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REDISTRICTING

Redistricting is the process of redrawing electoral district boundaries. It is meant to ensure that every person has fair representation at the local, state, and federal levels. Census data collected every ten years are used to draw new districts, each with about the same number of people.

Why is it important?

How district lines are drawn influences who runs for public office and who is elected. Elected representatives make decisions that are important to our lives, from ensuring safety in schools to adopting immigration policies. Once drawn, these district boundaries are in place for the next ten years, and their policy impacts can last well beyond that.

We are advocating for a transparent redistricting process that equitably represents BIPOC (Black, indigenous, people of color) communities, low-income people and immigrants in

Massachusetts. 10 years ago, the community-based redistricting process created the first majority BIPOC Congressional District which Ayanna Pressley now represents. We can create more opportunities for people who reflect Massachusetts demographics to represent our needs.

Why should my community be involved?

Redistricting has been used at times to exclude communities from political power. By fully participating in and monitoring the upcoming redistricting process, underrepresented communities will have the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice and voice their needs and interests. District boundaries are generally drawn once every 10 years, so this process has long-term effects on community representation.

Who is in charge of redistricting?

In Massachusetts, the state legislature is responsible for drawing congressional districts and state legislative districts in 2021. Local governments are responsible for redistricting their own districts in 2022. The state legislature is holding hearings NOW to hear from community members across the state.

CALL TO ACTION

Summer Congressional District Hearings

During the summer, the Special Joint Committee on Redistricting will hold a virtual hearing for residents of the 8th, 1st, and 3rd Congressional Districts. We need community voices from residents to offer their opinions on local and community interests. See below for the cities and towns in each district.

- [Congressional District 4](#) on July 19 at 12-5pm ([Map](#))
- [Congressional District 9](#) on July 29 at 5pm ([Map](#))

Take Action

- **Testify virtually** and provide live testimony during the hearing. Sign up below:
 - [Congressional District 4](#)
 - [Congressional District 9](#)
- To **submit written testimony**, use the [Contact the Committee](#) form on the Special Joint Committee on Redistricting website.
- **Attend the hearing** through the livestream on the [Legislative Website](#).
- **Questions and Resources**
 - Check out the sections below for a [testimony template](#) and [talking points](#);
 - Drawing Democracy Coalition's [instructions and suggested talking points](#)
 - Contact Tanekwah Hinds (thinds@aclum.org), the Racial Justice Community Advocate at the ACLU of MA, for questions on how to give testimony and redistricting advocacy.

- For questions on the logistics of the hearing, contact committee staff with any questions at (617) 722-2014. Please be advised that the schedule and agenda are subject to change at the discretion of the Chairs.

WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

1. **Follow the Drawing Democracy Coalition:** For the most up to date local info about redistricting
 - a. [Website](#): Sign up for the newsletter for updates
 - b. [Facebook](#)
 - c. [Twitter](#)
2. **Submit Community Maps:** Provide input on how to draw the political borders of your community that you want incorporated into a single district via [Representable](#). It's an easy process and the instructions are available on the [website](#).
 - a. Schedule a mapathon by [filling out this form](#)
 - b. **Resources:** [Worksheet](#), [Walk-Through](#), [submitted maps](#), and [FAQs](#)
 - c. The Drawing Democracy Coalition can be a resource for your efforts. Contact Achutha (araman@miracoalition.org) and Arlyss (arlyss@mavotertable.org) to set up a one-on-one Zoom meeting.
3. **Testify at Hearings:** The state legislature's Joint Committee on Redistricting committee is hosting public hearings to get community input on the process. Testify at an upcoming hearing to encourage a transparent process that equitably represents BIPOC communities, low-income people and immigrants in Massachusetts
4. **Learn more about redistricting:** Check out the Drawing Democracy Coalition [toolkit](#) for more information on the history and importance of redistricting and how to get involved.

TESTIMONY TEMPLATE

*You will have **THREE MINUTES** for oral testimony. Time your testimony ahead of time so you don't get cut off. You can submit written testimony for longer statements.*

Goal

Our goal is to define "communities of interest," so that communities can elect candidates of their preference in the next decade. A community of interest is a neighborhood, community, or group of people who have common policy concerns and would benefit from being in a single district. Another way of understanding a community of interest is that it provides a way for a community to tell its own story about what neighbors share in common, and what makes it unique when compared to surrounding communities. A community of interest is defined by the local community members like you!

What are examples of a community of interest?

A community of interest can be defined in many ways. Here are a few examples:

- Residents who have been working together to keep a local health clinic open
- Community members who have sought assistance in repairing their neighborhood after a natural disaster;
- A neighborhood organizing to have a high school built closer to their area;
- A community that advocates for special recognition of its cultural holidays, like Lunar New Year.

Introduction

Begin your oral testimony by thanking Redistricting Committee Chairs Senator William Brownsberger and Representative Mike Moran, as well as other members of the Committee, for hosting this public hearing and for their commitment to engaging with grassroots organizations throughout this process.

Introduce yourself and the organization you are representing. If applicable, mention that your organization is a proud member of the Drawing Democracy Coalition.

Content

Choose one or more of the talking points below for your testimony.

- **Description of your community map**—Describe the boundaries, significant landmarks, and gathering places.
 - o What are the streets or boundaries that mark your community borders on each side?
 - o What are the significant landmarks: rivers, parks, shopping areas, or historic sites, etc.?
 - o What are the gathering places: shopping districts, schools, community centers, religious places, and social service agencies?
 - o Do the current political district boundaries divide your community? Or do they keep your community together?

Example: “As you can see on the map that we submitted for our community of interest Riverside South: The northern boundary is the river, the eastern boundary is Highway 10, the southern boundary extends to Main Street, and the western edge goes to the city boundary where we meet the next town. Almanson Park by the river is where the neighbors gather to celebrate. Our community is currently divided into 2 city council districts and represented by two city council members.”

- **Description of your community**—Describe your community by including social and economic demographics, and narrative information about its history and culture. Describe what connects the people and why it’s important that they be kept together.

Include stories.

- o Imagine describing your community to a visitor from out of town.
- o Who lives in your community? What kinds of things do they do for a living?
- o Does your neighborhood have celebrations or traditions, like street festivals or parades?

- Are there important places where people gather, like shopping areas, places of worship, parks, or community centers? Is there a place that is the largest employer?
- What is the history of how your community came together?

Example: “My Little Cambodia neighborhood is where many new immigrants move to first when they come to the city. In the 1980s, it was mostly Southeast Asian. There was a small shopping district where people come in from all over to get Asian groceries and other goods. Along the main road of that area, there is a parade each year celebrating Lunar New Year.”

- **Include data from reliable sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau as another way to describe your community and what neighbors have in common.** This will make the case stronger. You can search your city or town data [here](#).

- What is the average level of education or graduation rates? What is the average income level? Are there common occupations or jobs people have?
- What kind of housing is common? Single family homes, large apartment buildings? Do people rent or own their homes?
- Are neighbors mostly immigrants? Is there a common language? How do neighbors rate their level of English?
- What are the different ancestries, races, and ethnicities of the neighborhood? (Race and ethnicity may be one factor, but it cannot be the predominant reason that a community is unique and needs to be kept united during redistricting.)

Example: “My neighborhood is working class, low to median income families mostly renters. The median household income is \$32,000. Many of our residents moved from the South to this neighborhood to build a new life.”

- **Description of how your community is different or alike from the communities around you**—Highlighting community issues in personal stories and written narratives helps demonstrate the need for elected officials who understand and respond to community needs. Share stories and data about community concerns and if you feel like your voices have been heard and your needs have been met in the past.

- Has your community come together to advocate for important services, like more translated information or health centers in your neighborhood?
- Have you worked for more recognition or support of your community, like having holidays recognized or historical events commemorated?
- Are there stories about harm because your voice has been ignored? What are some barriers to solving that issue?
- Has the makeup of your community changed over the past ten years, since the last redistricting process? What populations have increased or decreased, and how has that changed your community's interests?
- What kind of relationship do you have with elected officials in your area? Are you able to meet with them?
- Using income, education, housing, and other data, compare your neighborhood with ones nearby.

Example: “A few years ago, my neighbors and I started complaining about the lack of affordable healthy food. We found that there were ten liquor stores, and the closest grocery store was almost two miles away. Like Green Heights, our neighborhood of Hamilton South is working hard to bring a food market in. The neighborhood to the north has two grocery stores...”

Conclusion

- Restate your goals, acknowledge your community members and partners in attendance, and thank the members.

Example: “I believe my neighborhood should be kept together for the many reasons our coalition members have outlined. I want to thank the commissioners for their consideration of keeping my neighborhood together.”

OVERALL TALKING POINTS

- We want a transparent redistricting process that equitably represents BIPOC communities, low-income people and immigrants in Massachusetts.
- We are committed to advocating for a statewide map that keeps our communities whole and increases the number of majority BIPOC districts. If we work together, we can create districts that maximize our communities’ chances of authentic representation and open new opportunities for building power.
- We believe it’s important to:
 - Use data from the 2020 Census to create district maps that maximize the political power of people of color, low-income people, and immigrants;
 - Educate and mobilize community members to participate in public forums and provide feedback on district maps;
 - Democratize access to data and mapping tools to increase community voice in redistricting;
 - And advocate for a redistricting process that is transparent and open to all.
- Redistricting determines who can run for public office and who is elected to make decisions for our communities for the next 10 years.
- Because of community efforts and input in the past, Massachusetts has doubled the number of districts that contain a majority of a racial or linguistic minority population in the state legislature and created the first majority BIPOC Congressional District.
- In 2021, we have the opportunity to build on this progress and move Massachusetts even closer to ensuring that everyone – including BIPOC communities, low-income people and immigrants – has equitable representation. To do so, it is critical that we

maintain an open, public dialogue between community members and the redistricting committee about our shared goals and how we can work together to achieve them.

- This is especially important considering the unprecedented delay in the release of the 2020 Census data, which means we have a shorter time period to redraw the maps. The only way we will be able to succeed is through constant communication, transparency and trust.
- This hearing marks an important step in this partnership and we are grateful for the opportunity to share with you our goals and concerns about the redistricting process. We look forward to continuing to work together to elevate the voices of those who are most impacted and ensure a more equitable and accountable democracy.

FAQs

Most questions can be answered in the Drawing Democracy Coalition [toolkit](#) and the resources below.

What is the redistricting timeline?

1. Public Hearings - Summer/Fall 2021

The state legislature's Joint Committee on Redistricting will announce its process and public hearing dates. The hearings are an opportunity for community members to tell their stories and present a case for keeping their communities united. There may be hearings before the release of data from the Census Bureau or before any draft maps are displayed.

2. Delivery of Census Data - September 2021

The Census Bureau is expected to deliver census results to the states by September 30, 2021. This is the basic data used for all redistricting. If community organizations are already engaged in census outreach, they can begin to engage neighbors on issues that are important to them. Collecting stories, issues, and contact information is one way to start preparing for redistricting.

3. Draft Maps - Fall 2021

Draft maps will be released with an opportunity for public comment and for community leaders to weigh in before any votes are taken to adopt a final map. Having access to the draft map, as well as the underlying data, will be important for any analysis. Some of the things to consider are whether the maps incorporate community suggestions, respect neighborhood areas, and adhere to the Voting Rights Act and other redistricting criteria.

4. Map Approval - Deadline: November 8, 2021

For the new maps to go into effect, legislators will have to vote on and approve them. The Coalition will directly lobby and educate legislators about the draft maps before this vote occurs. After the maps are approved, they can be assessed for potential legal challenges. If the maps are unsatisfactory, advocates can challenge them in courts, for example by arguing that they violate the Voting Rights Act.

5. **Elections with New Maps** - begin in November 2022

The new maps will be used in subsequent elections for the next ten years. The long-lasting effect of redistricting is one of the most important reasons for communities to be involved.

RESOURCES

Check out the Drawing Democracy Coalition's [toolkit](#) and [resource page](#) for a comprehensive list of materials.

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