Redistricting and Representation

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Electoral Boundaries

• Redistricting affects individual representation, but more importantly it affects aggregate partisan representation in Congress and state legislatures.

• In most states, though not Iowa, redistricting for congressional and legislative boundaries are handled by the state government (legislature and governor).

• This results in partisan plans if unified, or deadlocked if divided state govt.
Gerrymandering Affects Everyone

• State legislative gerrymandering, to the extent it is considered a problem, the effects are limited to each state.
• However, when states gerrymandering Congressional seats, it affects the whole country.
• At the moment, GOP has a partisan advantage in terms of seats and that affects national politics.
How can we improve redistricting?

• Reform the process - Give the power to draw new maps to someone other than politicians.
• Reform the outcomes - Further restrict politicians in the types of maps they can draw.
• Mix - Crowd source/computer algorithm for source of maps.
Process: Set a Partisan Benchmark

- Ohio and New Jersey have both considered this option.
- The idea is to set a target for the partisan split of seats.
- Use an average of statewide elections results.
- Naturally, picking which elections to include could be tricky.
Pennsylvania Example

- 2010 Senatorial – 49% D, 51% R
- 2012 Presidential – 52% D, 48% R
- 2012 Senatorial – 54% D, 46% R
- 2014 Gubernatorial – 55% D, 45% R

- Average - 52.5% D, 47.5% R
- 18 seats in House – 9.45 seats for Dems, so 9 or 10.
- Current delegation is 13 R, 5 D
Commissions, etc.

• Legislative Services Agency – LSA draws map in Iowa, subject to legislative approval.
• Arizona and California have commissions implemented through the initiative process.
• Problem with Commissions is populating them and then post-hoc analysis/complaints.
Computer/Crowd Sourced maps

• One possible source of less biased maps those drawn via computer algorithm and crowd sourced maps. Drawing legal maps is still difficult but not impossible to do.

• We could also produce (infinitely?) many maps by having computers draw maps given some instructions (need VRA districts, etc).

• We could limit legislators to pick among these maps rather than drawing their own.
Conclusion

• Partisan gerrymandering mistranslates votes into seats, that’s not great.
• Court not likely to do anything.
• Racial gerrymandering was the flavor of the decade for the court. This is a bit of a mess as well.
• There are some ways to reform the process.
• We could just switch to proportional representation and be done with geographic districts.