

What Georgians need to know about reapportionment, redistricting



The Georgia General Assembly will formally redraw the state's U.S. congressional and state legislative districts next fall. The executive director of the Georgia Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Office, Gina Wright, gave a primer on the process during the Biennial Institute for State Legislators, a pre-legislative session gathering for senators and House members.

2020 Census

The census results drive both reapportionment and redistricting. The introduction of an online census portal resulted in a more comprehensive count, with more than 90% of Georgians responding, according to Wright. She projects the census will show the state's population as approximately 10.7 million people, a million more than in 2010.

Reapportionment vs. redistricting: The difference

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Reapportionment refers to U.S. congressional districts and how many each state gets. The U.S. House is currently capped at 435 seats, 14 of those held by Georgians. The state is not assured of getting additional seats based on the last decade's population change, and Wright predicts Georgia will remain at 14 representatives. Georgia gained one seat following the 2010 census and two following the 2000 count.

Redistricting refers to the redrawing of district lines. If Georgia remains a 14-district state, the state's total population will be divided by 14 to determine the size of the district. The same goes for the 56 Georgia Senate districts, 180 Georgia House districts and five Georgia Public Service Commission districts. The boundaries are to be drawn to divide the population as equally as possible.

The process

The Georgia Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Office plugs the census data into computer mapping software to adjust the district boundaries. Georgia General Assembly members are invited to offer input on the boundaries. Senate and House redistricting committees will meet throughout the year as the maps are developed. Republicans control both chambers and will take the lead in finalizing draft maps.

The Georgia General Assembly will meet for a special session in the fall to adopt the new maps.

The maps are to be adopted as a package and not piece by piece.