REDISTRICTING IN OREGON
WORKING TITLE

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THE ROLE OF REDISTRICTING IN OREGON

• What is it? How does the districting process work?
• Drawing Metro Council districts after 2020
• Potential reform to districting practices
A GENERAL COMMENT ON THE PURPOSE OF ELECTIONS

• Elections get us from individual preferences to social choices (Riker 1982)
  – The critical variable for elections is district magnitude, M, the number of seats in a district (Cox 1997)
    • In American congressional elections M=1 in 435 districts
    • In Finnish parliamentary elections M ranges between 7 and 35 in 12 districts (excluding the Åland Islands district)
  – Districts can be drawn for strategic advantage in any electoral system, but this is uniquely controversial in the United States
THE CENSUS AND REDISTRICTING SCHEDULE

• April 1, 2020: Census Day
• December 31, 2020: Apportionment completed and submitted to the president for certification
  – Likely delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic
• April 1, 2021: Census data transmitted to the States for redistricting
• December 2021: Census data released to the public
• November 8, 2022: Next congressional and legislative elections
Who draws the lines in the states?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NJ</th>
<th>MT</th>
<th>HI</th>
<th>CO*</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>AK</th>
<th>ID</th>
<th>AZ</th>
<th>CA (I)</th>
<th>CA (c)</th>
<th>MI</th>
<th>CO*</th>
<th>2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: (Donovan, 2011). Colorado adopted a “kingmaker” commission in 1974 which was itself reformed in 2018. At the same time Colorado also adopted an independent commission for congressional redistricting.

*When were commissions adopted?*
CRITERIA FOR REDISTRICTING

• Federal, mandatory standards
  – Population equality
    • Less stringent standard in legislative and local redistricting
  – Compliance with Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act

• State standards vary; Oregon is exceptional (ORS § 188.010)
  – Contiguity
  – Respect existing geographic and political boundaries
  – Preserve communities of common interest
  – Maintain transportation links
  – Do not favor a party, incumbent, or person
  – State house districts are “nested” within state senate districts
THE OREGON METRO COUNCIL

- A unique, regional planning and coordination agency across Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties
- Elects a regional president and auditor
- Six nonpartisan councilors are elected from districts
- The districting process is scheduled to start in spring 2021
GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR REDISTRICTING

• Compliance with federal and state requirements
• A role for the public
  – Participation in comment hearings
  – What is a community?
COMPUTER-BASED DISTRICTING

- Can we use algorithms to provide a set of district maps to select among?
- Some colleagues and I have developed an algorithm to do this task
  - We can produce contiguous and population balanced district plans (additional criteria to come)
  - We use 2018 ACS data at the block group level (N=964) for our simulated maps
  - We start with random “hubs” and then add block groups to each hub before swapping block groups to reach population balance
Simulated Plan 21
CAN WE DRAW A LATINO-MAJORITY DISTRICT?

• The Latino population is 12.7% in these block groups but the effective threshold for a district is 16.7%

• Is it possible to draw a Latino-majority population district?
Latino Population in the Metro Block Groups

![Map showing Latino population distribution in Metro Block Groups](image-url)
Histogram of Latino Population in 126 Simulated Districts
District 1 in this Simulation is 22% Latino
SHOULD OREGON CHANGE HOW REDISTRICTING IS DONE?

• Like most states the Oregon legislature has primary authority to draw congressional and legislative districts

• In the event the legislature does not pass a redistricting bill:
  – The congressional map is drawn by the courts
  – The legislative map is drawn by the Secretary of State

• There is an effort to qualify for the ballot a measure that will adopt a 12-member independent redistricting commission
  – https://www.peoplenotpoliticiansoregon.com/
HOW DOES A COMMISSION CHANGE THE PROCESS?

• Districts are more competitive

• Communities of interest are respected
  – (Stephanopoulos 2012)

• Reduced concerns about conflicts of interest, though politics may still be present
  – (Cain 2012)

• Maps are produced on a timely basis and largely avoid litigation
  – (Miller and Grofman 2013)
REFERENCES


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