

**Analysis of Proposed Illinois Congressional Districts**  
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A new 2021 congressional plan for Illinois was proposed on Thursday, October 28, 2021 (available at <https://ilhousedems.com/redistricting/>). We used Quantum Geographic Information System (QGIS) software to establish which census blocks are assigned to which congressional districts. With these block assignments, we determined basic properties of the proposed plan, scoring it according to voting-based fairness metrics. To calculate values for these metrics, we disaggregate and average precinct-level voting data from the 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections for the President, the United States Senate, and the governor to the census block level.

**Key Observations:**

The proposed congressional districts have nearly equal populations, with an approximate difference of 491 people between the most populated and least populated districts. The maximum deviation from the ideal (average) district population is approximately 0.041%.

The proposed plan maintains five majority-minority districts, to satisfy the Voting Rights Act of 1965: three with Black/African American majorities or pluralities, and two with Latino/Hispanic majorities or pluralities. The specific composition of each majority-minority district is listed in the table below. The currently enacted congressional plan has four majority-minority districts ([https://ballotpedia.org/Redistricting in Illinois](https://ballotpedia.org/Redistricting_in_Illinois)).

Majority-Minority District	Percent non-Hispanic white	Percent Black/African American	Percent Latino/Hispanic
1	36.05%	50.08%	9.20%
2	33.33%	47.45%	15.27%
3	39.07%	5.1%	47.35%
4	23.41%	4.84%	66.46%
7	29.47%	43.36%	15.72%

Many of the proposed districts have irregular shapes, such as districts 5, 13, and 15 (shown below). We measure the compactness of this plan as the sum of all district perimeters; a smaller sum indicates more compact districts, while a larger sum indicates more convoluted districts. The proposed plan has a compactness score of approximately 11,722 miles; for comparison a congressional plan for Illinois with very compact districts would have a score below 6,000 miles. Irregular district shapes do not automatically imply extreme partisan bias, but they do warrant further investigation into the partisan qualities of the proposed plan.



## Fairness Metrics:

*Efficiency Gap* is a fairness metric that reports the difference in wasted votes between Democrats and Republicans as a percentage of the total votes cast. The Efficiency Gap for the proposed congressional plan is  $-13.57\%$ , which confirms that Republicans waste a significantly larger portion of their votes than Democrats do.

The creators of the Efficiency Gap (Stephanopoulos & McGhee, 2015) suggest that a state legislative plan could be considered reasonable if its Efficiency Gap value is within  $\pm 8\%$ ; a congressional plan could be considered reasonable if it has less than a two-seat deviation from “winner’s bonus” proportionality. The proposed Illinois plan exceeds both recommended thresholds, which indicates a clear Democratic advantage.

*Partisan Asymmetry* is a fairness metric that compares how many seats Democrats and Republicans are expected to win if statewide voter preference shifts in favor of either party (Grofman, 1983). The Partisan Asymmetry value is close to zero (e.g., below 0.01) when both parties win/lose seats symmetrically as voter preference shifts; the value is higher (e.g., above 0.07) when the distribution of district vote-shares is extremely skewed. The proposed Illinois plan has an average Partisan Asymmetry value of 0.057. Although the distribution of district vote-shares is somewhat skewed from the three packed Republican districts, it is not extremely skewed. Therefore, Partisan Asymmetry does not show a clear advantage for either party as voter preference shifts.

Disclaimer: The commentary reported here is based on a non-partisan analysis of the proposed 2021 Illinois Congressional map available at the Illinois legislative redistricting website.

## References

- Grofman, B. (1983). Measures of Bias and Proportionality in Seats-Votes Relationships. *Political Methodology*, 9(3), 295-327.
- Stephanopoulos, N. O. & McGhee, E. M. (2015). Partisan Gerrymandering and the Efficiency Gap. *University of Chicago Law Review*, 82(2), 831-900.