

# Washington

State website:  
2000-cycle districts:  
Primary governing law:

Redistricting Commission, Secretary of State  
Congress, State Legislature  
Wash. Const. art. II, § 43; Rev. Code Wash. ch. 44.05

## The Latest

On January 1, 2012, the [independent commission](#) responsible for redistricting released [final maps](#) (along with a [final report](#)) for [congressional](#) and [state legislative](#) districts. On February 1, the state legislature passed [EHCR 4409](#), a slightly amended version of those plans, by greater than the requisite 2/3 vote.

## Institution

Redistricting political control:

	Governor	State Senate	State House
<a href="#">Congressional lines</a>	Independent commission with balanced partisan composition		
<a href="#">State legislative lines</a>			
2000 cong. lines	Independent commission with balanced partisan composition		
2000 state lines			

Washington's congressional and state legislative lines are drawn by a five-member [independent commission](#), created in 1982.

Each of the four legislative leaders (majority and minority party leader in each legislative house) each select one registered voter to serve as commissioner, and those four commissioners choose a nonvoting fifth commissioner to serve as chair. If the commissioners cannot agree on a chair, the state Supreme Court will select one. Current members are [here](#). [[Wash. Const. art. II, § 43\(2\)](#)]

The state constitution provides that no commissioner may have been an elected official or elected district, county, or state party officer within two years of appointment to the commission. [[Wash. Const. art. II, § 43\(3\)](#)] State law further prohibits those who have been registered lobbyists within the last year from serving as a commissioner; this latter limitation may be altered by the state legislature. [[Rev. Code Wash. § 44.05.050](#)]

The independent commission will submit its districting plan to the legislature, which may within the next 30 days amend the plan if two-thirds of each house approves the amendment. State statute provides that no legislative amendment may include more than two percent of the population of any particular district; this limitation may be altered by statute. [[Wash. Const. art. II, § 43\(7\)](#); [Rev. Code Wash. § 44.05.100](#)]

The state Supreme Court has original jurisdiction to hear legal challenges in state court to redistricting plans; it is also given the automatic authority to draw plans itself if the commission has not adopted a plan by January 1, 2012. [[Rev. Code Wash. §§ 44.05.100; 44.05.130](#)]

## Timing

Census data were delivered to Washington on [February 23, 2011](#).

The Washington state constitution requires that the commission produce congressional and state legislative plans by January 1, 2012, and the legislature will have 30 days thereafter to amend the plan. If the commission does not produce plans by January 1, the state Supreme Court will produce a plan, by March 1, 2012. Candidates must file for congressional and state legislative

primary elections by June 8, 2012. [[Wash. Const. art. II, § 43\(6\)](#); Rev. Code Wash. §§ [44.05.100](#); [29A.24.050](#)]

In the normal course of affairs, Washington law prohibits redrawing state legislative lines mid-decade, before the next Census. However, by a two-thirds vote of each house of the legislature, the independent commission may be reconvened to redraw district lines at any time. [[Wash. Const. art. II, § 43\(8\), \(11\)](#); Rev. Code Wash. §§ [44.05.100](#), [44.05.120](#)]

## Public input

Commission meetings are open to the public and distributed via [interactive webcast](#). When the commission's work is done, the commission must publish a report explaining the plan. The meeting schedule is posted [here](#), and minutes and materials from past meetings archived [here](#). [[Rev. Code Wash. § 44.05.080](#)]

The commission allows members of the public to [comment](#) on ideas or plans for redistricting, or to [submit their own plans](#), which were accepted through August 15, 2011. Written public comments are indexed [here](#). The commission's own draft maps are archived [here](#) and [here](#).

## Criteria

Like all states, Washington must comply with constitutional [equal population requirements](#); the state constitution further requires that state legislative districts be equally populated, "as nearly as practicable," excluding nonresident military personnel. [[Wash. Const. art. II, § 43\(5\)](#); Rev. Code Wash. § [44.05.090](#)]

Washington must also, like all states, comply with [section 2 of the Voting Rights Act](#).

The Washington constitution requires that, to the extent reasonable, both constitutional and state legislative districts should be contiguous, compact, and convenient, and follow natural geographic, artificial, or political subdivision boundaries. The commission must also not purposely draw plans to favor or discriminate against any political party or group. By statute, Washington further provides that districts should be drawn to preserve areas recognized as communities of interest, and that the number of divided counties and municipalities be as small as possible; they also define contiguous areas as those without geographical boundaries or artificial barriers preventing transportation. Finally, Washington statutes require the commission to "provide fair and effective representation and to encourage electoral competition." [[Wash. Const. art. II, § 43\(5\)](#); Rev. Code Wash. § [44.05.090](#)]

State legislative districts are, by definition, nested; one Senator and two Representatives are elected from each district. [[Rev. Code Wash. § 44.05.090](#)]

## 2010-cycle cases

*In re 2012 Washington State Redistricting Plan*, No. 86976-6 (Wash. Sup. Ct.): a challenge in state court to the congressional and state legislative districts, based on alleged violations of several state criteria, including unequal population, insufficient attention to political boundaries, and inadequate competition.

- [Petition for declaratory judgment](#) (Feb. 8, 2012).
- Briefs re interim plan by [petitioner](#), [State](#) (Mar. 1).
  - [Petitioner's response brief](#) (Mar. 8).
- [Order](#) approving map temporarily for 2012, [briefing to continue](#) (Mar. 14).
- [Motion for dismissal, concurrence](#) (Oct. 29).
- [Order](#) dismissing the case (Nov. 2).

**The latest:** On March 14, the state Supreme Court [determined](#) that too little time remained to address petitioner's claims for 2012, and ordered the use of the commission's maps for the upcoming 2012 elections. On November 2, 2012, the case was [dismissed](#) by stipulation of the parties.

2000 cycle

In the 2000 redistricting cycle, Washington's commission adopted state legislative plans on December 17, 2001, and congressional plans on January 2, 2002. With a 2/3 vote in each house, the legislature made two minor adjustments to the state legislative plan, with a 2/3 vote in each house, on February 11, 2002. It does not appear that either plan was challenged in court.

Other state links

Washington's Redistricting Board Game

Congress	State legislature	Maps & Data	States			
Current status	Current status	Litigation	Alabama	Indiana	Nebraska	South Carolina
Timing	Timing		Alaska	Iowa	Nevada	South Dakota
Authority	Authority		Arizona	Kansas	New Hampshire	Tennessee
Institution	Institution		Arkansas	Kentucky	New Jersey	Texas
Party control	Party control	Reform	California	Louisiana	New Mexico	Utah
Criteria	Criteria		Colorado	Maine	New York	Vermont
			Connecticut	Maryland	North Carolina	Virginia
			Delaware	Massachusetts	North Dakota	Washington
			Florida	Michigan	Ohio	West Virginia
			Georgia	Minnesota	Oklahoma	Wisconsin
Overview of redistricting		Further resources	Hawaii	Mississippi	Oregon	Wyoming
Why it matters	Redistricting criteria	My work	Idaho	Missouri	Pennsylvania	
Public engagement	Preclearance	Tools	Illinois	Montana	Rhode Island	