

ISSUE NUMBER 4

(Proposed by Petition of the People)

Arkansas Citizens' Redistricting Commission Amendment

POPULAR NAME: The Arkansas Citizens' Redistricting Commission Amendment

BALLOT TITLE: An amendment to the constitution repealing and amending Sections 1, 4, and 5 of Article 8 of the constitution to create a Citizens' Redistricting Commission, consisting of nine commissioners who are registered voters in Arkansas, that will replace the Board of Apportionment, consisting of the governor, secretary of state, and attorney general for the redistricting and apportionment of legislative districts, and the General Assembly for the redistricting and apportionment of congressional districts; providing the commission shall apportion and redistrict congressional and legislative districts after the census every ten years; providing commission meetings be advertised and public; requiring the secretary of state to publish the commission's work product and redistricting maps; providing records of communications of the commissioners, commission staff, and outside consultants relating to the commission's duties be public records; requiring persons receiving income or reimbursement to influence commission action to publicly disclose such fact; providing any registered Arkansas voter may apply for the commission but disqualifying anyone who, within the immediately preceding five years, has served as an elected or appointed federal, state, county or city official, registered lobbyist or officer of a political party, or has been employed by a registered lobbyist, political party, political campaign or political action committee, or is related by blood or marriage to a disqualified person; providing for an application requiring

QUICK LOOK:

What does your vote mean?

FOR: A "FOR" vote means you are in favor of changing the Arkansas Constitution to establish a new process for drawing state and congressional districts after the census every 10 years through a Citizens' Redistricting Commission, replacing the existing process where state districts are determined by the governor, secretary of state, and attorney general and congressional districts are drawn by legislators. It means you are in favor of establishing criteria in the constitution for drawing districts and establishing a system for public input.

AGAINST: An "AGAINST" vote means you are opposed to changing the Arkansas Constitution to establish a new process and criteria for drawing state and congressional districts after the census every 10 years through a Citizens' Redistricting Commission. The current redistricting process would remain in place where state districts are determined by the governor, secretary of state, and attorney general and congressional districts are drawn by legislators.

statement of the applicant's qualifications, residential address, and political party affiliation or lack of party affiliation; requiring the secretary of state to prepare and advertise the application; providing applicants be selected by a panel appointed by the Arkansas Supreme Court chief justice, with consideration of racial, gender, and geographical diversity, of three retired Supreme Court justices and Court of Appeals judges, and circuit judges if necessary to fill the panel; requiring the panel by majority decision to place the applicants into pools based on party affiliation and choose thirty applicants from the pool affiliated with the party with the largest representation in the General Assembly, thirty from the pool affiliated with the party with the next-largest representation in the General Assembly, and thirty who are not affiliated with the largest or next-largest party; providing the chosen applicants be publicly disclosed, and that the governor and the parliamentary leaders of the parties with the largest and next-largest representation in the state House of Representatives and Senate may each eliminate up to two applicants from each pool; providing the panel shall then randomly select three applicants from each pool to serve as commissioners, and providing for random replacement draws if necessary to ensure at least one commissioner is selected from each congressional district, and that the panel shall fill any commission vacancy; requiring commissioner terms to end when a new commission is convened and prohibiting commissioners from holding elected office or serving as a registered lobbyist while a commissioner and for three years thereafter; requiring the commission to elect its chair and vice chair from different pools; providing a quorum for any meeting is seven commissioners, and requiring attendance and voting in person and not by proxy; requiring at least two votes from each pool to approve any final redistricting map and six votes to approve any other commission act; requiring the secretary of state to provide the commission census and election data and a means for public comment and proposal of maps; requiring any congressional district to have a population as equal as practical to the population of the state as reported in the census divided by the number of districts to be established; requiring any map for a state House of Representatives or Senate district to vary by no more than three percent from the population of the state divided by the number of state House of Representatives and state Senate seats, respectively; requiring the commission to conduct at least one public meeting in each congressional district and to publish three redistricting maps of congressional seats and three redistricting maps of state House and Senate seats, with a written report of the basis for the districts; requiring maps be drawn not to favor or disfavor any political party when viewed on a statewide basis; directing, to the extent

practicable, districts be contiguous, not deny or abridge the right to vote on account of race or language, be reasonably compact, and except as required to meet the other criteria, not divide cities or counties, and as feasible after satisfying the preceding criteria, promote competition among political parties; requiring the commission to certify its final maps, and the respective populations and boundaries, to the secretary of state, which shall become binding unless, within thirty days, a petition for review is filed in the Supreme Court, in which case the apportionment becomes effective thirty days after the commission certifies to the secretary of state any revision pursuant to the Supreme Court's mandate; providing reasonable reimbursement of panelists' and commissioners' expenses related to their duties and a per diem of up to \$200, subject to increase by the General Assembly; requiring the General Assembly to appropriate moneys, in no case less than \$750,000, for the commission's duties, and providing, to the extent the commission requires moneys prior to such appropriation, the commission shall receive such moneys from the Constitutional Officers Fund; providing the Supreme Court have original jurisdiction to require by mandamus the chief justice, panel, secretary of state, and commission to perform their duties; providing references to the Board of Apportionment in the constitution shall refer to the Citizens' Redistricting Commission; and repealing Arkansas Code §§ 7-20-101 through 105.

What is being proposed?

This amendment asks voters to change parts of the Arkansas Constitution establishing who is responsible for dividing the state into districts for representation in the Arkansas General Assembly and the U.S. House of Representatives every decade after the U.S. Census, and establishing criteria for how these districts would be created starting in 2021.

The amendment proposes to remove and replace parts of Article 8 of the Arkansas Constitution. It would:

- 1. Do away with the existing Board of Apportionment (governor, secretary of state and attorney general) currently responsible for establishing state legislative district boundaries.
- 2. End the practice of state legislators creating boundaries for the four Arkansas U.S. House of Representative districts.





- 3. Create a nine-member Citizens' Redistricting Commission and the process by which members are selected by a panel of three retired judges to establish state legislative and congressional districts. Commissioners would include:
 - 3 people who self-identify as affiliated with the political party having the largest number of legislators in the General Assembly
 - 3 people who self-identify as affiliated with the political party having the second largest number of legislators in the General Assembly
 - 3 people who self-identify as unaffiliated with major political parties
- 4. Establish who may serve on the commission and the process the panel of judges would use for selecting commissioners.
- 5. Allow the governor and legislative leaders from the two largest political parties in the state legislature to each remove a maximum of two applicants from the semifinal pool of commission candidates.
- Prohibit commissioners from being elected or appointed to a state office or working as a lobbyist during their time as commissioner and for the three years after their term ends.
- 7. Require Citizens' Redistricting Commission meetings be advertised and open to the public and the commission's work be considered public records.
- 8. Require the secretary of state to develop and publicize an application form for serving on the Citizens' Redistricting Commission, provide information and existing maps to commissioners, and establish multiple methods for the public to comment and propose alternate maps.
- 9. Require people who receive money for influencing commission action to publicly disclose this information.
- 10. Establish criteria to guide how the commission draws maps, including federal requirements of equal population in U.S. Congressional districts and no more than a 3% difference in population in state legislative districts; districts that do not favor or disfavor a political party; keeping cities and towns intact as much as possible, and promoting competition within districts.

- 11. Require the commission to conduct public meetings in each U.S. House of Representatives district, publish three alternative maps, provide a written report explaining the basis for proposed congressional and state districts, and certify the final apportionment with the secretary of state.
- 12. Require the final maps be approved by at least six members of the commission, with approval coming from at least two members from each majority party and from the group of commissioners who do not identify with the majority parties.
- 13. Require the General Assembly to budget at least \$750,000 for the commission to fulfill its duties, including payment to commissioners for their time and reimbursement for their expenses. The legislature would have the authority to increase the budget by a majority vote.
- 14. Replace existing language in Section 5 of Article 8 regarding the jurisdiction of the Arkansas Supreme Court with language consistent with this proposed amendment, including the power to compel the chief justice, panel of judges, secretary of state, and Citizens' Redistricting Commission to perform their duties.

This amendment also would repeal Arkansas Code § 7-2-101 through § 7-2-105 about U.S. House of Representatives districts. This would:

- 1. Eliminate the requirement in state law that Arkansas is divided into four U.S. House of Representatives districts.
- 2. Remove language listing specific counties and other geographic locations making up current congressional districts.

How did this issue get on the ballot?

Sponsors collected signatures from at least 89,151 Arkansas voters, equal to 10% of the people who voted for governor in the last election, to put Issue 4 on the statewide general election ballot.

Constitutional amendments require the approval of a majority of voters in a statewide election. Election Day is Nov. 3, 2020.

Who are the main sponsors of this constitutional amendment?

Arkansas Voters First

What is "redistricting"?

Following the completion of the U.S. Census every decade, each state reviews boundaries for their legislative districts at the state and congressional level to reflect population changes. The process is meant to accomplish the principle of "one person, one vote" to ensure all citizens have equal legislative representation.

Boundaries for legislative districts may need to shift, expand, or shrink if the population of the district increases or declines. The process for changing boundaries after a census is called "redistricting."

Arkansas has 100 state representatives and 35 state senators. The total number of state legislators always remains the same, but the communities and residents in districts that legislators represent may change after the census to reflect shifts in population. Districts must be nearly identical in population size.

The same thing happens at the federal level for the U.S House of Representatives. The total number of representatives remains at 435, but the number of representatives per state can change depending on population change. The process for determining the number of congressional representatives is called "apportionment." Arkansas has four U.S. House of Representatives seats and is expected to keep that number after the 2020 census, though how districts within the state are drawn can change during the redistricting process.

The following statements are examples of what supporters and opponents have made public either in media statements, campaign literature, on websites or in interviews with Public Policy Center staff. The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture does not endorse or validate these statements.

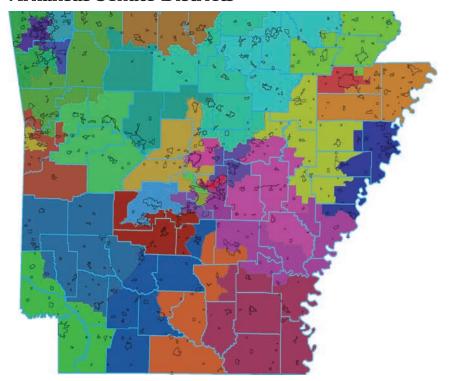
What do supporters say?

- Arkansas voters deserve fair maps, drawn by the people in an open and transparent process. It's time we put the voices of Arkansans ahead of lobbyists and political insiders. It's time to end the practice of politicians picking their voters, and instead have voters pick their politicians in fairly drawn districts.
- There are absolutely no restrictions in the current process to prevent undue influence by lobbyists, party bosses, and other special interests to establish districts in their own benefit. This has led to special interests from both sides of the aisle drawing maps that overwhelmingly benefit people already in power. By manipulating data to draw districts that "pack" some constituents into one district and "crack" their opponents across several districts they dilute the power of voters based on how they vote. At the end of the day, politicians and representatives aren't held accountable.
- Those who strongly oppose non-partisan redistricting do so for one simple reason: The system already benefits them. One of the core principles of democracy is that everyone's vote counts equally. Gerrymandering does away with all that.
- Politicians rail about groups from outside our community, or outside our country, that are "trying to steal our elections." Our elections are already being stolen by a system that determines the winner before the race even starts. We need a transparent and accountable redistricting process to end hyper-partisan practices that don't benefit anyone except the people already in office.

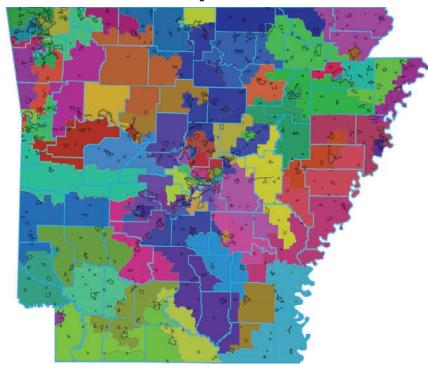
What do opponents say?

- Democrats have controlled this process since it was created. Now that Republicans are the majority party, out of state Democrats are funding an effort to strip that responsibility from Republicans.
- Shifting redistricting to an independent commission sounds good in theory. But if you take away redistricting responsibilities from the governor, attorney general and the secretary of state and give those duties to an independent commission all you do is strip the obvious politics from the process. Unless the folks nominated to an independent commission are robots, they're going to have thoughts, opinions, biases and political affiliations. More likely, when a new commission's lines get warped for political purposes, voters won't have a constitutional office to blame. Or hold accountable.
- The representatives of the state are voted into office by we the People and they decide how to distribute/allocate the districts. This is how the people's constitution works. Allowing a few politically appointed people to decide how our votes are counted will lead to gerrymandering on a scale never seen before.
- The proponent of the amendment has operated under a false guise of transparency in an attempt to both confuse and deceive the Arkansas electorate. This effort is being championed by out-of-state interests as a way of stealing elections right in our own backyard. They've essentially described Arkansas as a lab rat for their own social and election engineering efforts. It's unacceptable, and it's not the way we do things in Arkansas.

Arkansas Senate Districts



Arkansas House of Representative Districts



The current Arkansas Senate and House districts (represented by the different colors in the maps above) were established in 2011. There are 35 Senate districts and 100 House of Representative districts. Source: www.arkansasredistricting.org/maps

How does redistricting work now in Arkansas?

The process for redistricting in Arkansas is set out in the state constitution through amendments passed by voters in 1936 and 1945. Several provisions have been declared unconstitutional by courts since that time, but the law remains that state and congressional districts be divided into approximately equal size populations. There are no other criteria for redistricting in the state constitution.

The governor, secretary of state and attorney general make up the Board of Apportionment and are responsible for creating state legislative districts. They along with their staff review census data to determine which districts gained population or lost population and establish new district boundaries. Districts must have close to the same number of people living within them with a 10% or less difference in population.

The process takes several months. In 2011, the last time redistricting occurred, the Board of Apportionment started its work in April and finalized maps by August. They accepted public comment and held public meetings on the proposed maps.

State legislators are responsible for setting boundaries for the U.S. House of Representatives districts, which are defined in state law. The U.S. Constitution requires congressional districts to be nearly equal in population with less than a 1% difference in population allowed.

To be in compliance with federal and state laws and with court orders, congressional districts are supposed to be drawn in a way that they do not discriminate against a race or minority, that they are reasonably compact, and geographically connected. It's also common practice to avoid splitting counties, cities or voting districts. Read more about general legal principles for redistricting at www.arkansasredistricting.org/redistricting-criteria.

The last time legislators drew congressional districts in 2011, they did so during their spring legislative session. Hundreds of proposals from senators and representatives were studied, with nine being discussed publicly, according to an April 2011 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette article about the process when the final plan was approved.

How would redistricting work under Issue 4? What criteria would be used to create maps?

Issue 4 proposes to disband the Board of Apportionment and end the role of legislators in setting congressional district boundaries. Instead, a nine-member Citizens' Redistricting Commission would set boundaries for state and congressional districts by November of the year following a census.

The proposal would delete old language in Article 8 that has already been found unconstitutional by courts and replace it with new sections describing the role of the Citizens' Redistricting Commission, the process for filling the commission and how it would operate.

Similar to existing law, the commission would be required to create congressional districts that have nearly equal populations. Populations of state representative and senate districts could not vary by more than 3% from each other.

The commission would be required to prepare three alternate maps for the state and congressional districts for public comment, along with a written report explaining their basis for the districts. Their meetings would be open to the public and their materials considered public record.

Commissioners could not propose maps that excessively favor or disfavor any political party. They would be required to draw maps that follow the criteria below in priority order. Districts must:

- 1. Share common borders so areas in districts are connected.
- 2. Avoid discriminating on account of race or language.
- 3. Avoid dividing cities or counties except as needed to meet population requirements.
- 4. Be reasonably compact.
- 5. Promote competition among the political parties.

Public hearings on proposed maps would be required in each of the state's four congressional districts. Revised maps and accompanying reports must be released at least 30 days before a final vote of the commission.

The final maps would require support from at least six commissioners, with support required from at least two commissioners representing each of the three pools of commissioners. The maps would be due to the secretary of state by Nov. 1 of the year following a federal census.

The new boundaries would take effect after 30 days unless they are challenged in the Arkansas Supreme Court. If challenged, the commission would make revisions to comply with Supreme Court findings and the revised maps would go into effect 30 days after being submitted to the secretary of state.

How would the nine commissioners be selected?

If approved by voters, the selection process would start no later than Jan. 1, 2021. In future years, the process would start by December 1 of each federal census year. The chief justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court would appoint a three-person panel of retired judges, considering geographic, racial and gender diversity, to oversee the application process and select commissioners.

The secretary of state would advertise the opportunity to serve on the commission by January 15 of the year following the census. Any registered Arkansas voter would be eligible to apply for the commission with certain exceptions, as described in the following section.

The deadline to apply would be March 1. By April 1, the panel of judges would select 90 applicants to choose from, making an effort to select candidates that are geographically and demographically representative of the population of the state.

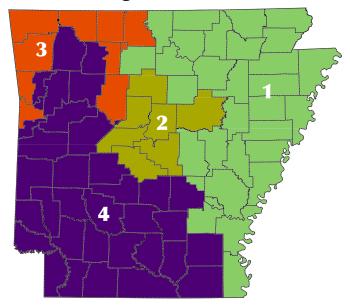
Candidates would be divided into three separate pools of 30 people. The pools would represent (1) the two major political parties in the state legislature and (2) people who do not affiliate with either of the major political parties. Currently, that would mean:

- 30 people who self-identify as Republicans
- 30 people who self-identify as Democrats
- 30 people who self-identify as a member of other political parties or no political party at all.

The governor, the speaker of the house, the minority leader of the house, the senate pro tempore, and the minority leader of the senate would each have the right to eliminate two applicants from each pool of candidates.

The panel of judges would then randomly draw three applicants from each pool of remaining candidates for a total of nine people. If any of the state's four congressional districts lacks representation, the panel would remove a drawn applicant from the district having the most drawn applicants and draw again from that pool. This process would be repeated as many times as necessary to have

Arkansas Congressional Districts



Source: www.sos.arkansas.gov/elections/district-maps

representation from all four congressional districts from each of the three pools. The only exception to this would be if there aren't enough applicants from an unrepresented district. This process must be completed by May 1.

The panel of judges would fill any vacancies on the commission by selecting someone from the remaining pool of applicants, approved by at least two of the three judges and maintaining district representation to the extent possible.

Who can't serve on the commission?

Any registered voter would be eligible to serve on the commission, with a few exceptions. A person could not be appointed if in the previous five years he or she:

- Has served as an elected federal, state, city or county official
- Has served as an appointed federal or state official
- Has worked as a registered lobbyist
- Has served as an officer of a political party
- Has worked as an employee of a registered lobbyist, political party, political campaign committee, or political action committee
- Was by blood or marriage the spouse, child, parent or sibling of any of the above

How long would a commissioner's term last?

Commissioners would serve from when they are selected until after the next census and a new commission is appointed. Federal censuses are conducted every 10 years, so commission terms could last up to 11 years depending on the completion of the federal census and convening of a new commission.

Commissioners could not hold elected or appointed state office or register as a lobbyist during their tenure and for three years afterward.

Would commissioners be paid?

Yes. Commissioners would be paid \$200 each per day when meeting and could be reimbursed for their expenses. These payments are known as "per diem." The per diem could be increased by state legislators with a majority vote in the future.

How would this new process be funded?

The proposal would require the state to fund the commission at an amount sufficient to carry out its duties. The legislature would appropriate money in the fiscal year in which the census is performed and the year immediately following the census. The total amount budgeted for the tenure of each commission must be at least \$750,000.

If the commission needs funding before the legislature appropriates it, the amendment would require the commission to receive the funding it needs from the Constitutional Officers Fund until the legislature is able to pass its appropriation.

Funding would be used to pay commissioners' per diem and reimbursements for expenses, and for other expenses necessary to complete their task.

How does redistricting work in other states?

States differ in the process for drawing boundaries for state and congressional districts.

According to The Brennan Center for Justice, state legislatures are responsible for drawing state districts in 30 states. Another nine states use commissions made up of people appointed by elected officials or party leaders to draw state districts. Six states have advisory commissions, which may include a mix of legislators and non-legislators, to recommend districts. The legislature then votes on their recommended maps. Four states currently use an independent commission model to draw boundaries for state districts. Arkansas is the only state where members of the executive branch create state legislative districts.

At the federal level, legislatures are responsible for creating congressional boundaries in 31 states, including Arkansas. Seven states have only one representative so congressional redistricting isn't needed. In the remaining states, four have advisory committees, four have political appointee commissions, and four have independent commissions without public or elected officials.

Why change redistricting processes?

Arkansas is one of several states where changes to the redistricting process have been proposed in an effort to remove or limit legislators' role in drawing boundaries.

At a national level, these changes have been proposed to make the process more open to the public and to prevent legislative district boundaries from being drawn to give one political party an advantage over another or from being overly political. This type of boundary manipulation is often called "gerrymandering." One form of this dilutes the strength of voters from opposing parties by spreading them across as many districts as possible is often called "cracking." Another variation, called "packing," is used to isolate voters from opposing parties into a single district to allow the party in power to win as many other districts as possible. Boundaries may be drawn to make it harder for the incumbent legislator to be challenged.

Gerrymandering can erode public trust in political processes or lead to citizen disengagement when people feel their voices are not being heard. Gerrymandering is not limited to one political party. Historically, legislative districts have favored whichever political party was dominant at the time maps were created. Distinguishing between unfair gerrymandering and acceptable redistricting can

be a challenge because the U.S. Supreme Court has not established a standard for what constitutes gerrymandering.

When was the last time Arkansas voted on redistricting?

Arkansas voters amended the original Article 8 of the Arkansas Constitution in 1936. Amendment 23 created the Board of Apportionment for establishing state legislative districts, the process for determining districts, and how legislative terms would be affected after redistricting. The vote tally is not known.

Voters in 1956 approved Amendment 45, a citizen initiative that condensed some of the wording in Article 8. Voters passed the amendment by a vote of 197,602 (58%) in favor and 143,100 (42%) against.

Parts of Article 8 that called for every county to have at least one representative and then dividing the remaining 25 seats among the more populated counties were ruled unconstitutional because representation was geographical rather than based on population.

Where can I find more information?

The complete wording of this amendment can be found at www.uaex.edu/issue4

The following is the proposed constitutional amendment name and title as they will appear on the state's November general election ballot.

Issue No. 4

(Popular Name)

Arkansas Citizens' Redistricting Commission Amendment

(Ballot Title)

An amendment to the Constitution repealing and amending Sections 1, 4, and 5 of Article 8 of the Constitution to create a Citizens' Redistricting Commission, consisting of nine Commissioners who are registered voters in Arkansas, that will replace the Board of Apportionment, consisting of the Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General for the redistricting and apportionment of legislative districts, and the General Assembly for the redistricting and apportionment of congressional districts; providing the Commission shall apportion and redistrict congressional and legislative districts after the census every ten years; providing Commission meetings be advertised and public; requiring the Secretary of State to publish the Commission's work product and redistricting maps; providing records of communications of the Commissioners, Commission staff, and outside consultants relating to the Commission's duties be public records; requiring persons receiving income or reimbursement to Influence Commission action to publicly disclose such fact; providing any registered Arkansas voter may apply for the Commission but disqualifying anyone who, within the immediately preceding five years, has served as an elected or appointed federal, state, county or city official, registered lobbyist or officer of a political

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- O FOR ISSUE NO. 4
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