

West Virginia Legislative

Redistricting Office

Supreme Court decisions increased the states' need for geographically detailed census information in the redistricting process. The urgency of the states' need for this data led Congress to pass Public Law 94-171 which laid out in detail the use of geographic features and the relationship of the population counts to these areas.

Many question what the Redistricting Office does "the other nine years". The census goes through a developing process in the intermittent years. This involves the gathering and updating of geographic data about the state for the formation of new Federal TIGER (Topographically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing) maps, gathering of political boundary information from counties and cities, the geographic boundaries of county precincts, and working hand-in-hand with the Census Bureau so that the State of West Virginia is as completely geographically defined as possible. The office uses GIS (Geographic Information System) Mapping Software that has enabled this process to be addressed more precisely. Geocoding this data and data needed by members about their counties and/or districts is also done as needed. There are five (5) stages.

Stage 1 – 2004-2006 State Legislative District Project (SLDP). We submit digitized geographic boundaries WV Congressional, State Senate, and State House of Delegate districts. These are then added to the US Government files. We proceed with verification stage and data tabulation with the 2000 Census data. For accuracy, the WV Redistricting also sends block equivalency files.

Stage 2 – 2007-2009 Voting District (precinct)/Block Boundary Suggestion Project

(VTD/BBSP). Submission of the updated county precinct (VTD) boundaries to the Geographic Division of the Census Bureau is done during this process. We collect this data from the counties and digitize it. We now have the ability to make suggestions for Census Block Boundaries and now have the ability to add county specific ridge lines into this mix (YEA). A verification process is included for all components (VTD/SLD/Congressional) of this phase and will continue into the year 2010.

This is the work we are compiling in the Redistricting Office at the present time. This is one of our busiest times of the process. We are currently using new software (MAF/TIGER provided by the Census Bureau) for digitizing precincts and adding proposed new block boundaries. It can only be used for this purpose.

Phase 3 – 2010-2011 We will receive geographic and data products to enable us to get the state ready for the release of P.L. 94-171 tabulations. These geographic population numbers are mandated by law to be distributed to the states no later than April 1, 2011, a year following Census Day.

Phase 4 – 2011-2013 The drawing and submitting of Congressional and State Legislative Districts using the Phase 3 materials

Phase 5 – 2012-2014 Will be the evaluation and recommendations for Census 2020. This will be a review of and by the states to determine successes and failures of meeting P.L. 94-171 requirements.

Then we get to “the census year”. The data collected is based on the residence of the population on April 1st of the census year. The Secretary of Commerce and the Census Bureau Director will report the total population counts by state to the President by December 31 of the census year. The President must report these population figures and the number of

representatives apportioned to each state during the first week of the Congress in January following the census year. By April 1 of the following year of the census, the Director will provide the detailed geographically defined population counts to the governor and legislative leaders. These provisions are defined within Public Law 94-171. Once the Legislative Leadership receives this data, they form Redistricting Committees if they have not already done so. They will work with the Analyst of the Redistricting Office to draw new geographic boundaries for the Congressional Districts, Senate Districts, and House of Delegates Districts in order to insure equal representation within West Virginia. The analyst are up to date on Federal and State laws and codes in order to help guide the Members through drawing plans that will stand up in court. This process can either take place during regular session or a special session can be called. Once the Plans are completed the Redistricting Office generates the reports and maps needed for the formation of the Bill. Once the Bill is signed into law, the Redistricting Office sends the new geographic district boundary information to the counties in order for them to realign their Magisterial Districts and Voting Precincts, respecting the Congressional and State Legislative District boundaries as required by State Code.

During the interim between Censuses, the Legislative Redistricting Office works with Legislative Members and Agencies to help with data within certain areas. The office also works with other Legislative offices such as Claims and PERD in order to produce maps or graphs from their data and/or data bases.

Then the process starts all over again.