

Learn more about the Fair Map Amendment!

Frequently Asked Questions

What is redistricting?

Redistricting is the process by which legislative maps are drawn after each decennial census. Since 2010 is a census year, state legislative and Congressional districts throughout the United States will be redrawn to reflect changes in population. The Brennan Center has published a thoughtful and accessible Citizens' Guide to Redistricting (HYPERLINK www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/a_citizens_guide_to_redistricting/).

Why is Illinois' process of redistricting ripe for reform?

The current redistricting process is controlled by the legislative leaders of whichever political party is in power immediately following the US Census, which is conducted every ten years. It is a secretive process that results in the almost-certain election of candidates favored by the political leaders in power. The Illinois legislature has complete control over drawing the boundaries of Illinois' 59 legislative districts. Because of partisan gridlock, for the last thirty years a partisan name drawn from a hat determined which political party's map would become the approved map from which all candidates for the General Assembly run for election or – in most instances - reelection.

Is there a better way to ensure a more transparent, less arcane process?

The supporters of the Illinois Fair Map Amendment believe that there are a number of cornerstones to any reform effort:

- The Constitutional protections embodied in the Voting Rights Act must be preserved
- There must be independence in map making – politicians should not draw the lines; neither incumbency or a voter's party history should be considered
- The process of redistricting must be transparent and open to the public. The public should be able to participate in the process.

Why are we trying redistricting reform via citizen initiative?

Because the Illinois General Assembly has failed, despite the call to do so from many quarters, to agree on a best way to reform the current process.

The legislative article in the Illinois constitution (Article IV) is the only one that can be amended by citizen initiative and so offers a golden opportunity for voters to become involved in shaping an important aspect of representative government. The proposed amendment must be applicable to both the structure and procedure of the General Assembly.

The Fair Map Amendment seeks to undo - by changing the composition of legislative

districts - the structural nesting requirement currently in the Illinois Constitution. Nesting in Illinois results in two Representative districts nested (within the boundary) in one Senate legislative district. Under the Fair Map Amendment, the House and Senate districts would be drawn independent of each other.

The Illinois Fair Map Amendment changes the procedure by which the General Assembly draws its legislative map after every decennial census. Under the current system, redistricting is done by a bill, with both the Senate and the House passing the bill and sending it on to the Governor for signature.

How will the Illinois Fair Map change the way in which Illinois does redistricting?

1. Under the Fair Map Amendment, redistricting would be placed in the hands of an independent Temporary Advisory Commission, known as TRAC. Eight members would be appointed by the four legislative leaders, and a ninth member would be selected by the appointees and designated the chairperson of the commission.

There are very strict and specific criteria by which the leaders are bound when appointing members of TRAC. No current legislators or lobbyists may serve on TRAC.

2. Maps drawn by TRAC are guided by stringent, specific and established criteria, in order of importance.

3. The TRAC process is open and transparent with its meetings open to the public with (at least) 24-hours notice; the public is invited to submit maps to TRAC. It is likely that TRAC will consult with software vendors who have the capacity to draw maps based on the specific criteria. We expect that TRAC will consider dozens of possible maps from a variety of sources.

4. TRAC will draw and submit a map to the Illinois Senate and another to the House of Representatives. If these first maps are not approved by a 2/3rd vote in either chamber, TRAC goes back to the map drawing board and submits another. If no map is approved by the first Monday in July, TRAC will approve one of the two previously submitted maps by the third Monday in July, and that map automatically becomes law.

5. If TRAC fails to meet a deadline, a special master process is triggered and that master will file the final map.

Is there a document that helps me understand the differences between the current way redistricting is accomplished and what the Fair Map Amendment will do?

Yes. Please visit here (HYPERLINK) <http://www.ilfairmap.com/about-redistricting/current-system-vs-proposed-system/>)

How was the idea for the Illinois Fair Map Amendment developed?

The amendment was based initially on a proposal recommended by Governor Quinn's

Illinois Reform Commission, which was headed by former Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Collins. The amendment language was revised several times with input from the League of Women Voters of Illinois, the Brennan Center for Justice, the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, Illinois Reform Commission members and others.

Why not replicate the redistricting system used in Iowa?

It is true that Iowa does redistricting by commission but the commission functions to advise the legislature and to draw draft lines for the legislature to accept, reject or modify. Additionally, Iowa's geography and population are much different than that of Illinois.

How many other states conduct redistricting through an independent commission?

Six – Arkansas, Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana and Washington.

How many signatures are required to ensure that the Fair Map Amendment gets onto the November 2 general election ballot?

Signatures equal to 8% of the total vote cast for governor in the most recent gubernatorial election must be collected, or nearly 300,000 valid signatures. The Fair Map Amendment organizers have targeted 500,000 as their goal to ensure that we reach the approximately 300,000 valid signatures required.

Why should I sign the petition?

If you believe that in Illinois our elected leaders are too powerful, that partisan gridlock and not good public policy is all we get from those we elect, if you believe it's time to reclaim our right to elect representatives of our choice, and if you believe in getting voters directly involved in reforming our state government, please sign the petition.

How can I help circulate a petition?

Go the ILFairMap.com website where you can download a petition. Each petition is specific to an election authority so make sure you circulate the one from the correct election authority (either your county or in the case of a few communities, your city).

Remember that the signatures you obtain on the petition must be from registered voters in that election authority. As a circulator, you need not be a registered voter but you must be at least 18, a resident of Illinois and a citizen of the United States. The petition must be copied front and back so that the language of the amendment is on the reverse side of the petition.

For more information, please contact

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