

REDISTRICTING IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Removing gerrymandered districts and voting restrictions empowers Native communities to elect representatives that will address their needs and interests. A fair map is a first step to addressing centuries of sustained, systemic racism.

HOW TO ORGANIZE FOR A FAIR REDISTRICTING MAP

1. LEARN THE RULES

- There are federal and state rules that control the redistricting process. Broad definitions and some state-specific guides are available at <https://vote.narf.org/redistricting/>.
- Make sure you know who draws the lines, when they must complete the maps, and what rules they have to follow.

2. ORGANIZE YOUR COMMUNITY

- Contact fellow tribal members, nearby tribes, or other members of your community. Explain the importance of redistricting and how you can make a difference.
- Consider building a larger coalition. Talk to groups outside of your community who might share interests.

3. DEFINE YOUR COMMUNITY ... OR SOMEONE ELSE WILL

- Work together to determine what area of land defines your community. A reservation's geographic border aren't necessarily the border of the community. There could be relevant voters outside the reservation or even multiple tribes who see themselves as a community.
- To define your community, you'll want to show that residents have common political, social, tribal, economic, or other interests, and would benefit from having a shared representative.
- Once defined, document your community's demographics and how past redistricting has affected or harmed you.
- You may want to prepare a proposed district map of your area or the whole state. Some redistricting organizations will accept maps drawn by the public.
- "Full maps" have the district lines for a significant area or the entire state. They are harder to develop but show how your community can be respected alongside other communities. Find mapping tools at <https://vote.narf.org>.

4. SPREAD THE WORD

- Circulate a petition or letter addressed to redistricting officials. Include a specific ask. Share with local media.
- Submit a letter to the editor at local and regional newspapers. Work with local media. Offer to be interviewed.
- If a discriminatory map is being considered, call attention to it! Share information with your community, media, social media, and groups like NARF that can help with a legal fight against such maps.

5. ATTEND PUBLIC HEARINGS

- Someone (or many people) from your community should attend redistricting meetings and hearings, when they are public. This allows you to stay informed and to demonstrate that your community is paying attention.
- Take notes and save meeting materials. If there is a court case challenging the maps, your notes could become public evidence, so write down only what is discussed and who talks, without comment.
- "Attend" through the internet, television, or radio if you cannot be there in person.
- Urge the redistricting officials to hold a meeting near your community so that community members can attend more easily. Make sure that language barriers are not limiting people's ability to participate.

6. TESTIFY AT HEARINGS

- Speak at public hearings and meetings. Sign up in advance when it is required. Stay within the time limit and focus on your most important points.
- Explain why you proposed a particular district and why it matters—the people making decisions may not be familiar with your community. Use statistics and stories to help them understand. Remember to be original and tell your story.
- Respectfully correct inaccurate statements if needed.
- Submit written testimonies about your community—the more the better. Present maps, community demographics, and redistricting impact stories. (Find guides at <https://vote.narf.org/redistricting/>.)



A project of the Native American Rights Fund
<https://vote.narf.org> :: vote@narf.org

Guide adapted from materials prepared by Common Cause, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, and State Voices in collaboration with other organizations.

#ShapeNativeFutures

