



## REDISTRICTING

Redistricting refers to the process of revising the boundaries of territories from which government officials are elected. The idea of having districts derives from our principle of “representative democracy,” whereby the people elect others to represent them in government decision-making.

Beginning in 1790 the United States conducted its first decennial census count as required by Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution in order that

“...Representatives shall be apportioned among the several states according to their respective numbers....”

In the 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court became more involved in issues pertaining to state congressional and legislative redistricting and in 1965 Congress passed the Voting Rights Act and later amended the Act so as to attempt to protect certain minority groups from electoral “schemes” which might act to discriminate against these groups. In the area of districting, plans or systems that dilute minority voting strength can be subject to challenge and should be avoided.

The process of redistricting usually begins with loading population (often merged with election data) into a districting geographic information software system. Districts are checked for population equality, with deviations from equality carefully noted. According to the courts, the “rules of thumb” for allowable deviations are remarkably small for Congressional districts. Federal law does not preclude using updated data for redistricting. However, the data must be defensible which requires sophisticated demographic estimation techniques. Williams Demographics has experience in this arena.

If boundary adjustments are needed, a “remap” is the next phase. There are some rules or principles that guide this process but generally the courts prefer jurisdictions to resolve their own remap problems. One set of rules that Williams Demographics has considerable experience with is the set that derive from the Voting Rights Act. If your area has substantial minority population, in concentrated neighborhood areas, and there is bloc-voting, you should be careful.

The goal is to avoid litigation but as a practical matter, litigation is always a threat in the redistricting world. Williams Demographics has successfully completed more than 60 redistricting and mapping projects. We have an excellent track record of avoiding litigation. Should litigation arise we have the technical expertise to assist you and we have a Ph.D. with extensive experience as a federal and state court expert witness.

Phone: 575-649-7149  
Williams Demographics  
1515 Grover Drive  
Las Cruces, NM 88005