

Illinois Legislative Redistricting Impact on Election Results

Every 10 years after the US Census we redraw the lines for our legislative districts. Illinois legislative districts are required to be compact, contiguous and substantially equal in population. Under the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 districts lines must also maximize any clear opportunity for minority groups to elect candidates of their choosing.

In Illinois under the 1970 Constitution the General Assembly has first crack at drawing the legislative maps, subject to the Governor's approval. If the GA and Governor cannot agree on maps an 8 member commission split between Democrats and Republicans is chosen by legislative leaders. If this commission does not agree on maps, the IL Supreme Courts submits two nominees – one Republican and one Democrat to be the "tiebreaker" commissioner. The crucial ninth commissioner is chosen when the Secretary of State pulls a name, out of a stovepipe hat.

In 1981, 1991, and 2001 the Tiebreaker provision was used. In 2011 with Democrats in control of the House, Senate and Governor's office the maps were agreed on without going to a legislative redistricting commission. The party winning the "tiebreaker" got control of the redistricting process and was able to draw maps to its advantage.

Impact on Election Results¹

- In the first election following each new map, the party in control of the redistricting process gained on average 7 seats in the House and 5 seats in the Senate.

- Across forty years, partisan maps create systematic bias, and continued partisan control intensifies that bias. Under the 2001 Democratic map, the Democratic candidates for the Senate won 55 percent of the votes and 54 percent of the seats in 2002. In 2012, under a second Democratic map, Democratic candidates for the Senate won 54 percent of the votes and 68 percent of the seats.

- The number of contested elections has declined significantly. In 1982, only 24 percent of House races were unopposed. In 2001, the number rose to 38 percent. In 2012, 60 percent of House races were unopposed.

- There has been a measurable decline in the number of competitive legislative elections (i.e., an election where the losing candidate receives at least 45 percent of the vote).

The Last Four Maps & Electoral Advantage¹

Election Year	Party Drawing Map*	Seats Gained in House & Senate**	Uncontested House & Senate Races	Competitive House & Senate Races***
1982	Democrats (tiebreaker)	13H & 3S	30	28
1992	Republicans (tiebreaker)	5H & 4S	35	30
2002	Democrats (tiebreaker)	4H & 5S	77	14
2012	Democrats	7H & 6S	101	16

* In the event that both the legislature and an independent commission fail to agree on a new map, a ninth commission member is randomly selected from one of the two main parties.

** Seats gained by the party that drew the map in the election immediately following the redrawing.

*** Competitive elections are defined as elections in which the losing candidate received at least 45% of the vote

Summary of Findings¹

From the analysis of the four maps as well as smaller case studies examining the local effects of redistricting, the report suggests five main characteristics of Illinois' redistricting process.

- ***The process is not transparent and does not welcome public involvement.*** Maps do not face public review and scrutiny. The final maps are quickly adopted without time for examination and feedback.
- ***Partisan intent produces partisan outcomes.*** Each of the last four legislative maps was drawn to give the political party controlling the process an advantage in the subsequent election.
- ***The quality and nature of representative government has been diluted and distorted.*** The political party in control puts elections ahead of quality representation. While some districts remained congruent and contiguous, other districts were drawn by fragmenting or ignoring communities.
- ***Partisan redistricting decreases voter choice in legislative elections.*** Maps drawn to decrease competitive elections consequently decrease voters' ability to choose their representatives.
- ***Partisan redistricting places political party interests ahead of minority voting interests.*** Party interests are placed ahead of compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act. Partisan redistricting results in the detriment or exclusion of legitimate representational interests of minorities.

1 CHANGE Illinois Paper – Backroom Battles and Partisan Deadlock: Redistricting in Illinois used as material for Impact on Election Results, The Last Four Maps & Electoral Advantage, Summary of Findings Sections

