

Representative districts should be “as close to rectangular as possible” while following existing county lines. This applies to all districts whether for the U.S. Congress or Oregon House or Senate seats. Here’s how that might work.

As much as possible, existing county borders should serve as boundaries for each district. Other “natural borders,” such as a river or mountain ridge, could also be acceptable. Some man-made barriers might also serve as a border. For example, if an interstate highway transects a county, it might physically divide a county just as any natural barrier.

After determining the population count to be represented by each district, select a precinct for a specific district. I would prefer starting in the southernmost or westernmost “corner” of the state, but that is not essential. Label the first precinct #1. Precincts would be added abutting against #1. Each of these precincts would be labelled #2. They also would abut against each other, but each must share a border with precinct #1. Once, and only after, all sides of #1 have been covered, precincts can be added that abut against #2. Each of these precincts would be labelled #3. They also would abut against each other, but each must share a border with the precinct labelled #2. Continue the process covering all sides of #3, then all sides of #4, and so on. Continue this process within each county until the total population of the district reaches the allocated level.

If the population within a county is not large enough to meet the population required for the district continue the process in an adjacent county. However, if the district is to extend into another county, it must do so at the earliest possible point. For example, if county A and county B are adjacent, if precinct #1 in county A is at the border with county B, then if any precincts from county B are to be included, precinct #2 must be from county B. The district could not be gerrymandered in a way that precinct #18 (for example) would be added from county B somewhere after an earlier point of contact.

Tom Vandegrift
1741 Douglas Ave SE
Salem OR 97302