

BLACK CHURCHES MATTER

FAIR  COUNT

A Toolkit to Prepare
Your Congregations and
Communities for
Redistricting

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A Call to Action

It's difficult to overstate the power civic engagement has to shape our lives. The decennial census provides the opportunity for every person to be counted where they live so they are seen, and voting allows every qualified person the chance to determine who will best represent them. And every 10 years, after each census, the boundary lines of election districts are drawn during redistricting – **the process of drawing those district lines to equalize the population and reach equal representation between districts.**

Unfortunately, unfairly drawing district lines (gerrymandering) is a tool that seeks to demoralize and disenfranchise voters, disrupt communities, and undermine trust in our system of government. It is both socially and politically detrimental, and it strips power from some for the purpose of handing it to others. But data show that when largely Black districts are redrawn into districts with Black incumbents, the negative effects of redistricting are reversed – and voter participation increases. **It's essential, then, that Black faith institutions remain engaged during the redistricting process, not only as a voice for the most vulnerable, but as an engine of mobilization.**

From civil rights to Black Lives Matter, Black faith institutions have always stood at the forefront of social and political movements, citing 'prophetic voices' from sacred scriptures as motivation for the push for fairness and justice. Today, there can be no deviation: **Now is the time to act, to protect the right of everyone to have a voice in shaping their future by ensuring that all communities of interest, including those served by Black faith institutions, are kept together and accurately represented.**

As a trusted Faith Leader, you are called to recognize the significance of this moment. **And you must be steadfast in your efforts to educate, encourage, combat misinformation, and alleviate anxiety on behalf of your constituents and communities to work towards fair redistricting.** You are on the front lines and have the ability to reach into your community through local networks. You are uniquely able to move your congregants in a manner that is critical to the success of any mission. This is especially relevant for so many of your members, who find themselves on the outside of the system. For generations, Black churches, under the leadership of Black pastors, have been sacred spaces of refuge where one could find spiritual freedom, job training, leadership opportunities, political conversations, and business opportunities, with the faithful light of Black faith leaders illuminating the road to liberation in even the darkest hours. **It is important now more than ever to remain engaged and to lend a moral voice throughout the redistricting process.**

Fair Count has designed this toolkit as a guide for understanding the redistricting process and the importance of shaping districts to reflect the shared values of your congregants and communities. The kit offers foundational knowledge to ensure that your congregation is fully aware of what is at stake and how now more than ever Black voices must be heard. **You are a vital component of the effort to ensure our communities are equitably represented!**

What is Redistricting?

Redistricting is the process of redrawing the lines of districts that determine who represent us in government. It typically takes place after the census and affects all jurisdictions that use districts, including **state legislatures, county commissions, city councils, and school boards**. The lines may be redrawn to account for population shifts, but they can also be redrawn at other times for other reasons—and in a few states, for no reason at all. Redrawing the lines can have a substantial impact on how different communities are grouped together and on communities' access to resources and services.

How Does It Work?

The way district lines are drawn puts voters together in groups – some voters are kept together in one district and others are separated and placed into other districts.

The lines can keep people with common interests together or split them apart.

Depending on which voters are bundled together in which district, the lines have the potential to change the composition of the legislative delegation as a whole.

DEEPER DIVE: The ‘When’ of Redistricting

In the 1960s, the US Supreme Court ruled that legislative districts must have approximately the same population according to figures that are reasonably up to date. For practical purposes, this means electoral district lines are usually drawn at least once every 10 years – after each decennial US Census.

In some states, though, electoral district lines may be redrawn at any time – in the middle of a decade or even several times during the decade. Some states have laws requiring that electoral district lines be redrawn before the next census, or that they may be redrawn only under certain circumstances (e.g., if existing electoral district lines are struck down by a court). Moreover, states have different rules for drawing congressional districts and state legislative districts – some have no rules at all for when electoral district lines should be redrawn.

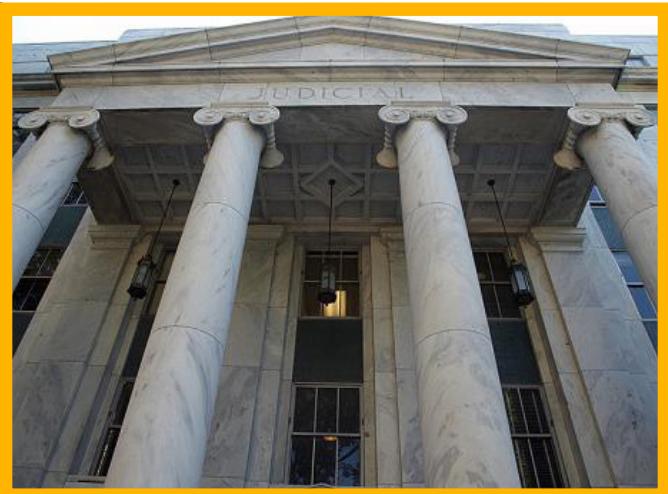
What are the Types of Redistricting?

Redistricting may be performed at each level of government and for the electoral district boundary lines in a state. Types of redistricting include:

- **US Congress**
Federal level
- **State House and Senate**
Legislative
- **County Commissioner**
County level
- **City and Town Leadership**
Municipal level
- **School Board**
School District level
- **Career & Technical Ed. Board**
Schools District level
- **Court Districts**
Judicial level
- **Voter Precinct Committees**
Elections



Learn more about how redistricting affects your state [here](#).



What are Communities of Interest?

One of the “best practices,” principles, One of the goals of redistricting on a local level can be to keep neighborhoods and “communities of interest” intact within a single district. **Communities of interest are the overlapping sets of neighborhoods, networks, and groups that share interests, views, cultures, histories, languages, and values and whose boundaries can be identified on a map.** Relationships with political parties or elected officials and candidates are not considered communities of interest. Communities of interest are:

- Self-defined communities or groups with shared interests and values.
- Neighborhoods or groups who gain more equitable representation by remaining together in a single district.
- Connected by things like religion, history or and culture, racial and or ethnic background, or shared socio-economic status.
- Often made up of local community residents who work together on initiatives.
- Communities that create boundary maps that offer insight on significant places within the community, such as faith institutions, schools, key business, and places where the community gathers.

Why Are Communities of Interest Important?

- Keeping communities of interest together during the redistricting process is essential because they are necessary community voices for those that are historically left out of the political process.
- Without community input like personal stories and descriptions, communities are subject to being defined by outsiders who may not have their best interests in mind.
- They are made up of community members who describe issues and concerns specific to their community.
- They are important because districts should not be arbitrary groups of people but instead cohesive units with common interests related to representation.
- One way to combat the drawing of unfair maps is to predetermine the most noticeable communities of interest.



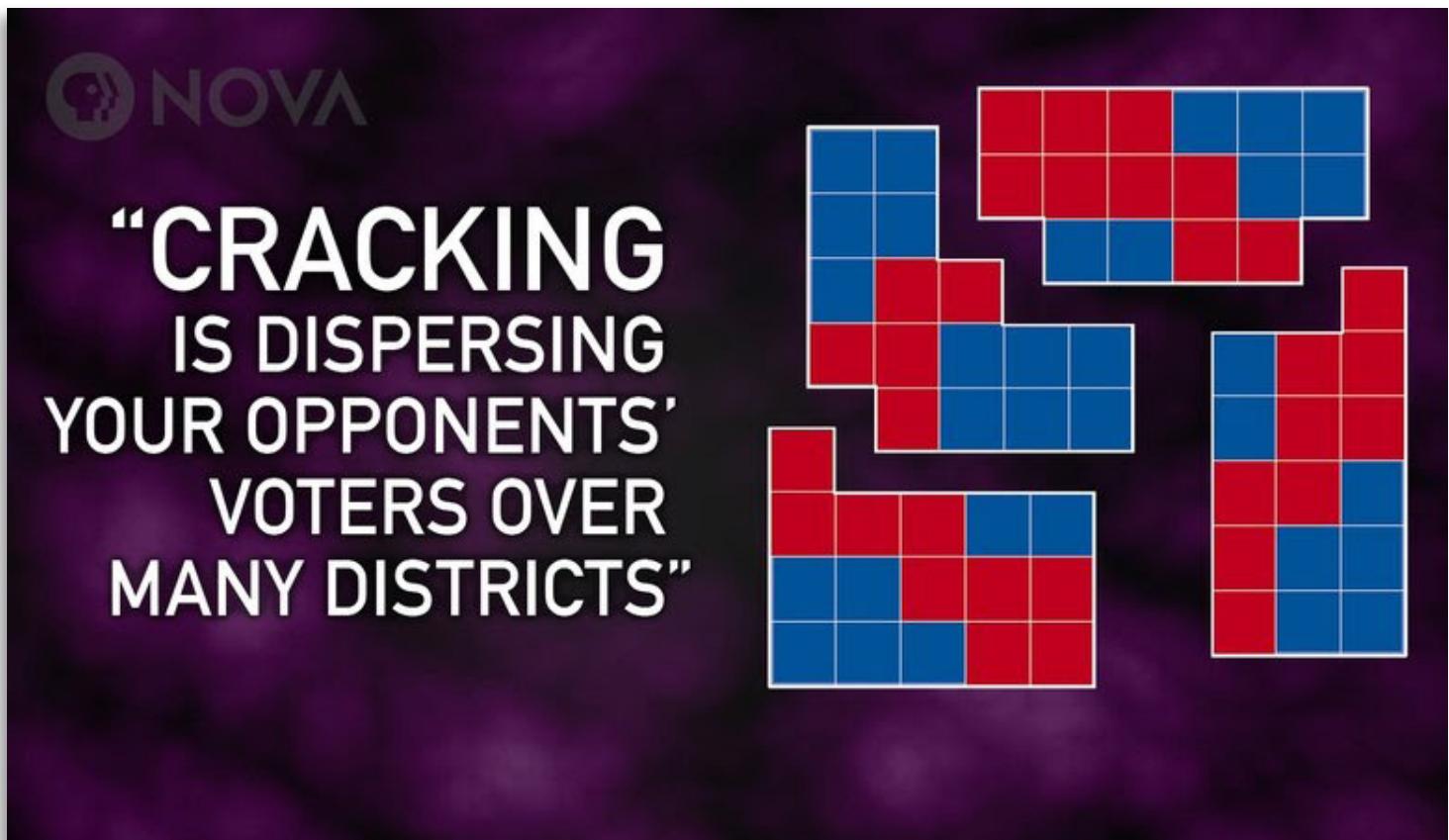
Why Is Redistricting Important for the Black Community?

- A fair redistricting process helps to restore confidence in disenfranchised Black voters.
- Black communities are more involved in the political process when there is representation that adequately reflects and advocates for them.
- Fair districts protect voters of color and help to keep communities of interest intact.
- Throughout history, redistricting has stripped and given power to the Black community.
- For example, Congressional Black Caucus member Congressman Steven Horsford's seat was created as a result of the changing demographic and the redrawing of district maps in Nevada.
- Black communities are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic so having fair and accurate representation is needed to elect representatives that will address their issues, helping to ensure an equitable recovery.
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), often with strong ties to Black faith institutions, are targets of gerrymandering, so a fair and transparent redistricting process is vital.

What Are the Challenges to Fair Districts?

The U.S. Constitution prohibits drawing district lines that intentionally discriminate against individuals or communities because of race or ethnicity. Challenges to redistricting include overcoming practices that weaken the voting power of minority groups. Two techniques frequently used to dilute minority voting strength are “cracking” and “packing.” (American Civil Liberties Union Voting Rights Project, 2001)

Cracking refers to fragmenting minority populations and dispersing them among other districts to dilute the minority population vote.



Example: In 2010, the North Carolina Legislature split North Carolina A&T State University, the largest HBCU in the country, directly down the middle into two legislative districts to dilute the voting power of the Black student population. These maps were later challenged and redrawn in court. (ABC News 2019).

Packing refers to the consolidation of minority voters into a small number of districts to decrease their voting power in surrounding districts and weaken their overall voting power.



**“PACKING
IS STUFFING
YOUR OPPONENTS’
VOTERS INTO TOO
FEW DISTRICTS”**

Example: In 1882, white legislators in South Carolina redistricted the state so the vast majority of the Black population was centered in the 7th “Boa Constrictor District,” and all other districts were majority white. South Carolina had a majority Black population at the time but only one majority Black district. ([The South Carolina Historical Magazine, 2012](#))

These techniques may result in a districting plan that violates the **Voting Rights Act**. The faith community plays a significant role in minimizing these challenges. **Ensuring that your congregation understands why – now more than ever – the significance of the redistricting process and how it affects their community is the first step!**

According to Professor Justin Leveritt of Loyola Law School, the Voting Rights Act concerning race and ethnicity in the redistricting context can be summarized by three concepts:

1. Don't draw lines that set out to harm voters based on their race or ethnicity.
2. Where discrimination plays or has played a significant role, and where voting is substantially polarized along racial or ethnic lines, look at electoral patterns and decide whether minorities already have proportionate electoral power. If not, the Voting Rights Act might require a change to the lines to give a compact and sizable minority community an equitable electoral opportunity they do not currently enjoy (i.e. the creation of majority-minority districts).
3. When considering race in drawing districts, whether to satisfy the Voting Rights Act or otherwise, consider other factors in the mix as well.

Prisonmandering

Prison-based gerrymandering, or “prisonmandering,” is a practice where **state and local governments count incarcerated persons as residents of the areas where they are incarcerated, rather than in the area of their home address, when voting district lines are drawn**. This shifts voting power to the districts where prisons and jails are located and weakens the voting power of everyone living outside of those districts.

This problem is not limited to any particular region, and it affects both rural and urban communities alike. However, in many cases, the population numbers of rural, predominantly white towns are often boosted by the **numbers of Black and brown people who disproportionately make up prison populations**.

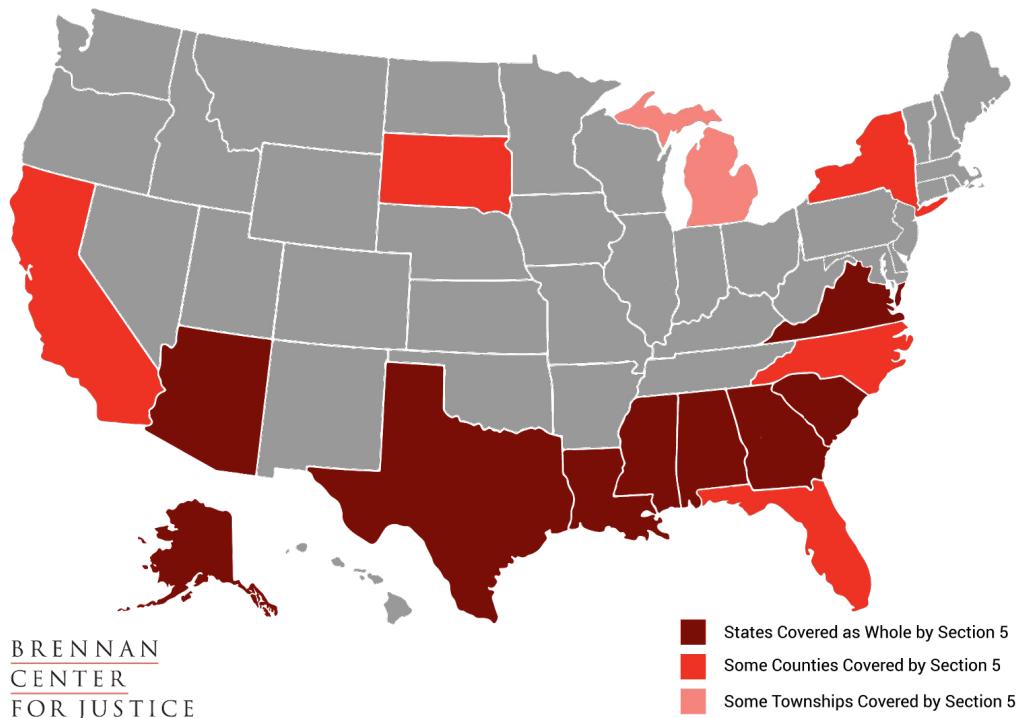
While this isn't something that can be completely fixed before this upcoming redistricting cycle, there are steps we can take to keep it from happening in the future. Visit the The Prison Policy Initiative's Prison Gerrymandering Project (prisonersofthecensus.org) to see how you and your community can get involved.

DEEPER DIVE: The Voting Rights Act

The federal [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#) was designed to combat tactics denying minorities the right to an effective vote, including redistricting techniques like packing, cracking, and stacking. As federal law, the Voting Rights Act overrides inconsistent state laws.

- From 1965-2013, the Voting Rights Act had an especially powerful provision, Section 5, targeting jurisdictions with the worst history of racial discrimination. In these areas, the Act required that **every** change in election rules (including redistricting rules) be approved by the Department of Justice or a federal court before they took effect. This process was called “preclearance” and helped stop discrimination before it had the chance to work.
- In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in [Shelby County v. Holder](#) ruled the Section 5 preclearance process unconstitutional. As of this cycle, maps proposed by states with a history of racial discrimination DO NOT have to get their maps approved by the DOJ before they’re adopted.

States Covered by Section 5 at the time of the Shelby County Decision



- The remaining provision of the Voting Rights Act is Section 2, which blocks district lines that deny minority voters an equal opportunity *“to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice.”* It applies whether the denial is intentional or an unintended end result.

Why Are Black Faith Leaders Important?

- In 2010, there were at least 18,000 active Black Protestant Churches in the country, representing approximately 4.9 million attendees.
- Faith Leaders are trusted community members whose leadership will be essential to reaching and engaging the Black community.
- Faith Leaders in urban, suburban, and rural communities minister to, interact with, and mobilize many of the hardest to reach communities on a daily basis, so their voices and continued encouragement can increase participation in and understanding of the redistricting process.
- Faith Leaders can encourage church and community members to participate in the redistricting process, so communities can have a say in how their districts are drawn and how they are represented.
- By engaging church members, Faith Leaders have the opportunity to encourage them to **reach out to their family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers to learn more about the redistricting process and how it affects their community.**



How Can Black Churches Get Involved?

- Make a commitment to keep your congregation informed about the redistricting process, trainings, hearings, and events.
- **Be a resource for community stories that are necessary for mapping out communities of interest.**
- Use Church Services, Sunday School, Bible Study, prayer meetings, etc. to share information about redistricting (see our Resources at the end of this toolkit).
- Encourage other Faith Leaders to become involved, especially leaders of neighboring faith institutions.
- Become a Redistricting Resource Hub for your church and community.
- **Periodically share redistricting information in bulletin inserts, on worship screens, and via social media.**
- Learn more and stay informed by signing up at FairCount.org.

What Actions Can Your Congregation Take?

Identify Communities of Interest

Work with people and groups of shared values to determine the neighborhoods and cultures that define the community. The understanding of where people live and places are located can guide the boundaries of the community and be used for drawing fair districts.



Create a map of your community

Once key places are identified, drawing a community map will clearly depicts what the community looks like. This provides a map that can potentially be used by map drawers and analysts when considering proposed district maps. Congregants can use free map-drawing tools (discussed below) to draw and share community maps.

Attend Public Hearings & Provide Testimony

Encourage your congregants to provide testimony about what defines their community as a whole. Most states hold public hearings to listen to testimony from community members. Once census data is received by the states, hearings allow people the opportunity to address any population shifts that can significantly change the makeup of their communities. Congregants can learn more about how their state holds hearings by visiting redistricting.lls.edu.

Attend Town Halls

Town halls can serve to help provide information to the community about redistricting and how it will affect our communities. It also allows the chance to answer questions community members may have and identify next steps that people can take.

RESOURCE: Sample Scriptures

Exodus 23:1-5 Do not spread false reports. Do not help a guilty person by being a malicious witness. Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, and do not show favoritism to a poor person in a lawsuit. If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to return it. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help them with it...

Deuteronomy 10:17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe.

Leviticus 19:15 You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor.

Proverbs 16:11 Honest balances and scales are the Lord's; all the weights in the bag are his work.

Proverbs 22:16 Oppressing the poor in order to enrich oneself, and giving to the rich, will lead only to loss.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Matthew 7:12 “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.”

Romans 2:11 For God shows no partiality.

James 2:1 My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?

James 2:8-9 You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.

1 Timothy 5:21 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality.

RESOURCE: Sample Bulletin Inserts

August	<p><i>"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."</i> We should strive to love our neighbors with the same love that we show towards the creator. That love should be a shining light to illuminate our path towards a more just society. It should seek to ensure fairness and human dignity for every one of us. Our voices matter. Our community matters. We have to tell our stories, so we can have fair districting and equal representation.</p>
September	<p><i>"Indeed, the hairs of your head are all counted."</i> The Lord values each one of us and for that reason, each of us should be fairly represented. Every 10 years, we are given the opportunity to not only ensure that everyone is counted but represented equitably. However, it is up to us to remain engaged to make sure that the districting process is done fairly. We can start by making our voices heard. It's time to testify!</p>
October	<p><i>"Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us, sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us."</i> Unfair districting silences communities and further divides us as a nation. Our sacred texts require us to root out all systems of oppression and strive for fairness in all that we do. As believers, we must stand up for the voiceless and fight against any attempts that seek to set back our communities. Speaking up for your community today will help strengthen our hope for today and the future.</p>
November	<p><i>"For God shows no partiality."</i> As people of faith, we are called to be engaged and to resist unfair efforts of partiality. Unfair redistricting efforts result in one community's dominance, leaving others disenfranchised. We must let our voices be heard now more than ever. Get involved today!</p>

RESOURCE: Messaging Fair Districts to Your Congregation

Redistricting and COVID-19

- Covid-19 has ravaged our community making it is necessary that we do all that we can to advocate for our recovery. Now more than ever we need fair representation that understands the needs of our community, so we can ensure an equitable recovery.
- The road to recovery from COVID-19 is going to be long, but we will get there. And when we do, we need to be sure that the people in our communities are seen and accurately represented in the maps that are drawn

Census and Redistricting

- The Census wasn't about finding people and redistricting isn't just about making maps. It's about counting YOU and giving YOU the opportunity to elect your own leaders, giving you better opportunities to get your fair share of resources and power. Don't be confused.



Representation Matters

- Now more than ever it is important that fair districts are drawn, giving us the opportunity to elect leaders that look like us and understand first-hand how issues affect our community.
- If we don't advocate for ourselves during the redistricting process, maps can be drawn to favor legislation that is not created in the will of the people.
- Fair lines create fair opportunities.

Redistricting and our Children

- The potential of our children is limited when they don't receive their share of opportunities. Having fair representation that understands the needs of our children is essential.
- So many opportunities are based on where a child goes to school. Every school board should have fair and accurate community representation because every child deserves someone to advocate for their access to these opportunities.
- Our community benefits when people who sit on our local school boards are directly connected to our community.

**OUR COMMUNITIES.
OUR VOTES.
OUR VOICES.**

**DEMAND FAIR
DISTRICTS.
GET INVOLVED IN
REDISTRICTING.**

#WE DRAW THE LINES



Power for the People

- Communities and individual stakeholders should know that there is POWER in knowing their community and participating in the redistricting process.
- By participating in the redistricting process, underrepresented communities can have a say in how their districts are drawn and how their communities are represented.

It's Up to Us

- Communities of Interest span generations and work together in the same areas. It's important that these communities are not broken apart.
- Redistricting affects different parts of our lives. It determines boundaries for our state senators and representatives, the school districts our children attend, even the precincts where we vote. Make sure your voice is heard for fair districts!
- Attend public hearings about redistricting to talk about the people, places, and boundaries that define our communities
- Stacey Abrams has said, "*If they can erase us from the story of America, they can erase us from the future of America.*"

A note on messaging and terminology: Research by ASO Communications and Frameshift has found that people are extremely unresponsive to the word "redistricting". Although that is the name of the process of redrawing districts, people are more likely to be interested and respond to "fair districting," "community districting," or even just "districting," which sounds less bureaucratic to people.

RESOURCE: Shareable Social Media Content

- Faith leaders can share (and urge members of their congregations and communities to share) accurate and up-to-date information about the redistricting process through their social media networks. Doing so will expand messaging and reach. Visit faircount.org to access graphics, articles, and other digital content that can be tweeted, posted on Facebook/Instagram/Snapchat, shared via text or email, etc.
- Follow Fair Count on **Twitter (@faircount)**, **Facebook (@faircountgeorgia)**, and **Instagram (@faircount)** to stay updated. Please retweet and/or share as often as possible.
- Visit faircount.org to access graphics, articles, and other digital content that can be tweeted, posted on Facebook/Instagram/Snapchat, shared via text or email, etc.

Fair Count is committed to keeping this toolkit up to date and providing more shareable information throughout the Redistricting period.

RESOURCE: CHARGE

CHARGE, the **Coalition Hub Advancing Redistricting & Grassroots Engagement**, is a space for groups that organize people in states and local communities. While each organization brings different skill sets, has presence in different states, and deploys different strategies, all are united around the common goal that redistricting must be transformed to allow more voices to participate, be heard, and ultimately be represented.

CHARGE is committed to empowering people who have been intentionally excluded from voting and electoral politics to have a seat at the redistricting table. The Coalition is grounded in the reality that, as important as this process is, redistricting is **not** at the top of most people's minds and that points of entry must be built that meet people where they are.

CHARGE has nine organizations that work collaboratively to anchor its work: APIA-Vote, Center for Popular Democracy, Common Cause, Fair Count, League of Women Voters, Mi Familia Vota, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, National Congress of American Indians, and State Voices.

To learn more about CHARGE or redistricting, visit
<https://www.redistrictingcommunitycollege.com/home>.

Black Men Count

Representation matters. In the spring of 2019, Fair Count launched Black Men Count, a statewide Complete Count Committee (CCC) in an effort to help identify and solve the long-term obstacles preventing Black Men from being counted in the census. Seeking to bring together leaders of organizations led by and serving black men to address the historical undercounts of Black men, Fair Count supports the effort and is committed to growing its connection throughout the nation.

Black Men Count has also developed a public discussion initiative called Black Men Speak. This program gives Black men a space to gather and strategize about how to ensure we are engaging civically in Georgia and the nation. The events with this program highlight the challenges facing our communities and the conversations end with concrete solutions and takeaways to tackle the articulated challenges.



Faith Leaders across the nation can use the efforts and materials from the Black Men Count program as advocacy tools in:

- Men's ministry programs
- Returning citizen efforts
- Youth outreach
- Fraternal activities
- Learn more about our national work at blackmencount.org.

When you sign up for the Faith Toolkit email list, you will receive links to media, social, and conversation-starting materials about outreach to Black men throughout the redistricting period.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Census 101. <http://bit.ly/census101>

U.S. Religion Census 2010 <http://www.usreligioncensus.org>

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