

The People's Maps Commission FAQ

Overview

Why does Wisconsin need the People's Maps Commission for redistricting?

Since 2011, Wisconsin has been widely referred to as one of the most politically gerrymandered states in the nation. Most Wisconsinites believe they should get to choose their elected officials, not the other way around. That means we need a nonpartisan, transparent, and fair redistricting process.

Over the past several years, 51 of Wisconsin's 72 counties, representing approximately 78% of Wisconsinites, have passed resolutions or referenda supporting nonpartisan redistricting. Governor Evers created the Commission in [Executive Order #66](#) to give the people of Wisconsin the opportunity to provide direct input, discourage partisan bias, and increasing transparency in the redistricting process.

What is the Commission's role in redistricting in Wisconsin?

Beginning in fall 2020, the Commission will host public hearings across the state to hear from Wisconsinites about how redrawing the political lines of Wisconsin will affect them and the state. The Commission will also hear from experts in redistricting who will educate the Commission on methods for drawing nonpartisan maps.

When the U.S. Census data is released in July 2021, the Commission members will use the information, feedback, and knowledge they collected to draw maps that fairly represent the people of Wisconsin. Those maps will then be presented to the Legislature for consideration as the People's Maps, reflecting the work and will of the people.

What is the general timeline for the Commission and redistricting?

Applications to serve as a Commission member will be accepted until July 31, 2020. The Commission will begin hosting public hearings in fall 2020. These hearings will take place over several months and members of the public are encouraged to participate. At the end of July 2021, the U.S. Census Bureau will release Wisconsin's data collected in the 2020 Census and the Commission will begin drafting a set of maps to the Legislature. The Legislature will then choose to accept the People's Maps or ignore the people's nonpartisan maps to draft their own.

Commission Membership

Who will serve on the Commission?

The Commission will have nine voting members. The members will be Wisconsinites representing each of Wisconsin's eight congressional districts and members from the African American, Latinx, and Tribal communities. The Commission members may not be elected officials, public officials, lobbyists, or political party officers. The idea is that the people should be making these important decisions, not

politicians. The Commission may also include nonvoting members who are experts in redistricting, including professors, statisticians, mathematicians, map software experts, and legal scholars.

Who picks the Commission members?

All eligible applicants will be provided to the Selection Panel. The Selection Panel will review all applications and select the nine voting members of the Commission. The Selection Panel is made up of three retired judges:

- **Janine Geske** – Geske served as judge from 1981 to 1993 on the Milwaukee County Circuit Court. In 1993, Governor Tommy Thompson appointed Geske to the Wisconsin Supreme Court where she served until 1998.
- **Joseph Troy** – Troy was elected to the Outagamie County Circuit Court bench in 1987. He resigned in 2007 after 20 years as a judge
- **Paul Higginbotham** – Higginbotham served on the Dane County Circuit Court from 1994 until 2003. In 2003, Governor Jim Doyle appointed Higginbotham to the Court of Appeals, District IV, where he served until 2017.

What do members of the Commission do?

Members of the Commission will be responsible for attending the public hearings held by the Commission, learning about map-drawing and best practices for drawing fair, impartial maps, and listening to redistricting experts and local voters to understand what matters to Wisconsinites regarding redistricting. The Commission will make important decisions on how Wisconsin's maps should be drawn and will guide the process for producing the actual maps to present to the Legislature after the release of the U.S. Census data in July 2021.

How do I apply to be a member of the Commission?

You must complete the application, have the completed application notarized, and mail or email your application in by July 31, 2020. Complete application information is [here](#).

Hearings

How many hearings are there and where will they be held?

There will be at least eight hearings, one for each of Wisconsin's congressional districts. Due to COVID-19, it is likely these hearings will be held virtually rather than in-person. The public hearing schedule for the People's Maps Commission will be announced in the coming months. The most up-to-date information is available [here](#).

What happens at a hearing?

At each hearing, the Commission and members of the public will hear experts speak about the importance of fair maps, the computer systems and statistics that help draw the maps, and new ideas and theories on the best way to draw maps. Members of the public, stakeholder groups, and elected officials will also have the opportunity to voice their opinions about current maps, the redistricting process, the priorities the Commission should use when drawing maps, and the affect new or changed political boundaries will have on their communities and neighborhoods.

Who can attend the hearings?

The hearings are free and open to the public. After the hearing schedule is announced and in advance of the public hearings, members of the public will be able to register their participation [here](#).

The Commission's Work

What kinds of decisions are the Commission making?

The charge of the Commission is to gather information, inform the public, and create fair maps. The Commission is also charged with making decisions about the [principles of redistricting](#) that will guide the map-drawing process. After the U.S. Census data is released in July 2021, the Commission will lead the process of drawing the maps that will be presented to the Legislature.

How does the Commission draw the maps?

After the U.S. Census data is released, the Commission will use the apportionment data and Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping technology to draw fair maps based on the population distribution and the principles of redistricting. The Commission will decide the exact process for drawing the maps, which could include engaging mathematics and software experts to help produce the final maps based on the Commission's directives, input, and priorities.

Where can I learn more about redistricting?

More resources on redistricting are available [here](#).