

Colorado's Independent Redistricting Commissions

Why are independent commissions important?

In a democracy, there's no liberty more fundamental than the right to freely choose who represent us. Politicians shouldn't be allowed to draw voting maps that benefit themselves. Every 10 years, states redraw the boundaries of congressional and legislative districts. Redistricting is supposed to reflect changes in population and ensure that everyone is fairly represented. In 2018, Colorado voters overwhelmingly voted in support of Amendments Y&Z which created two independent redistricting commissions – one for congressional maps and one for legislative maps – so that in 2021 voters will be choosing the politicians, instead of politicians choosing their voters.

The twelve citizens that serve on each of the two independent redistricting commissions will have the power redraw our districts and ensure that electoral maps are drawn fairly, that they don't allow any one party to preserve their own power and silence the will of the people. Whether you care about the water rights of ranchers, protecting Colorado's environment and outdoors, access to affordable healthcare, voting rights, or education access, the districts that are drawn in 2021 will either create a foundation of structural barriers to progress, or they will help create an equitable system in which all of our voices can be heard.

The people of the state of Colorado hereby find and declare that fair political representation requires that the practice of gerrymandering, whereby Congressional and Legislative districts are purposefully drawn to favor one political party over another, MUST END.

-Statement of Purpose, 2014 Colorado Fair Redistricting Act

Who can serve on the commissions?

Our state needs two committed groups of 12 people who are committed to fairness and reflect Colorado's diversity to help draw our maps! These are everyday Coloradans – not political insiders – who care about our state and want to serve their friends, family and neighbors. Commission members need to have an understanding of their state and committee but don't need any special training in redistricting or map drawing. Each commission will be comprised of 4 Republicans, 4 Democrats, and 4 unaffiliated voters.

Commissioners do need to meet the following requirements:

- Must be a registered elector who voted in both of the previous two general elections in Colorado.
- Must have been either unaffiliated with any political party or affiliated with their current political party for the previous five years.

You cannot be a commissioner if you:

- Have been compensated by a member of, or a campaign committee for a candidate to Congress (for congressional redistricting) or the General Assembly (legislative redistricting) in the last three years.
- Have been an elected public official at the federal, state, county, or municipal level in Colorado in the last three years.
- Have been an elected political party official above the precinct level in Colorado or an employee of a political party in the last three years.
- Have been a professional lobbyist registered as a lobbyist in the last three years.
- Have been a candidate for office at the federal (congressional commission) or general assembly (legislative redistricting) level in the last five years.

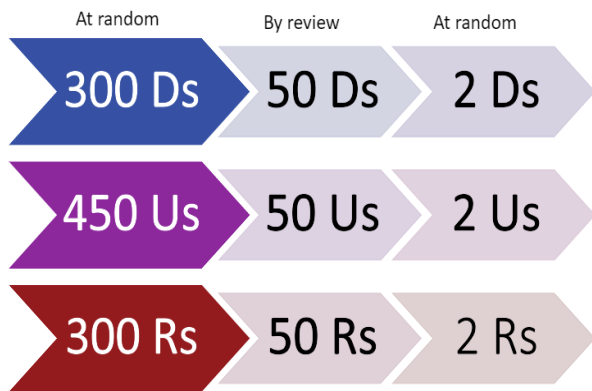


Keep in mind, you can apply to both commissions, but they are two separate applications and you'll need to fill out both. If selected, you can only serve on either the congressional or legislative redistricting commissions.

How are commissioners selected?

To ensure that the independent redistricting commissions are comprised of qualified commissioners that reflect the diversity of Colorado, the selection process has several steps. The total pool of eligible applicants will be selected no later than January 29th. Each commission will have a total of 12 commissioners: 4 registered Democratic voters (**D**), 4 registered Republican voters (**R**), and 4 registered unaffiliated voters (**U**). There are two “rounds” in which commissioners are selected.

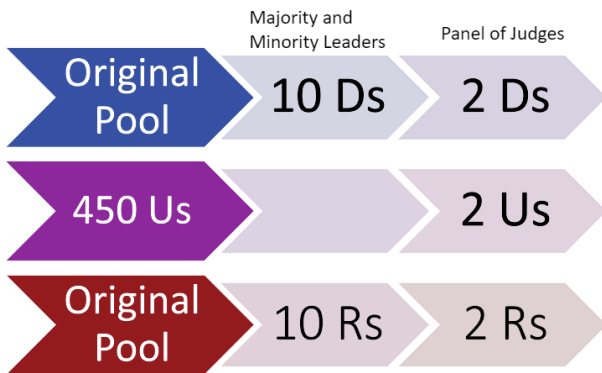




Round 1:

At a public meeting held on or before December 9th, 2020, a panel of three judges will select, at random, 300 **D**'s, 300 **R**'s, and 450 **U**'s.

On or before January 8, 2021, the panel will review the applicants and narrow them down to a smaller pool of 50 **D**'s, 50 **R**'s, and 50 **U**'s. From this pool, two applicants will then be chosen at random of each political affiliation, with consideration to not overrepresent any one congressional district.



Round 2:

By January 26th, the Majority and Minority leaders of the state House and Senate will each submit 10 applicants to the panel from the original pool of eligible applicants. One out of the 10 applicants in each of the four groups selected by each leader must be registered to vote in a congressional district not already represented by Round 1's six commissioners.

By January 29th, the panel of judges will conduct a public meeting to select one applicant from each group of 10, totaling 4 commissioners (2 **D**'s and 2 **R**'s). The panel will then select 2 **U**'s from the random pool of 450 generated in Round 1.

In selecting applicants, the panel shall, in addition to considering applicants' other qualifications:

- To the extent possible, ensure that the commission reflects Colorado's racial, ethnic, gender, and geographic diversity;
- Ensure that at least one commissioner is registered to vote in each congressional district and no more than two commissioners are registered to vote in any single congressional district;
- Ensure that at least one commissioner resides west of the continental divide; and
- Ensure that all commissioners meet the minimum qualifications.

How Do I Apply?

The applications are available at redistricting.colorado.gov from August 10, 2020 to November 10, 2020. Applications include information such as professional background, party affiliation, a description of past political activity, involvement with political and civic organizations, and whether

the applicant meets the eligibility criteria (listed on the page below). You must explain why you want to serve on the commission and may provide a statement about how you will promote consensus among commissioners if appointed. You may also choose to include up to four letters of recommendation with an application.

Applications are due by November 10, 2020

redistricting.colorado.gov

What else should I know, what are some other frequently asked questions?

Are commissioners paid?

Members of the commissions receive a per diem of \$200 for attendance at regularly scheduled meetings of the commission and are reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses incurred while performing official duties but they do not receive a salary.

What is the timeline, when will this all happen?

Given COVID-19 and the changing census timelines, some of the timeline is a bit more unknown than the drafters of the constitutional amendment originally anticipated. Additionally, it is worth noting that the commissions will set some of their own rules and governance procedures. All that being said, the applications are due on November 10, 2020. Colorado's nonpartisan legislative staff anticipate that meetings will begin in February and March of 2021. Census and reapportionment data should be delivered to states in Summer 2021 and the final maps are due to the Colorado Supreme Court by September 2021.

This sounds like a lot of work, how much time will it take?

This is important work and it will be a sizable time commitment. The legislative staff anticipate that the commissions will meet 4-6 times in March and February of 2021 and at least 25 times in summer and early fall of 2021. In 2011 California used a redistricting process that had many similarities to Colorado's process and commissioners reported that they spent between 10 and 40 hours a week on commission-related work. It's likely that a significant amount of the work will happen on evenings and weekends when more people can participate in public meetings.

I'm affiliated with a minor party; can I apply for the commission?

The state constitution specifies that each commission must include four commissioners who are not affiliated with any political party (unaffiliated), four commissioners affiliated with the state's largest political party (Democratic Party), and four commissioners who are affiliated with the state's second largest political party (Republican Party). Those affiliated with a minor political party (Green, Libertarian, etc.) are not eligible to serve on either commission.

I'm not eligible or don't have time to be on the commission. Can I still be involved?



Yes! The public will have at least 21 opportunities to participate in the process during public meetings. You can also encourage your friends and neighbors to apply.

I have a criminal conviction, am I still eligible to serve on the commissions?

Yes! As long as you meet the other qualification you are qualified to serve of the commissions regardless of prior conviction.

I have a disability, am I still eligible to serve on the commissions?

Yes! The commissions need to represent Colorado's diversity. This includes people with disabilities. The commission doesn't have quotas for representation from different communities but it will be strongest if people from all different backgrounds and life experiences are well represented.

Will commission meetings be virtual or in-person?

The commission is required to have at least 21 public meetings. Currently, the legislative staff is expecting that those meeting will be in person. Given the dynamic nature of COVID-19 it is possible that there could be changes in the future.

I've never heard of this before, do other states have independent redistricting commissions?

This is a brand new process for the state of Colorado and there are unique aspects of Colorado's commissions but independent redistricting commissions are not new eight states now have independent redistricting commissions and four have advisory commissions.

Hmm, I want more information or I'm part of a community group that might want more information, who should I reach out to?

There are many community groups engaging in the work of creating fair maps! Reach out to Amanda Gonzalez at Colorado Common Cause (agonzalez@commoncause.org) or Olivia Mendoza at All on the Line (mendoza@redistrictingaction.org) for more information. You can also subscribe to updates from the nonpartisan legislative staff managing the process by emailing Colorado.redistricting2020@state.co.us