 2 went from being one of the most competitive in the state from 2001 – 2011 but has been uncompetitive since new maps were drawn in 2011.

People in South Bend felt that their influence as the 4th largest city in Indiana is diminished because they are an urban center in a largely rural Congressional district.

People expressed frustration that they invite their Congressperson to participate in public forums and other community events and their invitations are declined or ignored. They attribute this lack of response to uncompetitive districts and note that previous incumbents from both parties were quite accessible when the district was competitive.

Congressional District 3

Concerns expressed about HD50, which includes all of Huntington County and a portion of Fort Wayne. The Fort Wayne portion of the district has a large Latinx population, and they feel underrepresented.

Concerns about Fort Wayne being divided into too many state legislative districts, and the combination of urban neighborhoods with rural areas. Most of the legislators who represent significant portions of Fort Wayne do not live in Fort Wayne.

Advocates for the public school district in Fort Wayne feel it is difficult to get adequate representation because the city is divided into too many state legislative districts.

Concerns about gerrymandering contributing to an unbalanced political landscape, which is causing young professionals to leave Indiana for a place they feel is more compatible with their political views.

Congressional District 4

Concerns about prison gerrymandering in Putnam County. It is a small, rural county so including prisoners from correctional facility in Putnamville in redistricting numbers skews their population.

Same concerns from Plainfield regarding prison gerrymandering.

Same concerns from Miami County regarding prison gerrymandering.

Greencastle is divided into two state Senate districts; they would prefer that the whole town be in one.

Voters in Howard County believe that it should not be divided into two Congressional Districts.

Congressional District 5

Large Latinx population in Clinton County is an important community of interest and should be kept intact.

Multiple people in the 5th CD complained about the lines moving in 2011 to shift them from an urban-focused district (7th) to the 5th CD. They did not move but their representation in Congress changed considerably.

Multiple people from the urban parts of CD 5 complained about their voices being drowned out by rural voters in the northern part of the district.

Concerns expressed about the multiple communities of interest in the 5th District (urban, suburban, and rural) and how many feel unheard.

Proportional representation was suggested as a way to make redistricting more accurately reflect the will of the voters.

Congressional District 6

Multiple people in the southern part of the district said it is inappropriate to have a congressional district that extends from the Ohio River to Muncie. Voters in southern Indiana usually access media from Louisville or Cincinnati, so they do not know much about candidates from the northern part of the district.

Several people said that the counties bordering the Ohio River are a community of interest.

Delaware County and the city of Muncie are divided into too many legislative districts given the population.

Common economic interests should be considered when drawing district lines.

Senate District 42 contains all or parts of seven counties. More effort should be made to not split counties.

Congressional District 7

Suggestion that the doughnut counties surrounding Marion County be joined in a Congressional District since they are mostly suburban areas and share common interests.

Several people living in the Indianapolis portion of SD28 commented that voters in their community are not well-served by being grouped in a district with largely rural counties.

Concerns expressed about several state legislative districts that combine Marion County with surrounding counties. Residents of Marion County feel their voice is not heard.

Several people commented that more competitive districts are essential to holding elected officials accountable and to improving voter turnout.

Congressional District 8

Several people from Evansville said their city should not be divided into two state Senate districts.

Like in other urban centers, Evansville voters complained that their voices are silenced because they are in districts with rural voters from adjoining counties.

Multi-member districts suggested to encourage more diversity and competition.

Concerns expressed about college students leaving the state upon graduation because they want to live in a place more compatible with their political views.

A voter complained about HD78, which is mostly in Vanderburgh County but contains a small section of Warrick County. Warrick County voters feel disconnected.

Discussion about the decline of competitiveness in the congressional district with the removal of Bloomington.

As in CD6, discussion about the Ohio River as a community of interest and how the southern and northern parts of CD8 are very different and voters would be better served if they were not combined in the same district.

Congressional District 9

Several people from Bloomington complained that Monroe County is divided into five state House districts.

Lake Monroe is a community of interest but currently it is divided into three state House districts.

People from Clark and Floyd counties testified that the Ohio River is a distinct community of interest and they do not feel well-served by a Congressional district that extends north to the southern Indianapolis suburbs.

Others felt that the northern part of CD 9 is economically and culturally different from the southern part and they should be in different congressional districts.

One person commented that Black and Brown communities in Johnson County are cracked.

One person suggested that Columbus, Mooresville, Nashville, and Martinsville share commonalities and should be joined in a district.