



Frequently Asked Questions about County Commission Redistricting in Michigan*

Who Does Redistricting at the County Level?*

County Apportionment Commission (County Population of 75,000 or More)

The County Apportionment Commission has 60 days from release of the 2010 detailed census data (around the end of March) to divide the county into commissioner districts of near equal population. The Apportionment Commission consists of the County Clerk, County Treasurer, Prosecuting Attorney, and the county chairpersons of the Democratic and Republican parties.

County Board of Commissioners (County Population under 75,000)

The county board of commissioners has up to 30 days from release of the 2010 census data to divide the county into commissioner districts of near equal population. If they fail to do so within 30 days, the County Apportionment Commission (as described above) assumes this responsibility and operates according to the rules for larger counties.

Number of County Commissioners Based on County Population

The county redistricting body sets the number of commissioner districts within the following limits:

| County Population | # of Commissioners |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Under 5,001 | 5 to 7 |
| 5,001 to 10,000 | 5 to 10 |
| 10,001 to 50,000 | 5 to 15 |
| 50,001 to 600,000 | 5 to 21 |
| 600,001 to 1,000,000 | 17 to 35 |
| Over 1,000,000 | 25 to 35 |

How Does the County Apportionment Commission Operate?

The County Clerk convenes the Apportionment Commission and the Commission adopts rules of procedure. At least three of the five members must be present in order to conduct business. All actions taken require a majority vote of the Commission.

Subject to the *Open Meetings Act* (MCL 15.261-15.275), Commission business must be conducted in public meetings and the County Clerk’s Office must provide appropriate notice of the time, date, and place of the meeting. The meeting minutes and other materials made for or used by the Commission must be made available for the public, in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act* (MCL15.231 to 15.246) of Michigan.

What are the Guidelines for Drawing Districts?

The apportionment body must use the following guidelines, listed in order of importance:

- a) All districts are to be single-member districts and should have as close to equal population as possible. The 2010 United States official census is to be used in determining population, except that an actual population count may be used when census units must be divided to meet the population standard. Other governmental census figures of total population or special census undertaken by the US Census Bureau may be used if the 2010 decennial census figures are not adequate. The Secretary of State must provide official Census figures to county apportionment commissions within 15 days after their publication.
- b) All district lines must be contiguous (connected without a break in the lines).
- c) All districts must be as compact and nearly square in shape as is practicable, depending on the geography of the county area involved.
- d) No township or part of a township can be combined with any city or part of a city to create a single district, unless necessary to meet the population standard.
- e) Townships, villages, and cities can be divided only if necessary to meet the population standard.



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Redistricting Guidelines, continued

- f) Precincts can only be divided if necessary to meet the population standard.
- g) Residents of state institutions who are ineligible to register to vote, such as prison inmates, must be excluded from representation.
- h) Districts cannot be drawn to result in partisan political advantage.

When is the Plan Final?

Adoption and Filing: The Commission has 60 days from publication of official Census data to complete its work, unless the Court of Appeals gives it additional time. Following approval by the Commission, the apportionment plan is filed in the County Clerk's office. The plan becomes effective at this time and is forwarded to the Secretary of State for filing. The plan must be made available at cost to any registered voter of the county.

Appeals: Within 30 days after the filing of the plan, any registered voter in the county may petition the Court of Appeals to review the plan to determine if it meets the state requirements. Findings of the Court of Appeals may be appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court.

Official Plan: If the plan is not appealed to the courts within 30 days or it has been found constitutional through the appeals process, then it becomes the official apportionment plan for the county until the next decennial census figures are available.

How Can the Public Participate in County Redistricting?

Public Meetings: The public can attend and comment at County Apportionment Commission (or County Commission) public meetings. All meetings of the Commission are public and the dates, times and locations must be posted in the same manner as other public meetings. Meeting minutes and materials used by the Commission in conducting its business may be requested and reviewed.

Appealing the Plan Passed by the Local Commission: Any registered voter in the county may petition for court review of the plan (see "Appeals" in previous section).

Alternate Redistricting Plan: If the County Apportionment Commission fails to submit a plan within 60 days, any registered voter of the county may submit a plan to the Commission for approval. The Commission must choose among plans submitted and file a plan that meets the requirements of state law.

Source: MCL 46.401- 46.408. Prepared by Michigan Voter Power, a project of the League of Women Voters of Michigan. For more information about redistricting, contact redistricting@lwvmi.org.

* This process may differ in Macomb and Wayne counties, which are charter counties. Check with the County Clerk about redistricting requirements in the charters of these counties.