

# Getting Involved: Strategies for Different Redistricting Processes

The redistricting process varies in each state and local area. Knowing the process your area uses and who you need to sway is important to designing an effective advocacy strategy. Much of redistricting is still done using a legislative process, but more and more, commissions are being used. Commissions are smaller groups that have been given the power to draw, and often, approve maps.

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Knowing your audience and how to reach them are key parts of your strategy. Research the decision makers to understand their influence and relationships. Also research the importance of public hearings and how to participate and monitor them

- Who are the decision makers?
- How are they selected or who selects them? What relationship does the commissioner have to the person or entity appointing them?
- What relationships do you or people you know have with them?
- How important are hearings or lobbying to making an impact?
- How will you be able to participate?

Use the descriptions and suggestions below to refine your strategies to best impact the decision-making group. A basic strategy starts with these activities (See **Getting Involved: Core Strategies for Impacting Maps**):

- Organize your community.
- Build your coalitions.
- Set your goals, including whether you are presenting a community map or whole map.
- Prepare your testimony (See **Getting Involved: Preparing Your Testimony**).

## Legislative Process

### Who Decides:

Lawmakers, such as city council members or county commissioners, draw and vote to pass new district lines. In some cases, the maps also require the Governor/Mayor's approval.

### Key Features:

- ❖ Behind the scenes lobbying often takes place (not always transparent).
- ❖ Notice for public hearings may be difficult to find, or not posted timely or distributed widely.

### Strategies:

- ❖ Organize people to testify at hearings with a common message.
- ❖ Advocate to keep your community together.
- ❖ Advocate for a transparent and open process.
- ❖ Use legislative advocacy tactics like ones used to pass a law:
  - Find decision makers who are allies.
  - Meet with key lawmakers and influencers (committee chairs, donors, community leaders).
  - Advocate with the Governor or Mayor if s/he approves the maps.
- ❖ Exert external pressure (traditional and social media, letters of support, phone banking, rallies).

## Independent Commission

### Who Decides:

An independent commission is composed of individuals selected by an appointment or screening process conducted by an independent entity, like a state supreme court. They can be elected officials, but not from the body for which the map is being drawn.

### Key Features:

- ❖ Commissions usually have clearly stated redistricting criteria.
- ❖ Public hearings are the main way to have community voice heard.
- ❖ Many people are giving input, which may make it harder for your message to break through.
- ❖ Hearing notices and maps should be publicly posted and available.
- ❖ No lobbying behind the scenes takes place.

### Strategies:

- ❖ Encourage your community members to apply to become commissioners.
- ❖ Organize as many people as possible to testify at hearings with a common message. Hearings are more important, because it is unlikely that you will be able to talk to a commissioner directly about your proposal.
- ❖ Exert external pressure: traditional and social media, op-eds, letters of support, rallies, etc.

## Variations on Redistricting Processes

There are other types of redistricting process. If your area uses a variation like the ones listed below, use the previous questions to understand who holds the decision-making power. Effective strategies may be a combination of the above activities, because hearings may be an important feature, and the commissioners are often elected officials. A final strategy to keeping your community together may be to consider challenging the maps in court.

**Advisory commission** – A commission that draws a map for consideration by another body such as a legislature. Unlike other commissions, an advisory commission does not have the legal power to pass a binding map. Membership of an advisory commission may consist of legislators, non-legislators, or a mix.

**Backup commission** – A commission that draws plans only if the legislature cannot agree on a map or when the governor vetoes a proposal and no new map is passed.

**Political appointee commission** – A commission composed, in whole or in part, of individuals who are directly appointed by elected officials or party leadership. In some states, the membership of a political appointee commission is evenly divided between parties but, in other states, there could be more members of one party than the other.

**Politician commission** – A commission composed entirely of lawmakers or other elected officials. Politician commissions usually are appointed by the legislative or party leadership, the governor, or chief justice of the state supreme court.