



Redistricting in Kentucky: Let's Build Fair Districts by a Fair Process

What is redistricting?

After each federal census, redistricting is the process of drawing new boundaries for congressional and state legislative districts. The next census will be done in 2020, with results released in the middle of 2021 and Kentucky redistricting likely to occur early in 2022.

Why should Kentucky change the way districts are drawn?

A fair approach to redistricting will:

- Avoid costly lawsuits like the ones resulting from 2012 redistricting
- Make the process transparent. Past efforts were done behind closed doors and without public hearings
- Avoid blatant gerrymandering (drawing districts to give advantage to an incumbent, a party or a group)
- Assure votes have meaning: voters in 'safe districts' have little chance to have their votes count if they support opposing party candidates
- Give voters confidence in the electoral system

How has Kentucky done redistricting in the recent past?

After each census, the Kentucky Constitution requires redistricting bills passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor. The bills are

usually filed and passed within a matter of days, with little opportunity for citizen participation.

Why are fair districts important?

The make-up of districts can make it easier or harder:

- For voters to learn about candidates for legislative seats and debate who can best serve their communities
- For citizens to contact and influence their legislators once they take office
- For candidates from one party to compete fairly against another party for election
- For people of diverse backgrounds to elect candidates they prefer
- For various regions of a state (rural or urban, agricultural or industrial, areas experiencing economic growth and those seeing economic decline) to get their interests considered

What makes districts fair?

The national League of Women Voters has called for districts that are:

- Equal in population
- Compact and competitive
- Designed for effective representation of racial and linguistic minorities,
- Drawn without preference to parties or incumbent office-holders

How can Kentucky move toward a fair redistricting process?

We can urge legislators to invite public input and build confidence in the fairness of the resulting boundaries. We will ask the legislature for four primary steps:

1. Public opportunities for redistricting input in 2021
2. A later candidate filing deadline in 2022
3. Commitment to create districts that are:
 - a. Equal in population
 - b. Compact and competitive
 - c. Drawn without preference to parties or incumbent office-holders
 - d. Designed for effective representation of racial and linguistic minorities
4. A redistricting plan that can pass with bipartisan support and substantially more than a simple majority vote

The national League supports **independent redistricting commissions** that can define districts without needing legislative approval of the final plan. Unfortunately, creating that kind of commission would require a constitutional amendment approved by the Kentucky House and Senate and then ratified by a majority of voters in a statewide election. That may not be a workable strategy for our state in the next few years.

An **advisory redistricting commission** may be an option. An advisory commission gathers input and propose maps that fit within rules about fair maps, but then the legislature makes the final decision.

How can you work for a fair process that builds fair maps?

Let your legislators know that redistricting is important to you. Share messages like these:

- We want fair redistricting.
- We don't want our state gerrymandered.
- We don't want expensive court battles over redistricting.
- Hear our voices and gather our input and concerns before new legislative districts are voted in.
- Let us choose our legislators. You should not use your power to keep yourselves in power.

Here are three ways you can deliver that kind of message:

- **Good:** Send email or US mail to the addresses on their official webpages. You can use tinyurl.com/KyLegis as a shortcut to the site that lets you look up your Senator and Representative to find their addresses.
- **Better:** Call 1-800-372-7181 to leave them messages.
- **Best of All:** Speak to your legislators in person by attending their town halls, forums, and other events or by making an appointment to sit down and talk.

The League of Women Voters of Kentucky would love to talk to people in your area about this issue. To discuss planning a presentation, please contact us at 502/875-6481 or kentuckywv@gmail.com.



Questions? Please contact the League of Women Voters of Kentucky. You can reach us at www.lwvky.org, at kentuckywv@gmail.com, or at 502/875-6481.

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization that promotes the informed and active participation of citizens in government through study and action.