

What other states use commissions?

Currently 23 states use some kind of commission in their redistricting process. 13 of them empower their commissions with the primary responsibility for redistricting. Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana and Washington all perform redistricting with independent commissions that limit direct participation by elected officials. California and Arizona have taken the idea of independence one step further with a selection method and other safeguards that limit commission members' link to the legislature and other partisan offices.

What have the results been?

2011 redistricting commissions in California and Arizona were able to maintain their independence, despite some challenges, to draw maps based on set criteria rather than political concerns. By many accounts, the California redistricting has created a greater number of competitive districts for both legislative and congressional seats. Washington's bipartisan independent commission completed the job with very little controversy. Commission or no commission, redistricting continues to be a high stakes, contentious and sensitive issue. With commissions, if there is controversy, it is directed at the commission, not the legislature. A commission process is also likely to be more efficient and less costly than the entire legislature working on new districts.

How can I help?

Representatives Vicki Berger (R-Salem) and Jules Bailey (D-Portland) have cosponsored HJR17 and HB2686 advancing this proposal. If you are interested in joining the movement to reform redistricting in Oregon, please contact our coalition at: greg@pdxcityclub.org



DRAWING FINE LINES

Redistricting using an Independent Commission

Despite the Legislature's unprecedented successful redistricting in 2011, Oregon's current process is open to abuse and conflicts of interest.

A non-partisan, independent redistricting commission would focus on community representation and make the process fair for all constituents. Now is the time to continue Oregon's legacy of clean, responsive government.



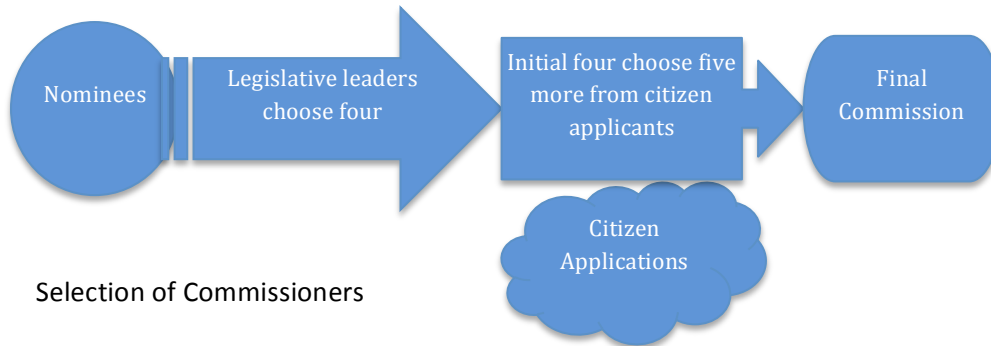
Why is now the right time?

Although the next redistricting won't be until 2021, now is the critical time to reform our system. Redistricting reform is difficult in a partisan environment and will become more so as the decade closes and parties jockey for advantage.

Making apolitical structural changes to redistricting is much easier when done without knowing which party might benefit most from the changes. The creation of an independent commission is the right thing to do for future generations of Oregon voters and making the changes now minimizes the perception of partisan advantage in the reforms.

How would the commission be selected?

There are two stages. First, the four legislative leaders would agree on the four initial commissioners from a pool of eligible nominees. Those four would then select the remaining five of the nine-member commission from a pool of eligible citizen applicants.



Where would the nominations come from?

Nominations would be solicited from organizations and individuals with knowledge of statewide issues (current and former governors and secretaries of state, former Oregon Supreme Court justices, Oregon Commission on Black Affairs, Oregon Commission for Women, etc.). These nominations would be screened for conflicts of interest and to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria prior to being presented to the legislative leaders.

What if the leaders can't agree on the first four commissioners?

Should the Legislative leaders not be able to agree, then the majority party would select two nominees who are registered from the minority party and the minority party would select two from the majority. The intent here is to select commissioners who serve in the best interest of the entire state and do not represent a particular political party or other group.

Would the commission be truly independent?

Commissioners would:

- Be pre-screened to assure that they have no record of partisan political activism.
- Be banned from holding partisan political office or being a registered lobbyist for five years before and after serving on the commission.
- Swear to be non-partisan in their activities and deliberations and would have to disclose their party registration, conflicts of interest and any relevant financial information.

The commission would follow Oregon's government ethics and public records law. Ex-parte contacts by commissioners with anyone interested in influencing the commission's work would be banned.

Although commissioners could be registered members of political parties, the method of selection and the legal limitations work to remove direct collusion with political parties and build trust that commissioners are not representatives of any party.

How would the commission do the actual work of drawing district lines?

The independent commission would solicit input from the legislature and the public. This information would inform draft maps, which would be exhibited and debated publicly throughout the state. The commission would then review feedback and produce final maps. Legal challenges, should they arise, would be reviewed by the Oregon Supreme Court and any necessary changes returned to the commission to enact.

How would the commission be funded?

Funding would be similar to today's budget for lawmakers completing the process. To assure independence, the legislature would allocate funding a year or two *before* the commission is formed.