

Gerrymandering



Leadership Lincoln

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Outline

- 1) Definition and history of gerrymandering
- 2) Cracking and packing
- 3) Scientific test for gerrymandering
- 4) Nebraska's process

Definition

- *gerrymander*: manipulate the boundaries (of an electoral constituency) so as to favor one party or class
- Gerrymandering uses foreknowledge with intent to favor

Consequences:

- A. Stealing votes before they can be cast.
- B. Legislators get to choose their voters.

Named for governor Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts who created a district resembling a salamander to favor his party in 1812 elections

Gerry + salamander=gerrymander

(For word buffs, this is a portmanteau.)



How to gerrymander

Goal: Divide 50 people into 5 districts of 10 people each.

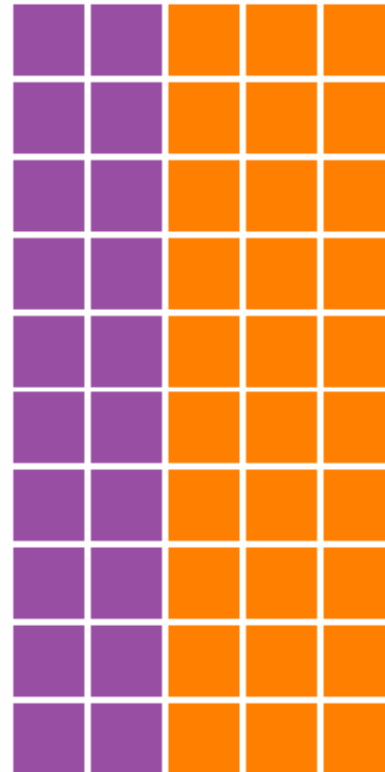
40% purple

60% orange

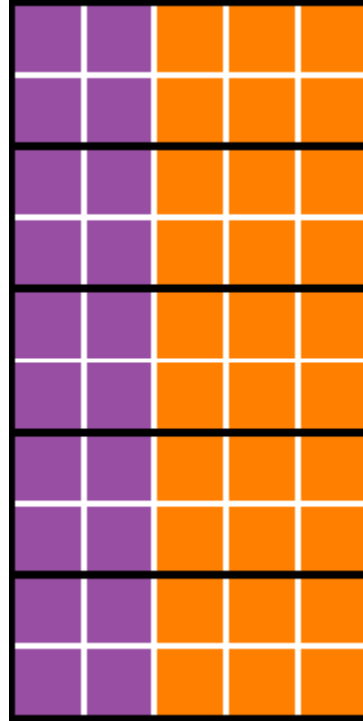
What seems fair?

Purple wins 2 districts

Orange wins 3 districts



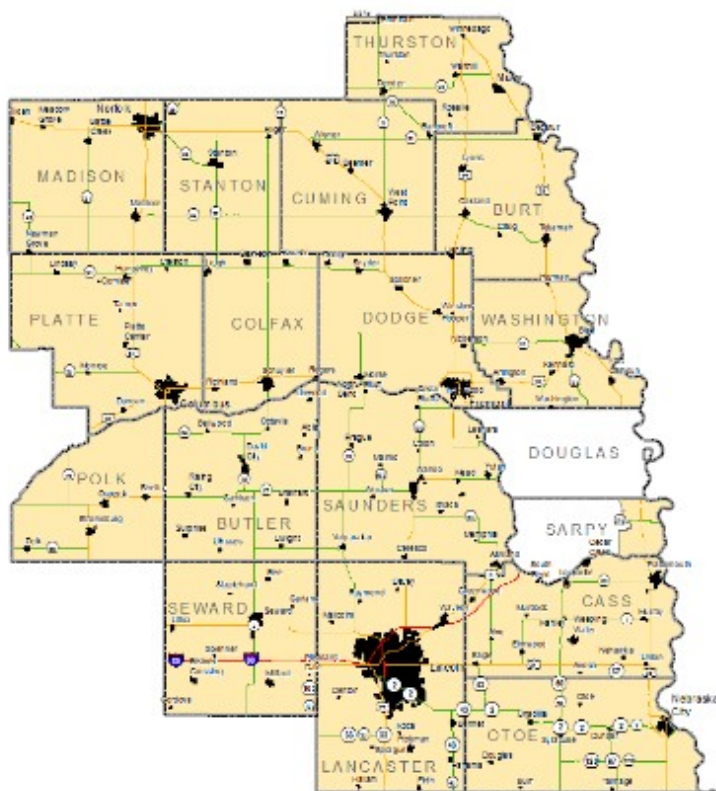
- Orange wins all by “cracking”
- losing parties are *thinly distributed*



Nebraska 2011 redistricting

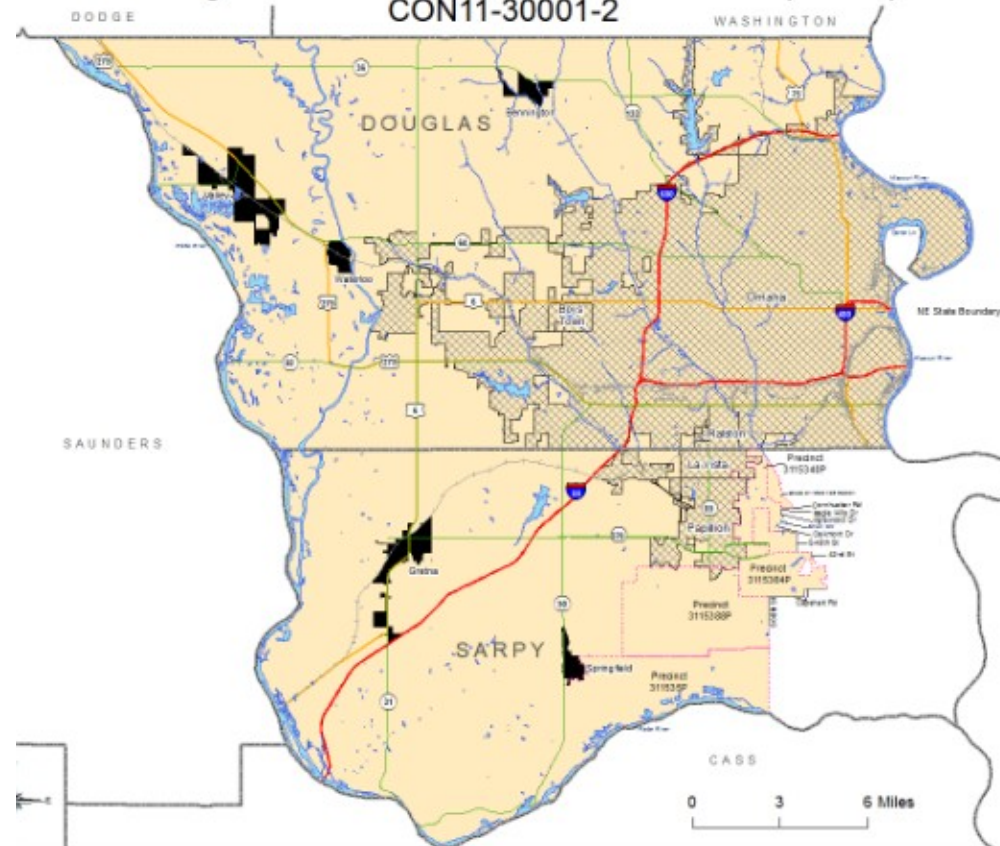
Congressional District 1 - LB 704 (2011)

CON11-30001-1

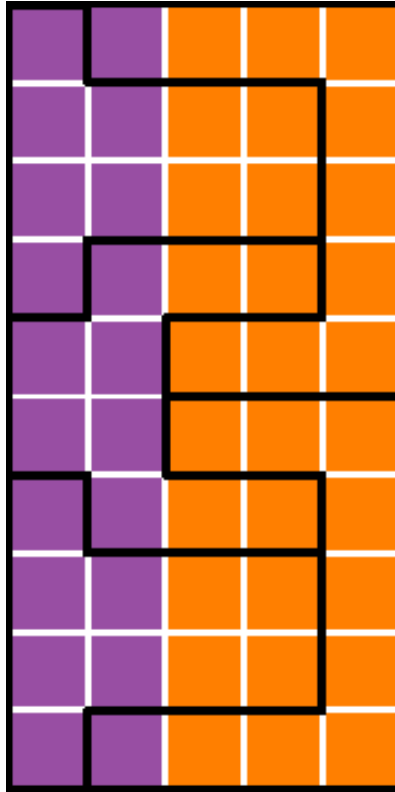


Congressional District 2 - LB 704 (2011)

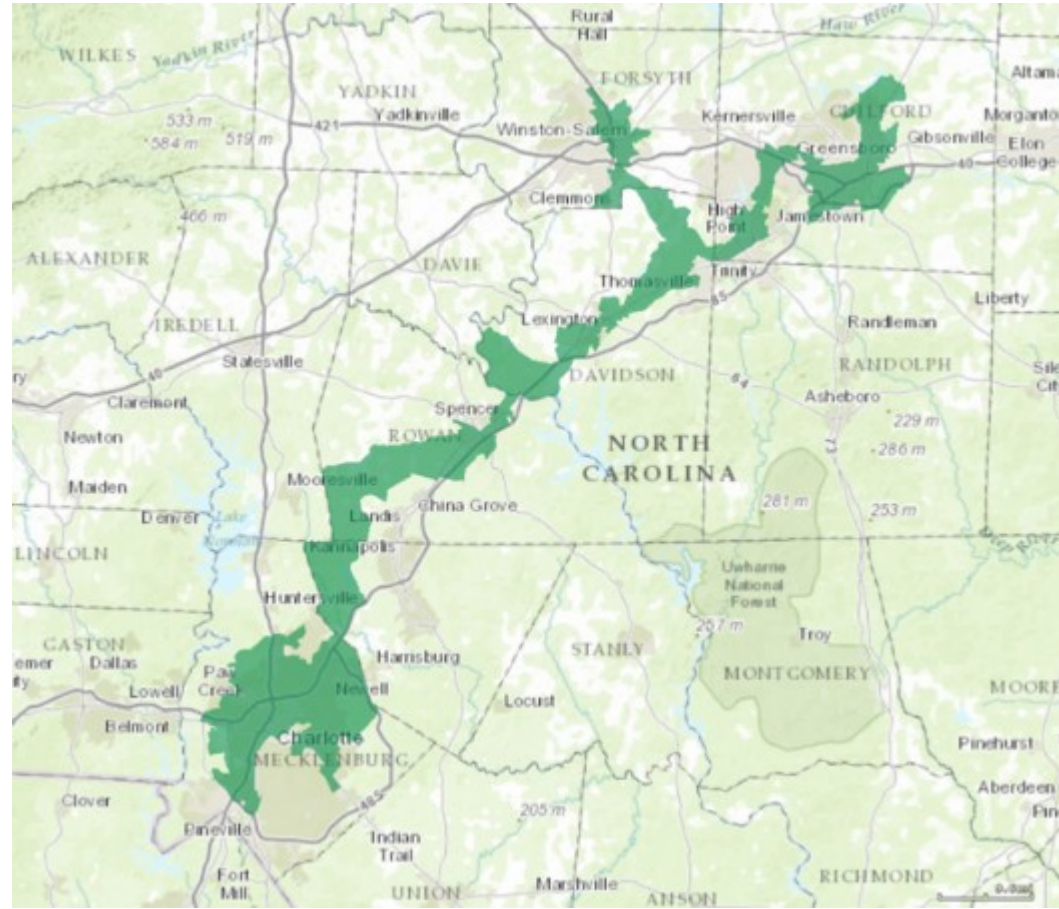
CON11-30001-2



Purple wins 3 of the districts by
“packing”
-unnecessary super-majorities

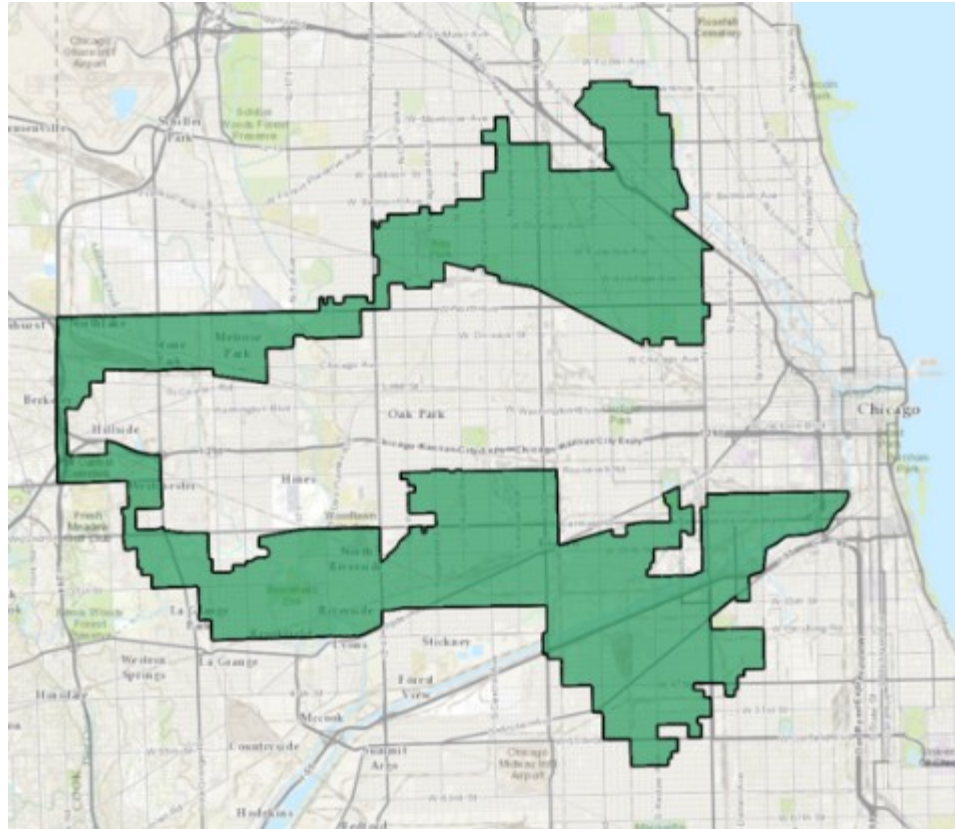


North Carolina's 12th District (2013-2017)

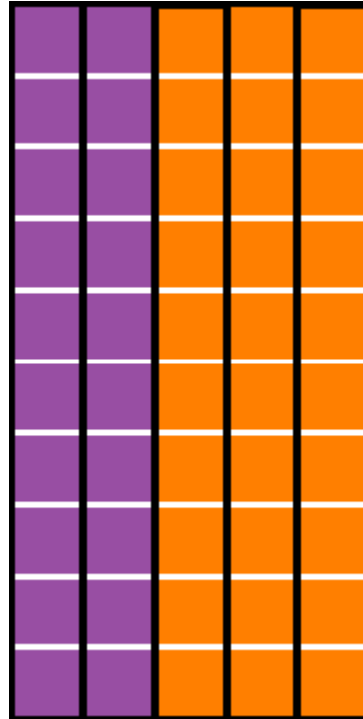


Are “badly shaped” districts bad?

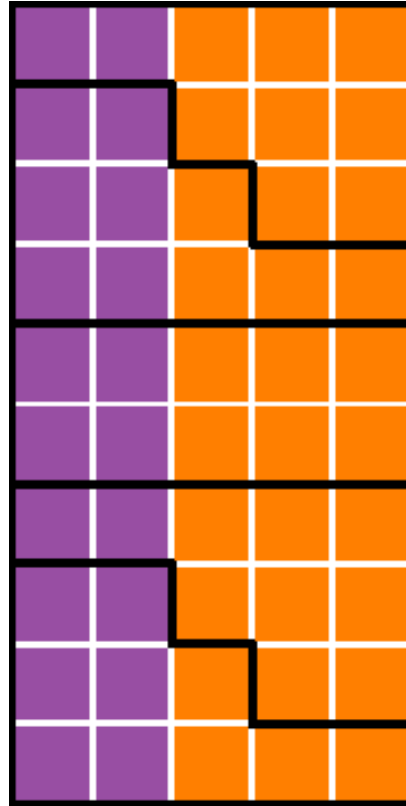
Illinois' 4th Congressional District



A proportionate outcome

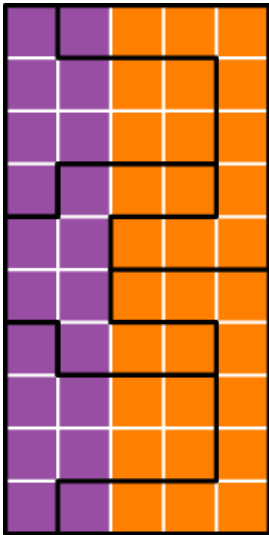


A proportionate outcome

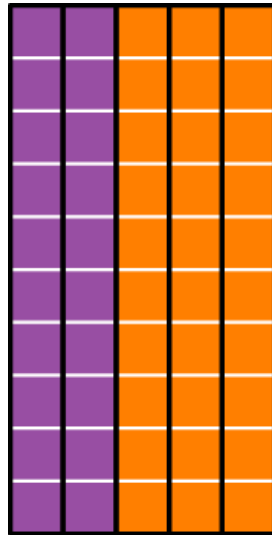


Testing Proportionality (really, distribution of voters) with Statistics

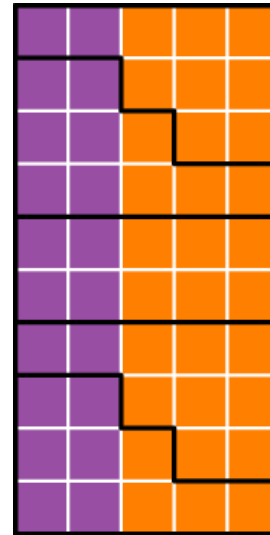
- Make lots (say 100,000) of legal maps.
- 3 seats orange is common
- 5 seats orange is extremely uncommon



2 seats Orange

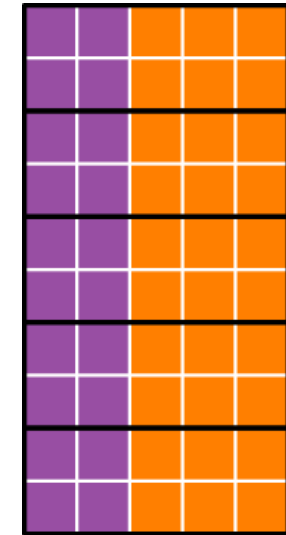


3 seats Orange



3 seats Orange

Legislature's
Map



5 seats Orange

Justice Kagan's Dissent on Rucho

Computer applications make gerrymandering easy!

“... today's mapmakers can generate thousands of possibilities at the touch of a key – and then choose the one giving their party maximum advantage. . . .”

Mathematical ideas developed in last 3 years detect gerrymandering

“... the same technologies and data that today facilitate extreme partisan gerrymanders also enable courts to discover them, by exposing just how much they dilute votes. . . .”

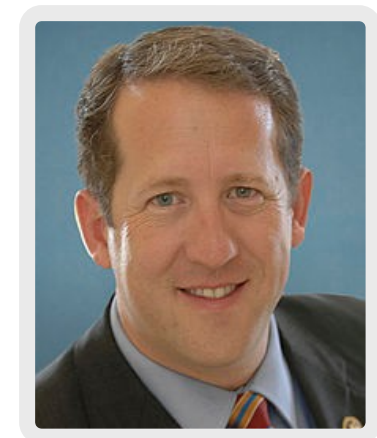
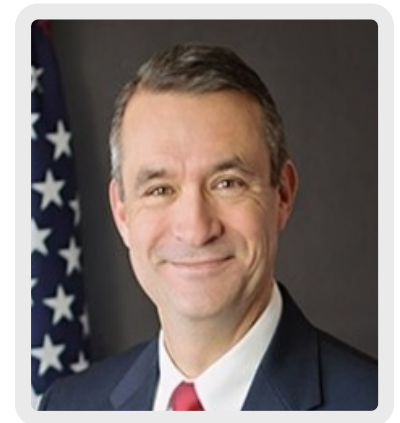
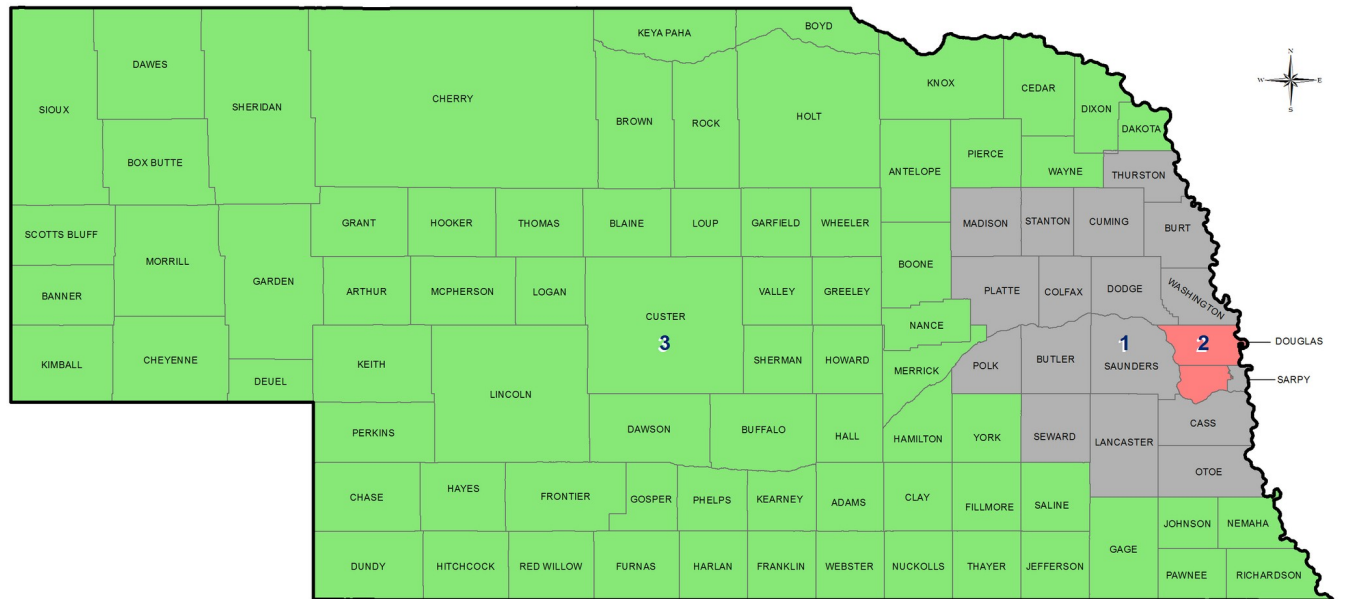
Nebraska

Six different public bodies for which NE legislature creates new district boundaries

3 Districts

U.S. House of Representatives - LB 704 (2011)

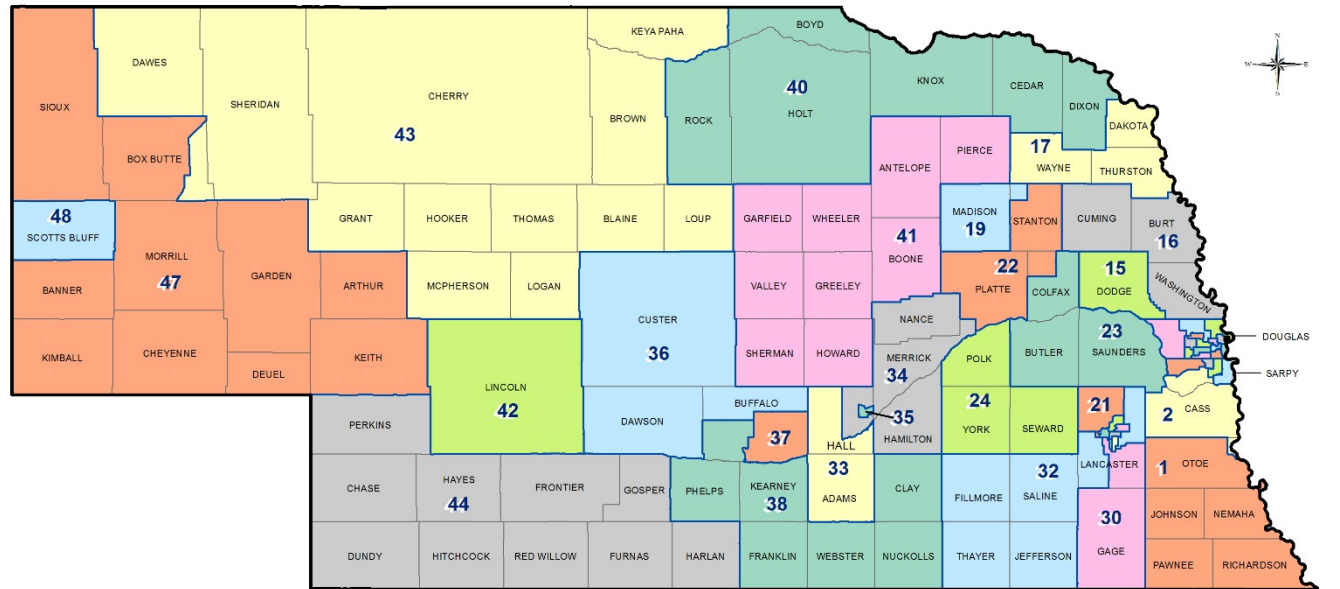
(Districts took effect May 27, 2011)



Geographic Information Systems
 Map Created by: Trisha Schlake, GIS Specialist
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau
 Date Created: 6-27-2011

Nebraska Legislative Districts - LB 703 (2011)

(Districts took effect May 27, 2011)



Geographic Information Systems
Map Created by: Trisha Schlake, GIS Specialist
Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Date Created: 6-27-2011

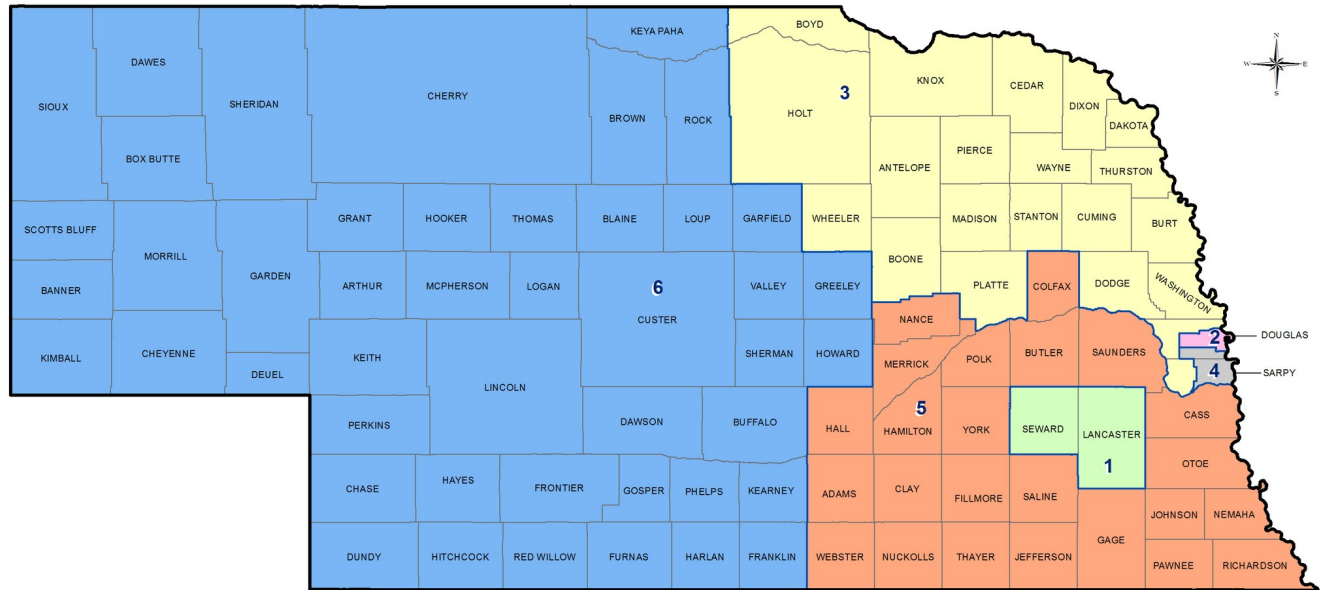
0 80 160 Miles

49 Districts



Nebraska Supreme Court Judicial Districts - LB 699 (2011)

(Districts took effect May 27, 2011)



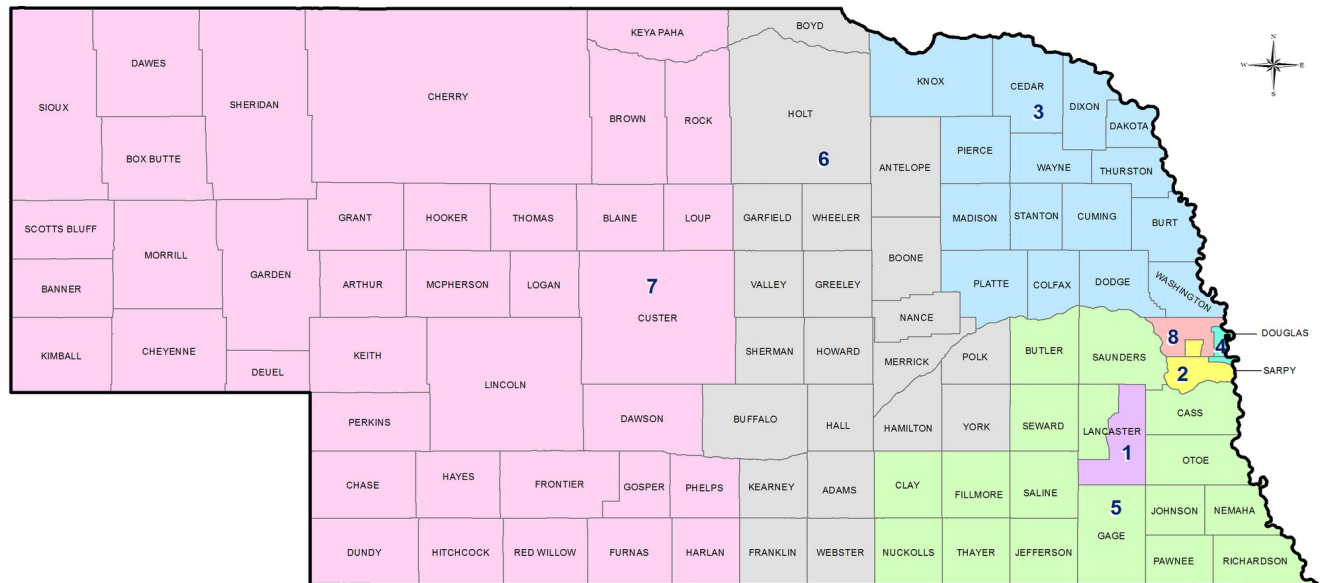
Geographic Information Systems
Map Created by: Trisha Schlake, GIS Specialist
Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Date Created: 6-27-2011

6 districts



Nebraska State Board of Education - LB 702 (2011)

(Districts took effect May 27, 2011)



Geographic Information Systems
Map Created by: Trisha Schlake, GIS Specialist
Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Date Created: 6-23-2011

0 80 160 Miles

8 Districts

#1: Patsy Koch Johns

#2: Lisa Fricke

#3: Rachel Wise

#4: John Witzel

#5: Patricia Timm

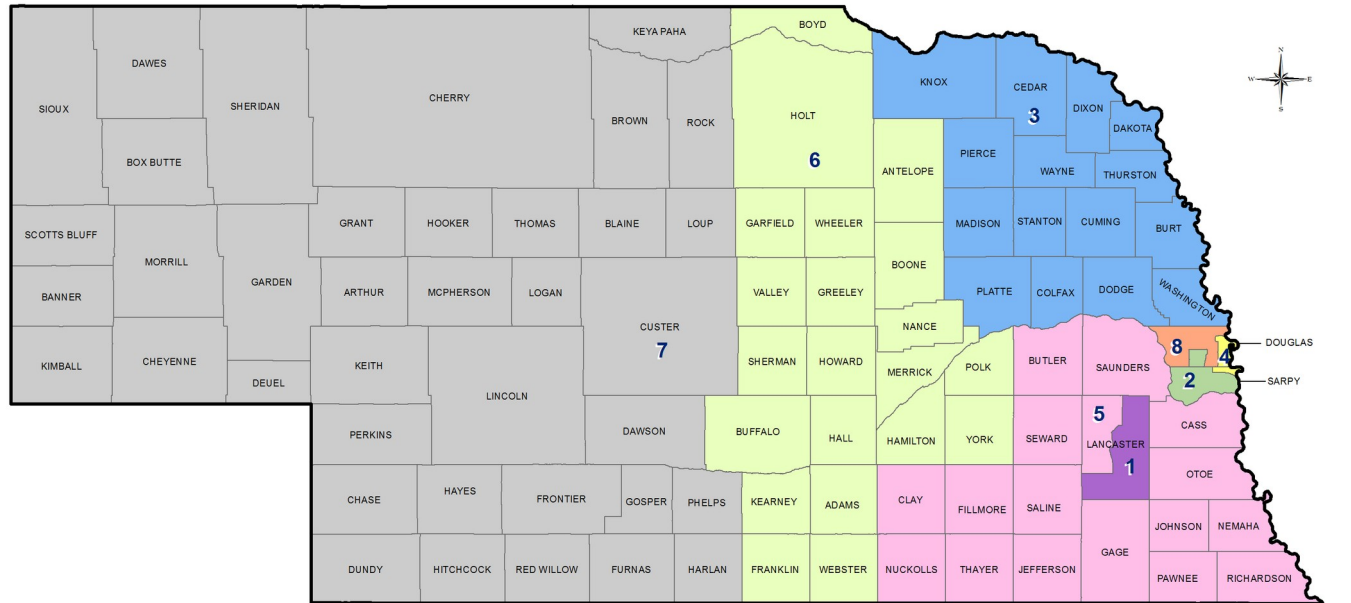
#6: Maureen Nickels

#7: Robin Stevens

#8: Deborah Neary

University of Nebraska Board of Regents - LB 701 (2011)

(Districts took effect May 27, 2011)



8 Districts

- #1: Timothy Clare
- #2: Howard Hawks
- #3: Jim Pillen
- #4: Elizabeth O'Connor
- #5: Robert Schafer
- #6: Paul Kenney
- #7: Bob Phares
- #8: Barbara Weitz

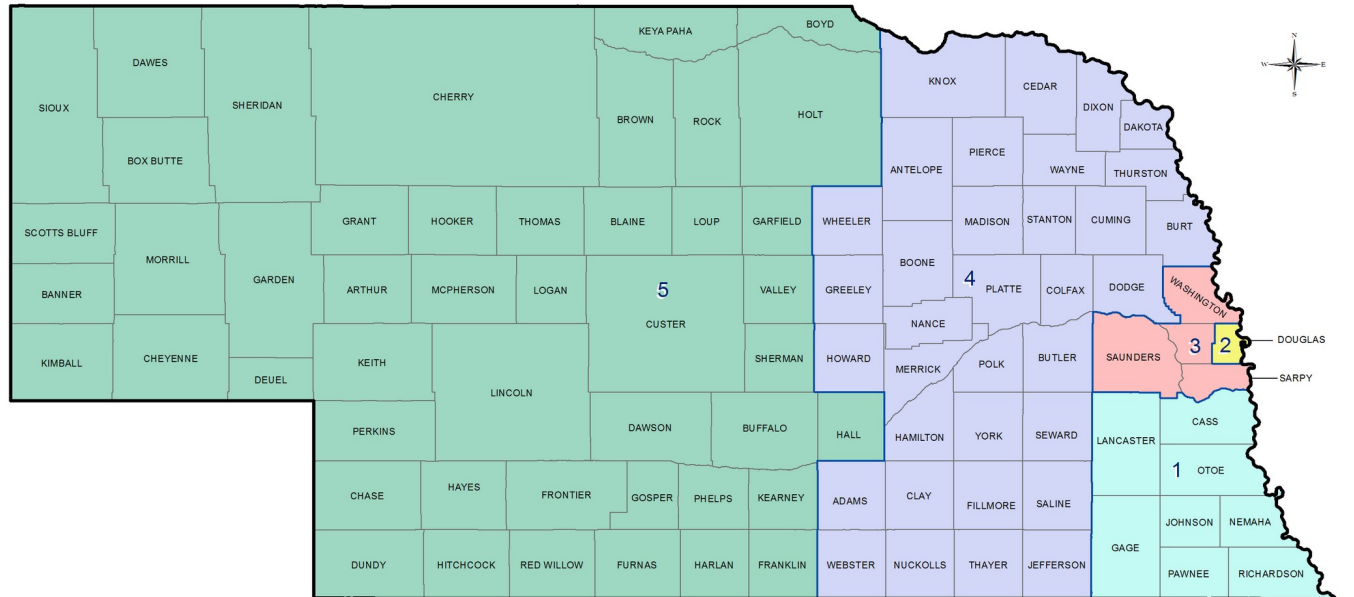


Geographic Information Systems
Map Created by: Trisha Schlake, GIS Specialist
Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Date Created: 6-23-2011

0 80 160 Miles

Public Service Commission - LB 700 (2011)

(Districts took effect May 27, 2011)



Geographic Information Systems
Map Created by: Trisha Schlake, GIS Specialist
Source: U.S. Census Bureau
Date Created: 6-27-2011

A horizontal number line with three tick marks. The first tick mark is labeled '0', the second is labeled '80', and the third is labeled '160 Miles'.

5 Districts

- #1: Dan Watermeier
- #2: Chrystal Rhoades
- #3: Tim Schram
- #4: Rod Johnson
- #5: Mary Ridder

How is it done?

Who?

- Legislative Committee (nine members in 2021)
- Legislative Research Office staff: GIS (geographic information system) specialists, analysts

When?

- Precinct-level Census data by mid August 2021 (1.9 million Nebraskans)
- 2 weeks to organize data
- 2 weeks to prepare redistricting recommendations
- Public hearings in the 3 congressional districts
- Legislative special sessions: September 13-30

Requirements

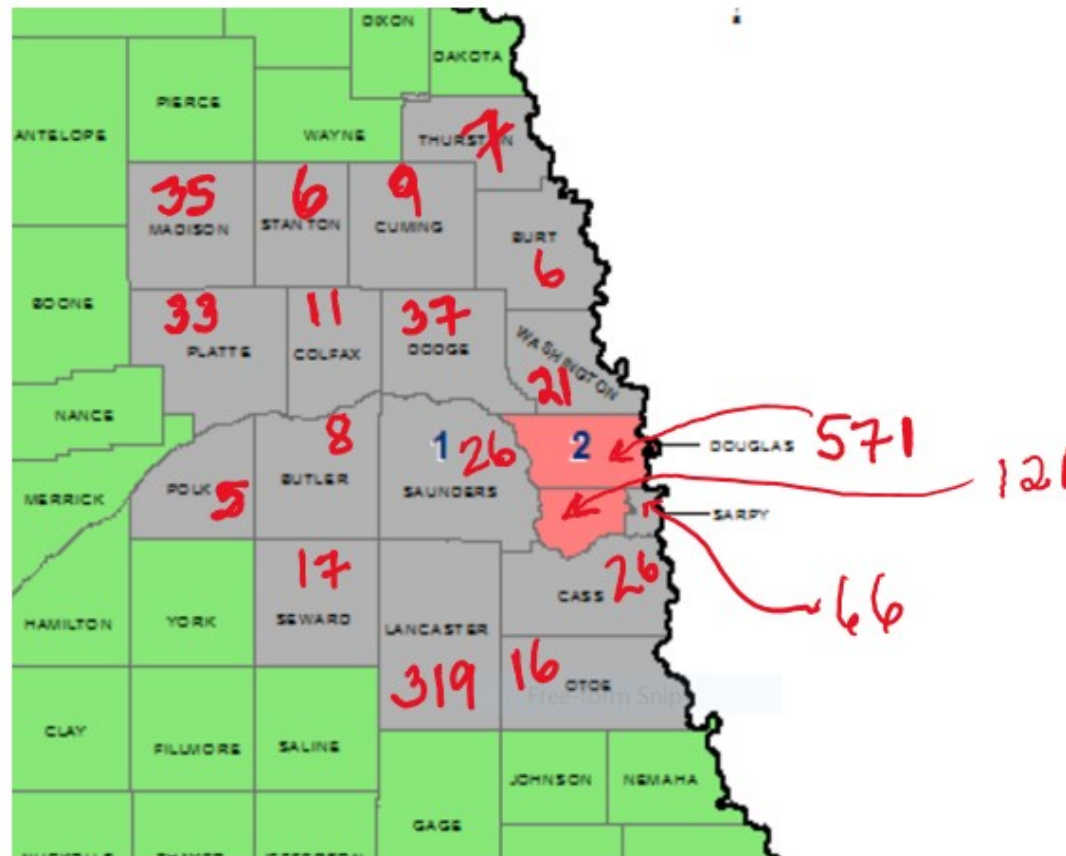
NE Constitution criteria:

1. Compact districts
2. Contiguous districts
3. Equal population
4. Follow county lines

Nebraska Legislature voted on additional rules: allowable deviations, more flexibility on prior cores, etc.

Congressional Districts

Probably will require moving 50,000 people to western Nebraska's District 3. (population in 1,000s on map below)



Census figures

What it means for legislative districts

- Based on estimate of 1.9 million in Nebraska, average of around 39,000 people in each of the 49 districts.
- Two districts could shift from rural to urban
Implications: Douglas, Sarpy and Lancaster County would have 27 out of 49 districts (note: they comprise 56% of state's population)

(source: LJS 12/16/2020)

Local Redistricting – done by each jurisdiction

- City Council
- School Board
- Lancaster County Board
- others

Pay attention to-

- Legislative districts
 - Majority-minority districts (current Districts #11,7, maybe 13)
 - “Eye-ball” test for strange shapes
 - District #s in strange new places
- Congressional districts: Sarpy County, Madison County, Platte County
- Deviations from ideal populations
- Preservation of cores of districts
- Opportunities to attend public hearings (if available) on proposed maps

Thank you to:

Metric Geometry and Gerrymandering Group

The Metric Geometry and Gerrymandering Group is a nonpartisan research organization. MGGG has major support from the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life at Tufts University and the Amar G. Bose Research Grant Program at MIT and an active partnership with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.