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Another Year Before Redistricting Becomes Reality

Next year, the Missouri General Assembly will start the process of redistricting political boundaries in the state.


The information starts with census data.

Redistricting is required every 10 years, based on new population data. The last time we went through this was 2001. There are two separate redistricting processes: for those representing you in both Washington, D.C. and in Jefferson City.

Congressional Districts:

As I wrote [previously](#), the Legislature is responsible for redrawing Congressional districts, which takes place in the form of legislation. Like other bills, it must be completed during the 2011 regular legislative session, which ends in May. Otherwise, the Legislature will have to come back for a special session. Coincidentally, the governor will also name two bipartisan commissions that will create new congressional district boundaries.

Ten years ago, Missouri lawmakers spent about

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two weeks dealing with Congressional districts, and had a new map ready in plenty of time before the end of the legislative session. This is worth noting because there is speculation that Missouri has lost enough population to justify the loss of a Congressional district this time around. This will complicate the process greatly.

Missouri House and Senate Districts:

In 2001, bipartisan panels were assigned in April and had until August 28 to submit their proposals to the governor for Missouri's House and Senate districts. Both of these groups held hearings around the state during May and June.

But neither the House Apportionment nor the Senate Reapportionment Commission could reach a conclusion and missed their August 28 deadline. Then, the Missouri Supreme Court appointed six appellate judges to draw new Missouri House district boundaries and six appellate judges to redraw state Senate lines. They began taking public testimony in October of that year and finished work on December 28, 2001.

Not surprisingly, politics played a huge role in redistricting. Neither redistricting panel was able to reach agreement the entire time they met. There were folks from all over the state involved, many of whom said they never got a chance to voice their opinions or concerns about what the panels were working on.

What happened in 2001 was not out of the ordinary. In 1972, a federal lawsuit was filed because somebody did not like the way a boundary was drawn in part of St. Louis. Three years later, the Missouri Supreme Court upheld the boundary as it had been created.

I do not know how smoothly this process will go next year. We will have the same situation in

Jefferson City that we had a decade ago: a governor of one political party and another party leading both the Missouri Senate and House. Whether a veto would come into play is unknown.

I would not be surprised if either of the commissions the governor will appoint will run into the same challenges that previous panels have had, which means an entire year could be spent trying to determine what the boundaries will be for Missouri's 34 Senatorial districts and 163 House districts.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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