

SUPPORT: The Fair Maps Amendment

SJRCA18/HJRCA41

Constitutional Amendment to ensure a non-partisan, transparent process to draw state legislative and congressional district maps.

Sponsors: Sen. Bush (D) - Sen. Curran (R) - Rep. Costa Howard (D) - Rep. Spain (R)

District boundaries are redrawn every 10 years to ensure that Congress and state legislatures reflect population changes after each census. An independent, transparent redistricting process that ensures communities are fully and fairly represented would protect the integrity of the democratic process and restore citizens' faith that their votes – and voices – matter.

The Fair Maps Amendment is modeled after a 2016 proposal (HJRCA58) which received 105 “YES” votes in the House. It also is modeled after California’s independent redistricting language. Additions to the amendment were made to strengthen transparency and public accountability language, as well as to explicitly protect the constitutional rights of communities of color and to count people who are incarcerated at their permanent home addresses.

This amendment would:

1. Remove politicians and sitting legislators from drawing their own districts.
2. Establish an independent redistricting commission to draw maps that is comprised of citizens who demographically, politically, and geographically represent our state.
3. Protect the constitutional rights of communities of color to elect representatives of their choosing.
4. Add sunshine and transparency by requiring the release of all communications made by the commission along with any data used to create and propose any and all maps.
5. Give the public the opportunity to participate in the process by requiring at least 30 public hearings on the maps before a final vote is taken. Members of the public will have the ability to comment on proposed maps and submit their own.

Make-up of the independent redistricting commission:

- 17-member citizen commission appointed by the two most-senior Illinois Supreme Court justices who were elected from opposite parties.
- Demographic requirements: “The commission must reflect the ethnic, gender, and racial demographics of the state.”
- Geographic requirements: Commissioners must come from different congressional districts.
- Political party requirements: 7 Democrats 7 Republicans, and 3 Independents.
- Ineligibility: To keep the commission truly independent and remove conflicts of interest, several parameters have been added to prevent manipulation. Public employees who report directly to an elected or appointed official cannot serve on the commission, nor can anyone in a job requiring Illinois Senate approval. Applicants cannot be a lobbyist or government contractor; or hold a political party position.

Criteria for drawing congressional, legislative & representative districts in order of priority:

1. Must fully comply with the U.S. Constitution and federal laws, such as the federal Voting Rights Act.
2. Must be substantially equal in population.
3. Must provide racial and language minorities with the equal opportunity to participate and elect candidates of their choosing and mirror the language in the Illinois Voting Rights Act.
4. Must provide racial and language minorities who constitute less than a voting-age majority of a district with an opportunity to substantially influence the outcome of an election.
5. Must be contiguous.
6. Must be compact.
7. Must respect geographic integrity of units of local government to the extent practical.
8. Must respect communities sharing common social or economic interests to the extent practical.
9. Must not discriminate against or in favor of any political party or individual.

Key Date Milestones:

- Deadline to appear on the next general election ballot: May 3, 2020
- Next general statewide election: November 3, 2020
- New maps in effect: Fall 2021

Proponents of The Fair Maps Amendment:

Asian-Americans Advancing Justice – Chicago
AARP Illinois
Better Government Association
Business and Professional People for the Public Interest
Campaign Legal Center
CHANGE Illinois
Chicago Votes
Chicago Urban League
Citizen Advocacy Center
Common Cause Illinois
Indivisible Chicago
Illinois Chamber of Commerce
Illinois Farm Bureau
Illinois Public Interest Research Group

John Howard Association
Latino Policy Forum
League of Women Voters Illinois
Metropolitan Planning Council
Mujeres Latinas en Accion
NAACP Chicago – South Side Branch
National Council of Jewish Women Chicago North Shore
National Rainbow PUSH Coalition
Northwest Suburbs Organizing for Action-Indivisible
Reform for Illinois
Represent Us – Illinois
Small Business Advocacy Council
Union League Club of Chicago
Unite America – Chicago Chapter