

CHAPTER 42

REDISTRICTING GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

Referred to in §2A.4, 39.28, 39A.1, 39A.2, 39A.6, 47.1, 260C.15, 260C.39, 275.35, 277.3, 296.4, 298.18, 357J.16, 360.1, 372.2, 376.1

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42.1 Definitions.

As used in [this chapter](#), unless the context requires otherwise:

1. “*Chief election officer*” means the state commissioner of elections as defined by [section 47.1](#).
2. “*Commission*” means the temporary redistricting advisory commission established pursuant to [this chapter](#).
3. “*Federal census*” means the decennial census required by federal law to be conducted by the United States bureau of the census in every year ending in zero.
4. “*Four selecting authorities*” means:
 - a. The majority floor leader of the state senate.
 - b. The minority floor leader of the state senate.
 - c. The majority floor leader of the state house of representatives.
 - d. The minority floor leader of the state house of representatives.
5. “*Partisan public office*” means:
 - a. An elective or appointive office in the executive or legislative branch or in an independent establishment of the federal government.
 - b. An elective office in the executive or legislative branch of the government of this state, or an office which is filled by appointment and is exempt from the merit system under [section 8A.412](#).
 - c. An office of a county, city or other political subdivision of this state which is filled by an election process involving nomination and election of candidates on a partisan basis.
6. “*Plan*” means a plan for legislative and congressional reapportionment drawn up pursuant to the requirements of [this chapter](#).
7. “*Political party office*” means an elective office in the national or state organization of a political party, as defined by [section 43.2](#).
8. “*Relative*” means an individual who is related to the person in question as father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, husband, wife, grandfather, grandmother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, half brother or half sister.

[C81, §42.1]

[2003 Acts, ch 145, §151](#)

42.2 Preparations for redistricting.

1. The legislative services agency shall acquire appropriate information, review and evaluate available facilities, and develop programs and procedures in preparation for drawing congressional and legislative redistricting plans on the basis of each federal census. Funds shall be expended for the purchase or lease of equipment and materials only with prior approval of the legislative council.

2. By December 31 of each year ending in zero, the legislative services agency shall obtain from the United States bureau of the census information regarding geographic and political units in this state for which federal census population data has been gathered and will be tabulated. The legislative services agency shall use the data so obtained to:

- a. Prepare necessary descriptions of geographic and political units for which census data will be reported, and which are suitable for use as components of legislative districts.
- b. Prepare maps of counties, cities and other geographic units within the state, which may

be used to illustrate the locations of legislative district boundaries proposed in plans drawn in accordance with [section 42.4](#).

3. As soon as possible after January 1 of each year ending in one, the legislative services agency shall obtain from the United States bureau of the census the population data needed for legislative districting which the census bureau is required to provide this state under United States Pub. L. No. 94-171, and shall use that data to assign a population figure based upon certified federal census data to each geographic or political unit described pursuant to [subsection 2](#), paragraph “a”. Upon completing that task, the legislative services agency shall begin the preparation of congressional and legislative districting plans as required by [section 42.3](#).

4. Upon each delivery by the legislative services agency to the general assembly of a bill embodying a plan, pursuant to [section 42.3](#), the legislative services agency shall at the earliest feasible time make available to the public the following information:

- a. Copies of the bill delivered by the legislative services agency to the general assembly.
- b. Maps illustrating the plan.
- c. A summary of the standards prescribed by [section 42.4](#) for development of the plan.
- d. A statement of the population of each district included in the plan, and the relative deviation of each district population from the ideal district population.

[C81, §42.2]

[2003 Acts, ch 35, §44, 49; 2006 Acts, ch 1010, §33; 2007 Acts, ch 78, §1](#)

42.3 Timetable for preparation of plan.

1. a. Not later than April 1 of each year ending in one, the legislative services agency shall deliver to the secretary of the senate and the chief clerk of the house of representatives identical bills embodying a plan of legislative and congressional districting prepared in accordance with [section 42.4](#). It is the intent of [this chapter](#) that the general assembly shall bring the bill to a vote in either the senate or the house of representatives expeditiously, but not less than three days after the report of the commission required by [section 42.6](#) is received and made available to the members of the general assembly, under a procedure or rule permitting no amendments except those of a purely corrective nature. It is further the intent of [this chapter](#) that if the bill is approved by the first house in which it is considered, it shall expeditiously be brought to a vote in the second house under a similar procedure or rule. If the bill embodying the plan submitted by the legislative services agency under [this subsection](#) fails to be approved by a constitutional majority in either the senate or the house of representatives, the secretary of the senate or the chief clerk of the house, as the case may be, shall at once, but in no event later than seven days after the date the bill failed to be approved, transmit to the legislative services agency information which the senate or house may direct by resolution regarding reasons why the plan was not approved.

b. However, if the population data for legislative districting which the United States census bureau is required to provide this state under Pub. L. No. 94-171 and, if used by the legislative services agency, the corresponding topologically integrated geographic encoding and referencing data file for that population data are not available to the legislative services agency on or before February 15 of the year ending in one, the dates set forth in paragraph “a” shall be extended by a number of days equal to the number of days after February 15 of the year ending in one that the federal census population data and the topologically integrated geographic encoding and referencing data file for legislative districting become available.

2. If the bill embodying the plan submitted by the legislative services agency under [subsection 1](#) fails to be enacted, the legislative services agency shall prepare a bill embodying a second plan of legislative and congressional districting. The bill shall be prepared in accordance with [section 42.4](#), and, insofar as it is possible to do so within the requirements of [section 42.4](#), with the reasons cited by the senate or house of representatives by resolution, or the governor by veto message, for the failure to approve the plan. If a second plan is required under [this subsection](#), the bill embodying it shall be delivered to the secretary of the senate and the chief clerk of the house of representatives not later than thirty-five days after the date of the vote by which the senate or the house of representatives fails to approve

the bill submitted under [subsection 1](#), or the date the governor vetoes or fails to approve the bill. If it is necessary to submit a bill under [this subsection](#), the bill shall be brought to a vote not less than seven days after the bill is submitted and made available to the members of the general assembly, under a procedure or rule permitting no amendments except those of a purely corrective nature. It is further the intent of [this chapter](#) that if the bill is approved by the first house in which it is considered, it shall expeditiously be brought to a vote in the second house under a similar procedure or rule. If the bill embodying the plan submitted by the legislative services agency under [this subsection](#) fails to be approved by a constitutional majority in either the senate or the house of representatives, the secretary of the senate or the chief clerk of the house, as the case may be, shall transmit to the legislative services agency in the same manner as described in [subsection 1](#), information which the senate or house may direct by resolution regarding reasons why the plan was not approved.

3. If the bill embodying the plan submitted by the legislative services agency under [subsection 2](#) fails to be enacted, the same procedure as prescribed by [subsection 2](#) shall be followed. If a third plan is required under [this subsection](#), the bill embodying it shall be delivered to the secretary of the senate and the chief clerk of the house of representatives not later than thirty-five days after the date of the vote by which the senate or the house of representatives fails to approve the bill submitted under [subsection 2](#), or the date the governor vetoes or fails to approve the bill. The legislative services agency shall submit a bill under [this subsection](#) sufficiently in advance of September 1 of the year ending in one to permit the general assembly to consider the plan prior to that date. If it is necessary to submit a bill under [this subsection](#), the bill shall be brought to a vote within the same time period after its delivery to the secretary of the senate and the chief clerk of the house of representatives as is prescribed for the bill submitted under [subsection 2](#), but shall be subject to amendment in the same manner as other bills.

[C81, §42.3]

[94 Acts, ch 1179, §1, 2; 2003 Acts, ch 35, §44, 49; 2006 Acts, ch 1010, §34; 2007 Acts, ch 78, §2 – 5; 2009 Acts, ch 133, §11, 12](#)

Referred to in [§42.2, 42.6](#)

42.4 Redistricting standards.

1. Legislative and congressional districts shall be established on the basis of population.

a. Senatorial and representative districts, respectively, shall each have a population as nearly equal as practicable to the ideal population for such districts, determined by dividing the number of districts to be established into the population of the state reported in the federal decennial census. Senatorial districts and representative districts shall not vary in population from the respective ideal district populations except as necessary to comply with one of the other standards enumerated in [this section](#). In no case shall the quotient, obtained by dividing the total of the absolute values of the deviations of all district populations from the applicable ideal district population by the number of districts established, exceed one percent of the applicable ideal district population. No senatorial district shall have a population which exceeds that of any other senatorial district by more than five percent, and no representative district shall have a population which exceeds that of any other representative district by more than five percent.

b. Congressional districts shall each have a population as nearly equal as practicable to the ideal district population, derived as prescribed in paragraph “a” of [this subsection](#). No congressional district shall have a population which varies by more than one percent from the applicable ideal district population, except as necessary to comply with [Article III, section 37 of the Constitution of the State of Iowa](#).

c. If a challenge is filed with the supreme court alleging excessive population variance among districts established in a plan adopted by the general assembly, the general assembly has the burden of justifying any variance in excess of one percent between the population of a district and the applicable ideal district population.

2. To the extent consistent with [subsection 1](#), district boundaries shall coincide with the boundaries of political subdivisions of the state. The number of counties and cities divided among more than one district shall be as small as possible. When there is a choice between

dividing local political subdivisions, the more populous subdivisions shall be divided before the less populous, but this statement does not apply to a legislative district boundary drawn along a county line which passes through a city that lies in more than one county.

3. Districts shall be composed of convenient contiguous territory. Areas which meet only at the points of adjoining corners are not contiguous.

4. Districts shall be reasonably compact in form, to the extent consistent with the standards established by [subsections 1, 2, and 3](#). In general, reasonably compact districts are those which are square, rectangular, or hexagonal in shape, and not irregularly shaped, to the extent permitted by natural or political boundaries. If it is necessary to compare the relative compactness of two or more districts, or of two or more alternative districting plans, the tests prescribed by paragraphs “a” and “b” shall be used.

a. Length-width compactness. The compactness of a district is greatest when the length of the district and the width of the district are equal. The measure of a district’s compactness is the absolute value of the difference between the length and the width of the district. In general, the length-width compactness of a district is calculated by measuring the distance from the northernmost point or portion of the boundary of a district to the southernmost point or portion of the boundary of the same district and the distance from the westernmost point or portion of the boundary of the district to the easternmost point or portion of the boundary of the same district. The absolute values computed for individual districts under this paragraph may be cumulated for all districts in a plan in order to compare the overall compactness of two or more alternative districting plans for the state, or for a portion of the state.

b. Perimeter compactness. The compactness of a district is greatest when the distance needed to traverse the perimeter boundary of a district is as short as possible. The total perimeter distance computed for individual districts under this paragraph may be cumulated for all districts in a plan in order to compare the overall compactness of two or more alternative districting plans for the state, or for a portion of the state.

5. No district shall be drawn for the purpose of favoring a political party, incumbent legislator or member of Congress, or other person or group, or for the purpose of augmenting or diluting the voting strength of a language or racial minority group. In establishing districts, no use shall be made of any of the following data:

a. Addresses of incumbent legislators or members of Congress.

b. Political affiliations of registered voters.

c. Previous election results.

d. Demographic information, other than population head counts, except as required by the Constitution and the laws of the United States.

6. In order to minimize electoral confusion and to facilitate communication within state legislative districts, each plan drawn under [this section](#) shall provide that each representative district is wholly included within a single senatorial district and that, so far as possible, each representative and each senatorial district shall be included within a single congressional district. However, the standards established by [subsections 1 through 5](#) shall take precedence where a conflict arises between these standards and the requirement, so far as possible, of including a senatorial or representative district within a single congressional district.

7. Each bill embodying a plan drawn under [this section](#) shall provide that any vacancy in the general assembly which takes office in the year ending in one, occurring at a time which makes it necessary to fill the vacancy at a special election held pursuant to [section 69.14](#), shall be filled from the same district which elected the senator or representative whose seat is vacant.

8. Each bill embodying a plan drawn under [this section](#) shall include provisions for election of senators to the general assemblies which take office in the years ending in three and five, which shall be in conformity with [Article III, section 6, of the Constitution of the State of Iowa](#). With respect to any plan drawn for consideration in a year ending in one, those provisions shall be substantially as follows:

a. Each senatorial district in the plan which is not a holdover senatorial district shall elect a senator in the year ending in two for a four-year term commencing in January of the year ending in three. If an incumbent senator who was elected to a four-year term which commenced in January of the year ending in one, or was subsequently elected to fill a vacancy

in such a term, is residing in a senatorial district in the plan which is not a holdover senatorial district on the first Wednesday in February of the year ending in two, that senator's term of office shall be terminated on January 1 of the year ending in three.

b. Each holdover senatorial district in the plan shall elect a senator in the year ending in four for a four-year term commencing in January of the year ending in five.

(1) If one and only one incumbent state senator is residing in a holdover senatorial district in the plan on the first Wednesday in February of the year ending in two, and that senator meets all of the following requirements, the senator shall represent the district in the senate for the general assembly commencing in January of the year ending in three:

(a) The senator was elected to a four-year term which commenced in January of the year ending in one or was subsequently elected to fill a vacancy in such a term.

(b) The senatorial district in the plan which includes the place of residence of the state senator on the date of the senator's last election to the senate is the same as the holdover senatorial district in which the senator resides on the first Wednesday in February of the year ending in two, or is contiguous to such holdover senatorial district. Areas which meet only at the points of adjoining corners are not contiguous.

(2) Each holdover senatorial district to which subparagraph (1) is not applicable shall elect a senator in the year ending in two for a two-year term commencing in January of the year ending in three. However, if more than one incumbent state senator is residing in a holdover senatorial district on the first Wednesday in February of the year ending in two, and, on or before the third Wednesday in February of the year ending in two, all but one of the incumbent senators resigns from office effective no later than January of the year ending in three, the remaining incumbent senator shall represent the district in the senate for the general assembly commencing in January of the year ending in three. A copy of each resignation must be filed in the office of the secretary of state no later than 5:00 p.m. on the third Wednesday in February of the year ending in two.

c. For purposes of [this subsection](#):

(1) "*Holdover senatorial district*" means a senatorial district in the plan which is numbered with an even or odd number in the same manner as senatorial districts, which were required to elect a senator in the year ending in zero, were numbered.

(2) "*Incumbent state senator*" means a state senator who holds the office of state senator on the first Wednesday in February of the year ending in two, and whose declared residence on that day is within the district from which the senator was last elected.

d. The secretary of state shall prescribe a form to be completed by all senators to declare their residences as of the first Wednesday in February of the year ending in two. The form shall be filed with the secretary of state no later than 5:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday in February of the year ending in two.

[C81, §42.4]

[90 Acts, ch 1244, §1](#); [94 Acts, ch 1042, §1](#); [94 Acts, ch 1179, §3](#); [2006 Acts, ch 1010, §35, 36](#); [2007 Acts, ch 78, §6, 7](#); [2008 Acts, ch 1032, §8](#); [2012 Acts, ch 1021, §36, 141, 143](#)

Referred to in [§42.2, 42.3, 42.6, 68B.32A, 331.209, 331.210A](#)

42.5 Temporary redistricting advisory commission.

1. Not later than February 15 of each year ending in one, a five member temporary redistricting advisory commission shall be established as provided by [this section](#). The commission's only functions shall be those prescribed by [section 42.6](#).

a. Each of the four selecting authorities shall certify to the chief election officer the authority's appointment of a person to serve on the commission. The certifications may be made at any time after the majority and minority floor leaders have been selected for the general assembly which takes office in the year ending in one, even though that general assembly's term of office has not actually begun.

b. Within thirty days after the four selecting authorities have certified their respective appointments to the commission, but in no event later than February 15 of the year ending in one, the four commission members so appointed shall select, by a vote of at least three members, and certify to the chief election officer the fifth commission member, who shall serve as chairperson.

c. A vacancy on the commission shall be filled by the initial selecting authority within fifteen days after the vacancy occurs.

d. Members of the commission shall receive a per diem as specified in [section 7E.6](#), travel expenses at the rate provided by [section 70A.9](#), and reimbursement for other necessary expenses incurred in performing their duties under [this section](#) and [section 42.6](#). The per diem and expenses shall be paid from funds appropriated by [section 2.12](#).

2. No person shall be appointed to the commission who:

a. Is not an eligible elector of the state at the time of selection.

b. Holds partisan public office or political party office.

c. Is a relative of or is employed by a member of the general assembly or of the United States Congress, or is employed directly by the general assembly or by the United States Congress.

[C81, §42.5]

[90 Acts, ch 1256, §23](#)

42.6 Duties of commission.

The functions of the commission shall be as follows:

1. If, in preparation of plans as required by [this chapter](#), the legislative services agency is confronted with the necessity to make any decision for which no clearly applicable guideline is provided by [section 42.4](#), the legislative services agency may submit a written request for direction to the commission.

2. Prior to delivering any plan and the bill embodying that plan to the secretary of the senate and the chief clerk of the house of representatives in accordance with [section 42.3](#), the legislative services agency shall provide to persons outside the legislative services agency staff only such information regarding the plan as may be required by policies agreed upon by the commission. [This subsection](#) does not apply to population data furnished to the legislative services agency by the United States bureau of the census.

3. Upon the delivery by the legislative services agency to the general assembly of a bill embodying an initial plan, as required by [section 42.3, subsection 1](#), the commission shall:

a. As expeditiously as reasonably possible, schedule and conduct at least three public hearings, in different geographic regions of the state, on the plan embodied in the bill delivered by the legislative services agency to the general assembly.

b. Following the hearings, promptly prepare and submit to the secretary of the senate and the chief clerk of the house a report summarizing information and testimony received by the commission in the course of the hearings. The commission's report shall include any comments and conclusions which its members deem appropriate on the information and testimony received at the hearings, or otherwise presented to the commission. The report shall be submitted no later than fourteen days after the date the bill embodying an initial plan of congressional and legislative redistricting is delivered to the general assembly.

[C81, §42.6]

[2003 Acts, ch 35, §44, 49; 2007 Acts, ch 78, §8, 9](#)

Referred to in [§42.3, 42.5](#)

42.7 Repealed by [80 Acts, ch 1021, §7](#).