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Redistricting: A Decade-by-Decade Glance

[Redistricting Facts](#)

- 1889** 1889 Between 1880 and 1889, Washington's Territorial Legislature and Constitutional Convention approved two redistricting plans. The redistricting plan of 1885 was completed under the Territorial Legislature. The 1889 plan, completed by members of the Constitutional Convention, divided the state into 24 senatorial districts. The first legislature was composed of 70 county-elected members who held seats in the House of Representatives and 35 senators. Washington became the nation's 42nd state on November 11, 1889.
- 1890** During the 1890s, the Legislature failed to divide the state into congressional districts — even after Congress granted the state a second seat. A legislative redistricting plan passed with the number of senate seats totaling 34 and the number of house seats at 49.
- 1900** 1900 In 1900, the state was given its third seat in Congress. A legislative redistricting plan was passed, increasing the number of senators from 24 to 42, and the number of representatives from 80 to 95. Years of regional infighting kept the Legislature from passing a congressional district plan until 1907.
- 1901** 1901 All three legislative redistricting plans introduced by the Legislature failed to pass. In 1913, legislators passed a congressional plan that divided the state in five congressional districts.
- 1920** 1920 During the 1920s, voters made an effort to pass a redistricting plan by Initiative. But the initiative never made it to the ballot.
- 1930** 1930 Washington's population increased by 210,000 people in 10 years (from 1.35 million to 1.56 million), entitling the state to a sixth seat in Congress. In 1930, the voters passed Initiative 57 that realigned Washington's legislative boundaries for the 1932 elections. The Legislature did, however, pass a congressional plan.
- 1940** 1940 The Legislature simply refused to redraw legislative and congressional districts in this decade. As if to foreshadow events 40 years in the future, members introduced a bill to create a redistricting commission, but the proposal failed.
- 1950** In 1956, the League of Women Voters drafted a redistricting plan, put it on the ballot, and got it approved. But the Legislature fought back, and in 1957 by a two-thirds vote, it amended the initiative by restoring almost all of the old districts.
- 1960** 1960 In the 1960s the U.S. Supreme Court delivered major legal decisions that

provided states with firm standards for how to draw fair district boundaries. On the home front, the U.S. District Court required the Legislature to take up redistricting as the first order of business during the 1965 session. Nationally, the infamous 1962 case, *Baker v. Carr*, opened the door to constitutional challenges against malapportionment. This landmark case has since made it next to impossible to create districts with vastly unequal populations, and therefore, unequally-weighted votes.

- 1970** Intense partisan in-fighting kept the Legislature from passing a legislative or congressional redistricting plan. In 1971, the federal courts hired a private redistricting master who redrew a state's political map in which district boundaries were adhered all elections held between 1972 and 1980.
- 1980** In 1981, the state Legislature passed a legislative and congressional plan. Then Gov. John Spellman vetoed the congressional district plan. The 1981 district plan went before the Federal District Court where the legislative map was deemed constitutional, and congressional map was ruled unconstitutional. In 1982, the Legislature tried a second time to craft a congressional plan, but the court pronounced it unconstitutional. Finally in 1983, a temporary commission appointed by the Legislature redrew an equitable congressional district plan. In that year, voters passed a constitutional amendment that created the independent redistricting commission.
- 1990** In 1991, the state's first redistricting commission was formed with voting members appointed by the Legislature's Democratic and Republican caucuses. The commission adopted new district boundaries that remained in effect through the 2001 elections. The commission's plan was never subjected to legal challenges.
- 2000** 2000 The state's second-ever redistricting commission unanimously passed a 2002 legislative and congressional district plan. On separate dates, yet after the statutory deadline, the commissioners approved maps outlining new electoral boundaries for 49 legislative and nine congressional districts. The commissioners did, however, adopt both plans by January 1, 2002, the constitutional deadline. The 57th Legislature subsequently passed a measure, signed into law, that retroactively changed the plan due date of December 15 to January 1.