VNP Policy Overview

Davia Downey, Ph.D
Grand Valley State University
Redistricting in the US

State Legislatures: In 37 states, the legislature has primary control of state legislative districts and 42 have primary control over congressional lines.

Advisory Commissions: Iowa, Maine, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont appoint advisory commissions to assist redistricting.

Backup Commissions: Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Texas utilize backup commissions if the legislature cannot agree on a plan.

Politician Commissions: Arkansas, Colorado, Hawaii, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania have elected officials creating redistricting plans.

Independent Commissions: Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana and Washington use Independent commissions whose membership are neither public officials or lawmakers.

Source: http://redistricting.lls.edu/who.php
### Redistricting:
Redrawing of districts to reflect population size according to the most recent Census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Every 10 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>US Census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District equality</td>
<td>Equal population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority protection</td>
<td>Voting Rights Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Redistricting in Michigan

Source: http://redistricting.lls.edu/who.php

**State Legislature** currently draws the state legislative district and congressional lines.

- Committees in both houses, which are populated according to the majority party in the legislature are in charge of drawing both sets of lines.
- Maps are submitted as statute to the legislature
- Gubernatorial veto possible
- Michigan Supreme Court can hear challenges
1973 – 1982


Detroit Metro Highlight

Wikipedia: Political Party Strength in Michigan
1983 – 1992


Detroit Metro Highlight

Wikipedia: Political Party Strength in Michigan
United States Congressional Districts in Michigan: Since 2013

2013 – 2019

Wikipedia: Political Party Strength in Michigan
VNP Policy Process

> **33 Town Hall Meetings:** Alpena, Detroit, Marquette, Lansing, and beyond.

> **Citizen Education and Survey:** included question on what features Michiganders wanted in commissioners and which aspects of redistricting they wanted reformed.

> **Policy Committee of Michiganders:** broad membership, subcommittees, included people from all walks of life.

> **Built on Existing Policy:** APOL Standards included with the addition of population diversity, prohibition of favor/disfavor candidates and incumbents and respect for communities of interest.
VNP Policy Overview

> **Voters, Not Politicians:** Citizen-led commission of Michigan voters and no politicians.

> **Fair:** Must adhere to Federal Constitution and redistricting criteria. Approved by majority of Commissioners.

> **Independent:** Remove partisan bias by requiring diverse representation. Contains language preventing transfer of power or manipulation from 3 branches of state government.

> **Transparent:** Public hearings, meetings, and reports are required.
Selection of Commissioners

PROPOSED PROCESS

- **Secretary of State** would be responsible for circulating 10,000 applications for the commission in various regions of state.

- **Secretary of State** would verify applicants’ eligibility to serve and their partisan affiliation and eliminate applicants that do not meet qualifications.

- The applicant pool **must mirror** demographic and geographic makeup of the state.

- Randomly selected pools from each category will makeup the commission.

- **13 Member Commission** made up of 4 Democrats, 4 Republicans, and 5 unaffiliated or affiliated with a minor party.

- The Secretary of State’s role is **administrative**. They are not able to provide advice to commissioners as they complete their work.
Who draws the maps?

**PROPOSED PROCESS**

- Commissioners must be registered to vote.
- Commissioner service has several restrictions:
  - Must not be declared or elected officials for state, federal, or local office
  - A member of the leadership board of a national, state, or local political party
  - Paid consultants
  - Employees of the legislature
  - A registered lobbyist, or
  - Related (parents, spouses, or children) to anyone in the categories listed above

Commissioners are also ineligible from holding partisan office at the state, county, city or township level for **five years** after their service.
How are the maps drawn?

Maps drawn with partisan influence behind closed doors

Maps drawn with clear criteria fairly and transparently

CURRENT PROCESS

PROPOSED PROCESS
Map Criteria

PROPOSED PROCESS

Each district must:

- **Equal Population** as mandated by the US Constitution and comply with the Voting Rights Act.

- **Geographically Contiguous**

- Reflect *diverse population* and respect *communities of interest*.

- Not provide a *disproportionate advantage* to any political party using an accepted measure of fairness.

- Not be drawn to (dis)favor any candidate or incumbent.

- Reflect county, city, and township boundaries wherever possible.

- Be reasonably **compact**.
How is the public involved?

Few public hearings or oversight

Reports, methodology, and data must be made public

CURRENT PROCESS

PROPOSED PROCESS
Who approves the maps?

Michigan house, senate, and governor

Majority of Commissioners including at least 2 Dem, 2 Rep, and 2 Independents to approve

CURRENT PROCESS

PROPOSED PROCESS
Voters should choose their politicians, not the other way around.