

Redistricting in Georgia: A 20-Year History

EXCERPT for July 8 LTE - Town Hall – June 21, 2021



**PRINCETON
GERRYMANDERING
PROJECT**

Fixing bugs in democracy

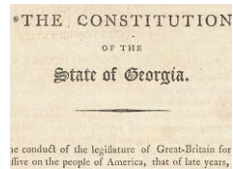


Decennial Redistricting Process in Georgia





Public Listening Sessions

Redistricting Guidelines



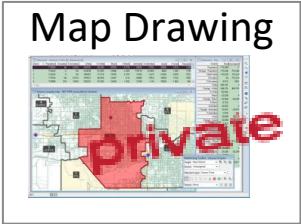
PRIVATE

General Assembly draws maps

 **Senate** +  **House**

Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Office (LCRO) & outside consultants

Map Drawing



GA Special Session



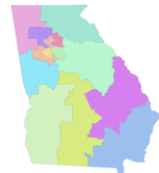
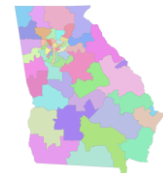
Floor votes
(Gentleman's Agreement)



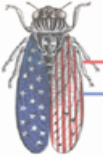
Governor signs



APPROVED



Public Participation Is Discouraged

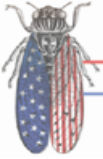


- Public meetings are often scheduled at the last minute
- District maps often aren't released before public meetings
- Bills consist of a listing of census tracts or other incomprehensible unit →
- Legislator communications with LCRO are legally privileged and confidential
- General Assembly is not subject to Open Records or Open Meetings Act
- Public comment, oversight, and participation are discouraged

Text of actual redistricting bill

15	*District 034
16	Cobb County
17	VTD: 067BG01 - BIG SHANTY 01
18	VTD: 067BK01 - BAKER 01
19	030226:
20	1019 1022 1023
21	030227: *
22	1001
23	VTD: 067CH02 - CHEATHAM HILL 02
24	VTD: 067EL01 - ELIZABETH 01
25	030506:
26	1088 1090 1091 1093 1094 1095 1096 1098 1102 1103 1107 1123

Few Legally-Binding Redistricting Criteria



- Federal District population must be **APPROXIMATELY EQUAL**
VOTING RIGHTS ACT must be followed
- Georgia Districts must be **CONTIGUOUS**

General Assembly 2011 **non-binding** guidelines considered:

COMPACTNESS

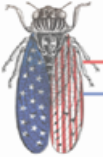
COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

EXISTING POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS

AVOID PAIRING INCUMBENTS

COMMITTEES MAY CONSIDER OTHER FACTORS

Legislators Draw Their Own Maps



Legislators control the process

Each chamber draws its own maps

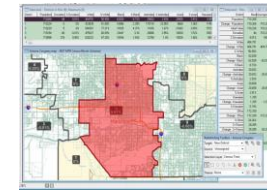
Chambers have “*Gentlemen’s Agreement*” to approve each other’s map

Politicians choose their own constituents with little oversight and vague rules

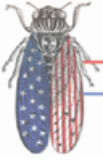
State House



State Senate



Mid-decade Redistricting Protects Incumbents



The Georgia General Assembly can redraw districts at every session; very few other states allow mid-decade redistricting without a court order

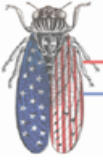
Mid-decade redistricting (2000 - 2021):

- 15 bills brought to the floor; 6 passed
- 97 proposed alterations; 64 districts changed

"...objective was to make these districts ... better for these incumbents to get reelected."

- Deposition of Gina Wright,
Executive Director of LCRO

We Are Asking For Three Big Changes



1. Listen

- Draw maps using community input
- Communities provide clear definitions
- Legislature responds to each defined community

2. Show your work

- More public and transparent process
- April 19 letter to Duncan, Ralston, committees signed by 20 organizations
- Requests waiver of secrecy
- Fifteen specific changes for public access

3. Check your work

- Commit to meeting independent, non-partisan benchmarks for districts

