

Virginia College and University Legislative Redistricting Competition*

I. Background and Purpose of Competition

The primary purpose of the competition is an educational exercise for the college and university students participating. A secondary purpose is to demonstrate that a non-partisan open process based upon objective criteria can produce fair legislative and congressional districts in Virginia.

II. Procedures

Using 2010 Census data, teams will draw maps for the Virginia congressional districts, Virginia House of Delegates districts, and Senate of Virginia districts that account for population shifts since 2000. Each map must include the appropriate number of districts (11 individually-numbered congressional districts, 100 individually-numbered House of Delegate districts, and 40 individually-numbered State Senate districts) that combine to cover the entire area of the state. No portion of the state may be omitted. Districts must be created by combining voting precincts. The competition will use precincts as the basic building block for districts. Plans may split precincts as Census Bureau data is divided into smaller units (such as census blocks).

The competition includes two divisions. Teams are encouraged to enter maps in both divisions, but may enter a map or set of maps in only one or both divisions.

Division 1: Maps entered in Division 1 must address criteria A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

Division 2: Maps entered in Division 2 must address criteria A, B, C, D, and E, but are prohibited from addressing criteria F and G.

Prizes will be awarded as follows:

Division 1:

House of Delegates – First place=\$2,000, second place=\$1,000
Senate of Virginia – First place=\$1,500, second place=\$750
Congressional districts – First place=\$1,000, second place=\$500

Division 2:

House of Delegates – First place=\$2,000, second place=\$1,000
Senate of Virginia – First place=\$1,500, second place=\$750
Congressional districts – First place=\$1,000, second place=\$500

III. Criteria

(A) Contiguity – Contiguity means that every part of a district must be reachable from every other part without crossing the district's borders. All districts within a plan must be contiguous. Water contiguity is permitted given Virginia's extensive coastal region. "Point contiguity" or "touch-point contiguity" where two sections of a district are connected at a single point is not permitted.

(B) Equipopulation – All districts within a plan must have nearly equal populations. The law does not require perfectly equal populations; however, the courts have said that districts must be as close in population as is practicable.

(C) Federal Voting Rights Act – Compliance with the Voting Rights Act will be assumed if maps include a minority-majority district in any area where a minority group is (as described in *Thornburg v. Gingles*, 478 U.S. 30, 49 (1986)) "sufficiently large and geographically compact to constitute a majority in a single-member district." For this competition, a valid congressional districts plan must contain at least one minority-majority district, traditionally located in Southeast Virginia. Teams should also pay particular attention to the issue of retrogression.

(D) Communities of Interest that are respectful of existing political subdivisions – Counties, cities, and other political subdivisions give Virginians a sense of place and shared interests. For the purposes of this competition teams should seek to draw maps that minimize the division of counties and cities between districts.

(E) Compactness – Compactness is sometimes referred to as the "look" of a district, and assures that oddly-shaped districts are minimized. The geography of Virginia's state boundary is complex; nevertheless, teams should attempt to produce districts that looks as compact as possible.

(F) Competitiveness – Democracy thrives when the marketplace of ideas is truly competitive. Competitiveness is increased when either major political party has the opportunity to win a particular district. Teams should seek to draw maps that contain as many districts as possible that are "heavily" or "generally" competitive.

For the purposes of this competition, the political competitiveness of a proposed new district will be determined using the results of the 2008 presidential and 2009 gubernatorial elections to calculate projected political performance. Teams must determine for each district in a plan the "average partisan differential" for the district based upon the results of the 2008 presidential and 2009 gubernatorial elections. A district's "average partisan differential" will be calculated by subtracting the Democratic "average partisan index" (for the

purposes of this competition, the average percentage of major-party votes cast in that district for Barack Obama in the 2008 presidential election and Creigh Deeds in the 2009 gubernatorial election) from the Republican “average partisan index” (average percentage of major-party votes cast in that district for John McCain in the 2008 presidential election and Bob McDonnell in the 2009 gubernatorial election). “Heavily” competitive districts are districts with partisan differentials of less than or equal to 5%. “Generally” competitive districts are districts with partisan differentials of greater than 5% but less than 10%.

(G) Representational Fairness – The counterbalance to competitiveness is assuring that a final redistricting plan does not unfairly bias one party over another. For the purposes of this competition, representational fairness is increased when the percentage of districts a party would likely win (based upon the “partisan index” used to determine Competitiveness) closely mirrors that party’s percentage of the statewide vote.

IV. Submitting Plans

For each plan, teams must submit the following documents electronically:

(A) A state map showing the boundaries of the districts, and district maps for each proposed district. The Public Mapping Project software will generate the required statewide and district maps.

(B) A detailed narrative description no longer than 5-pages of how the plan satisfies the division’s competition criteria. Each criterion should be addressed specifically and separately in this narrative.

* The language here draws heavily from the *Ohio Redistricting Competition – Competition Rules and Scoring*.