



Reapportionment and Redistricting Talking Points

Prepared by the NALEO Educational Fund

What is reapportionment?

Reapportionment is the process by which the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are apportioned to each state based on the decennial Census population data. Every 10 years, some states gain seats, while others lose seats to ensure that every single congressional district in the country is of the same population size as much as possible. Every state, however, is assured of at least one Congressional seat no matter how small its statewide population may be.

What is redistricting?

Redistricting is the process of re-drawing new Congressional, state and local political districts to ensure they are all as equal in population size as possible, as required under the U.S. Constitution. Redistricting decisions last for the next 10 years.

Why is redistricting important for the Latino community?

The districts created during the redistricting process will determine the political landscape for at least the next ten years. As redistricting shapes the contours of our representative democracy, Latinos need to have a voice in this process. Much like the Latino community placed a high priority on participating in the Census, now line drawers must place that same level of priority on ensuring Latinos have the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice..

What is the Voting Rights Act and why is important for redistricting?

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) protects Latinos and other underrepresented groups from discrimination in the electoral process. Under the VRA, redistricting plans cannot dilute the Latino vote, and districts must provide Latinos with a fair opportunity to choose their elected leaders.

Why is it important to get involved in the redistricting process?

As the nation's second-largest population group, Latinos must make their voices heard in this year's redistricting process. It is vital for all stakeholders to get involved because the people who are drawing the lines must use input from the community to draw fair maps. In order to comply with the VRA, the line drawers need information from Latinos about their neighborhoods and communities and how maps affect Latinos' ability to elect their representatives. Community involvement also helps ensure a fair and transparent process, and full access to participate effectively.

How do I get involved?

In many states the redistricting process is decided by elected officials, while other states have citizen commissions. In both cases, community members should seek out opportunities to participate in the redistricting process. Community members can testify during hearings, or help groups that are providing public comment to gather information about Latino neighborhoods and communities. (Mention mobilization efforts and hearings in your community)

Who is included in determining reapportionment?

The U.S. Constitution mandates that every person who lives in the United States, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or immigration status, be included in the Census. The Constitution requires that electoral districts be comprised of as nearly as equal as population in the number of people, not voters or some other smaller populations.

How does redistricting affect an elected official's ability to get re-elected?

Redistricting is not about incumbency protection or about keeping anyone in office. It is about ensuring that Latinos have a fair opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. Redistricting maps must comply with the U.S. Constitution's population equality requirements and the VRA.