

Changing the Seats in Congress

A lesson in reapportionment, redistricting and gerrymandering

- States used to get a new Representative for every 10,000 people they added to their state
- We ran out of room
- We now stick with 435 seats
- Each state gets the percent of seats that equals the percent of the population they have
- We use the census every 10 years to decide how many people (and seats) each state has

Reapportionment

- Who is gaining and losing?

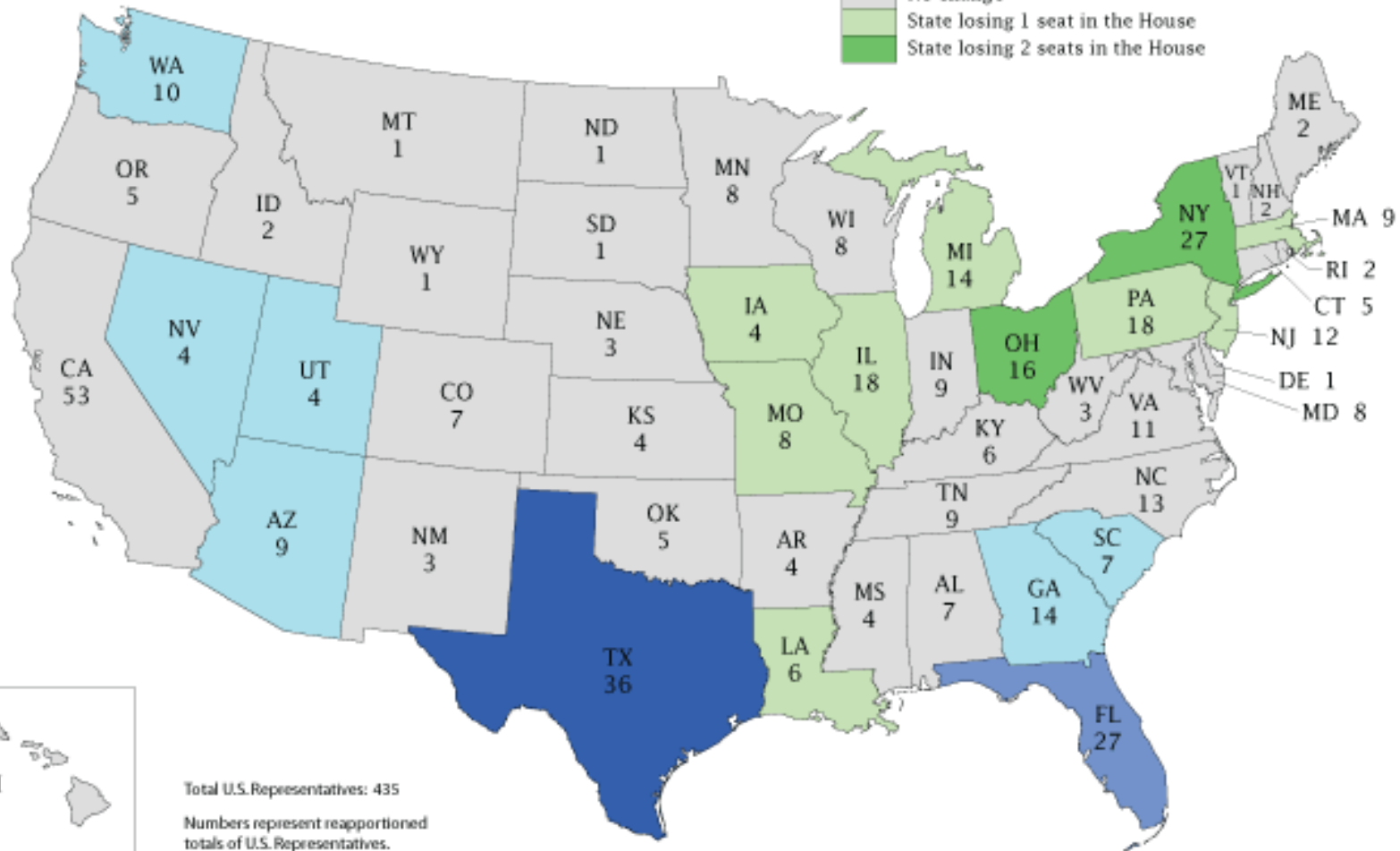
- <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/>

(Look at data)

Apportionment of the U.S. House of Representatives Based on the 2010 Census

Change from 2000 to 2010

- State gaining 4 seats in the House
- State gaining 2 seats in the House
- State gaining 1 seat in the House
- No change
- State losing 1 seat in the House
- State losing 2 seats in the House



Total U.S. Representatives: 435
Numbers represent reapportioned totals of U.S. Representatives.

- Once states find out what portion of the House they get, they have to redraw their district lines
- These districts are supposed to have roughly equal numbers of people
- These districts (says the Supreme Court) should not divide racial groups or other voting blocks
- These districts should be connected (no islands that count as a part of another district)

Redistricting

A quick overview:

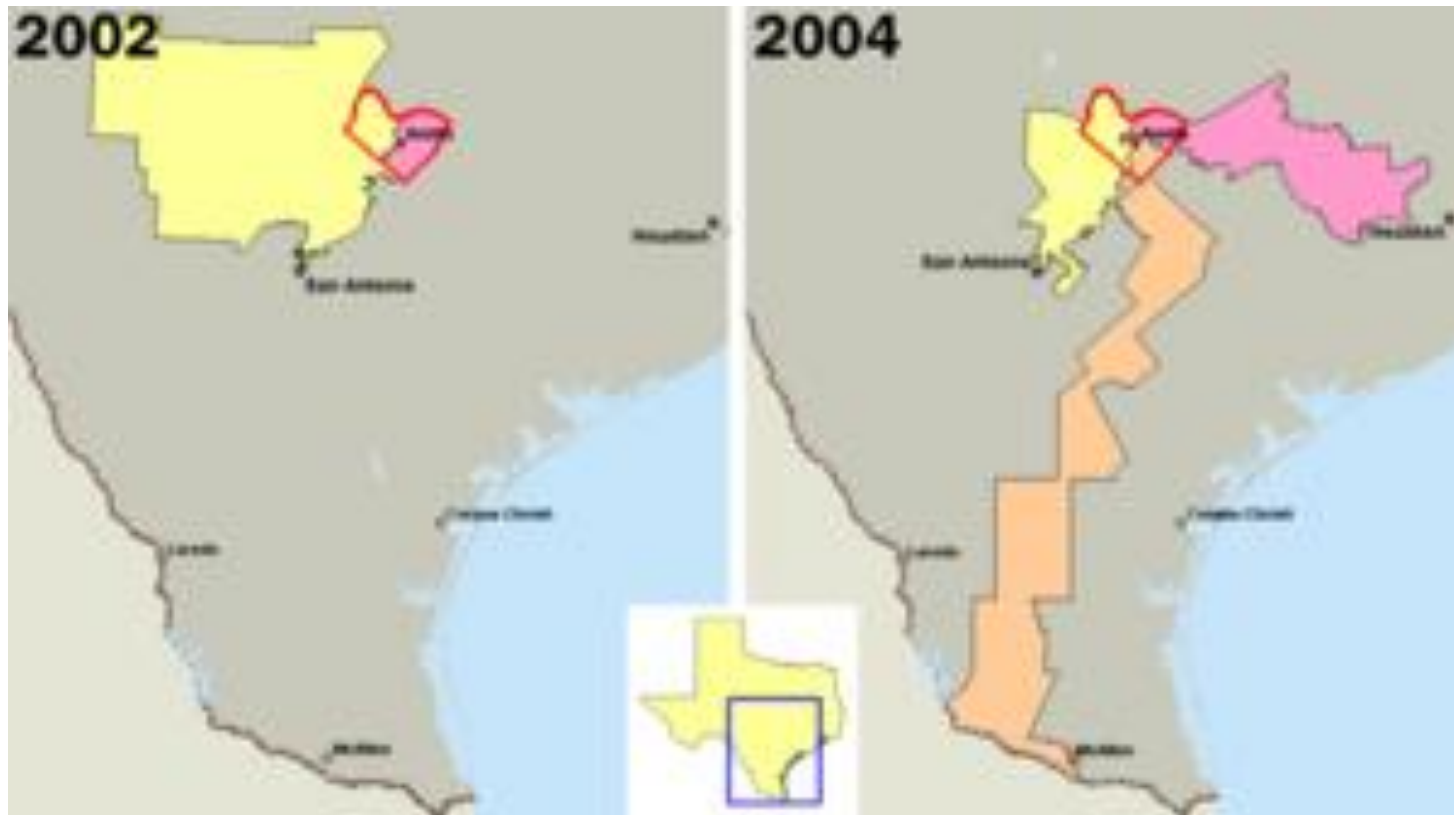
<http://www.wisc-online.com/objects/ViewObject.aspx?ID=SOC5502>

Gerrymandering

Congressional District 38



Carved out with the aid of a computer, this congressional district was the product of California's incumbent gerrymandering. This is the district of Democrat Grace Flores Napolitano, who ran unopposed in 2004, obtaining 100 percent of the vote.



U.S. congressional districts covering Travis County, Texas (outlined in red) in 2002, left, and 2004, right. In 2003, Republicans in the Texas legislature redistricted the state, diluting the voting power of the heavily Democratic county by parceling its residents out to more Republican districts.

Overview:

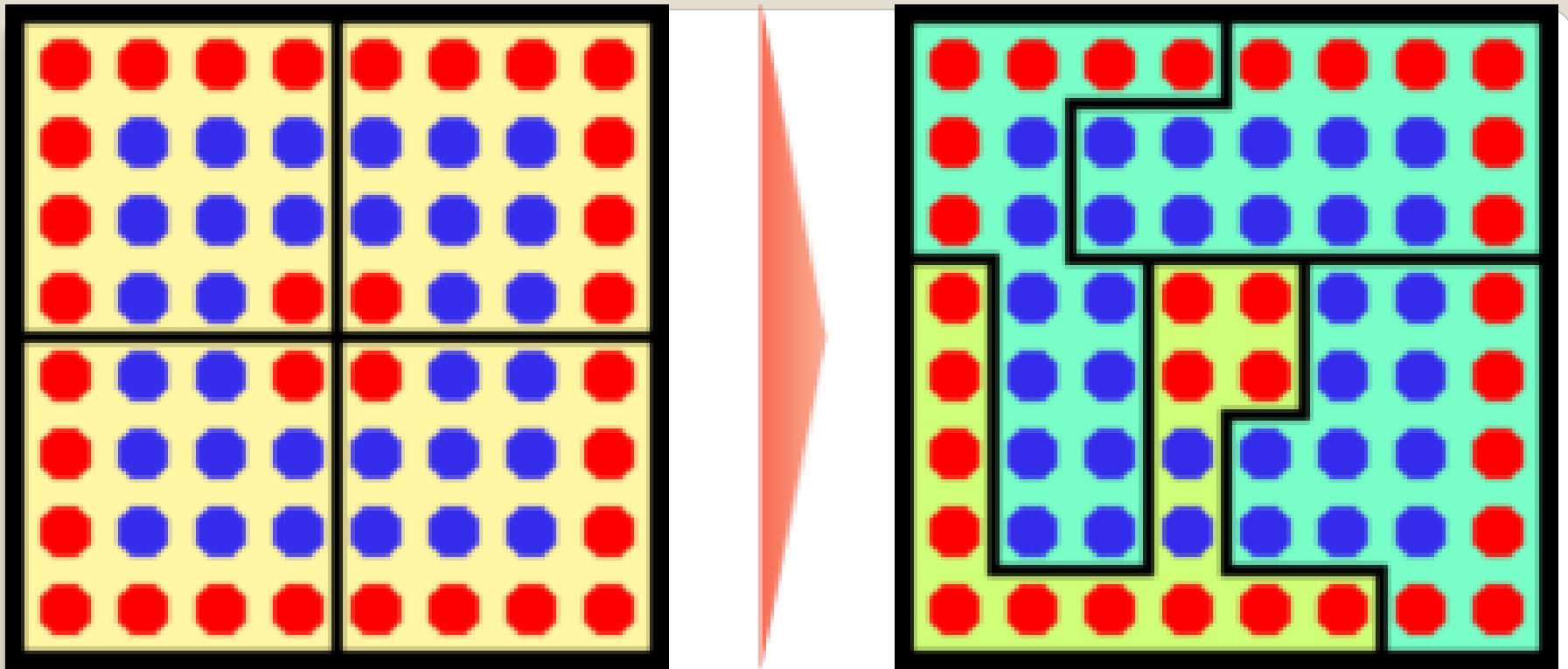
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8r7qJvprHXw&feature=related>

Movie trailer:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kurAB5ridko>

More complex movie trailer:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTO_HCW4Epk&feature=related



Redrawing the balanced electoral districts in this example creates a guaranteed 3-to-1 advantage in representation for the blue voters. Here, 14 red voters are *packed* into the light green district and the remaining 18 are *cracked* across the 3 blue districts.