



Colorado Independent
Redistricting Commissions

Colorado Independent Redistricting Commissions Staff

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MEMORANDUM

September 23, 2021

TO: Independent Congressional Redistricting Commission

FROM: Colorado Independent Redistricting Commissions Staff

SUBJECT: Third Congressional Staff Plan

Preliminary Statement

At its meeting on Monday, September 20, 2021, the Colorado Independent Congressional Redistricting Commission ("Commission") voted to direct the Colorado Independent Redistricting Commissions Staff ("Nonpartisan Staff") to use the Second Congressional Staff Plan ("Second Staff Plan") as the basis for the Third Congressional Staff Plan ("Third Staff Plan") and to take into consideration the issues raised by the Commissioners at that meeting and up to the time the Nonpartisan Staff submits the Third Staff Plan.¹

At the September 20 meeting, the Commission approved additional standards, guidelines, and methodologies that Nonpartisan Staff was required to follow as discussed below and made additional recommendations, some of which Nonpartisan Staff was able to incorporate into the Third Staff Plan. Nonpartisan Staff also considered issues raised by Commissioners and public comments received prior to finalizing this Third Staff Plan.

Description of Congressional Districts

Congressional District 1. Congressional District 1 is composed entirely of the area within the boundaries of the City and County of Denver. The population of Denver is 715,522. The population of the enclaves of Arapahoe County completely surrounded by Denver add an additional 7,348 for a total population within the boundaries of Denver of 722,870, or 1,156 over the ideal district size of 721,714. Nonpartisan staff moved the additional population from Denver into Congressional District 6.

¹ Article V, Section 44.4 (3) authorizes the Commission to adopt standards, guidelines, and methodologies to direct nonpartisan staff for the development of staff plans if approved by eight of the commissioners including at least two commissioners who are unaffiliated with a political party. Eight Commissioners, including at least two unaffiliated voters, approved this directive, so Nonpartisan Staff considered this a standard, guideline or methodology and started this Second Staff Plan with that plan.

Congressional District 2. Congressional District 2 is a mountain district consisting of the following whole counties: Boulder, Clear Creek, Gilpin, Grand, Jackson, Routt, and Summit. It includes the portion of Eagle County not in Congressional District 3. It includes all of Larimer County except for the cities of Loveland and Wellington, the portion of Windsor in Larimer County, and areas around those cities. It also includes portions of Weld County necessary to keep municipalities whole, including Berthoud, Erie, and Longmont. The population was equalized between Congressional Districts 2 and 4.

Congressional District 3. Congressional District 3 is a western and southern district consisting of the following whole counties: Alamosa, Archuleta, Conejos, Costilla, Delta, Dolores, Garfield, Gunnison, Hinsdale, Huerfano, La Plata, Las Animas, Mesa, Mineral, Moffat, Montezuma, Montrose, Otero, Ouray, Pitkin, Pueblo, Rio Blanco, Rio Grande, Saguache, San Juan, and San Miguel. The Commission voted to require that the Third Staff Plan keep the Roaring Fork Valley whole, including the towns of Aspen, Basalt, Carbondale, El Jebel, Glenwood Springs, and Snowmass Village. The district includes all of those towns and its population is equalized by including a larger portion of Eagle County than in the Second Staff Plan.

Congressional District 4. Congressional District 4 is an eastern district consisting of the following whole counties: Baca, Bent, Cheyenne, Crowley, Elbert, Kiowa, Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Prowers, Sedgwick, Washington, and Yuma. It then includes most of the population of Douglas County, the eastern portion of El Paso County not in Congressional District 5, the eastern portion of Arapahoe County not in Congressional District 6, and the eastern portion of Adams County not in Congressional District 6 or 8. It then includes much of Weld County not in Congressional District 8. The population is then equalized by taking the portions of Larimer County not in Congressional District 2, primarily in the cities of Loveland and Wellington.

Congressional District 5. Congressional District 5 is composed of nearly all of El Paso County including all of Colorado Springs. The population of El Paso County is 730,395, or 8,681 over the ideal district size. The Commission voted to require that the following military bases in El Paso County be included in a single district: the Air Force Academy, Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station, Peterson Air Force Base, Schriever Space Force Base, and the populated portion of Fort Carson. All of those bases are in Congressional District 5. Nonpartisan staff moved the excess population in the eastern portion of El Paso County to Congressional District 4 to equalize the population of District 5.

Congressional District 6. Congressional District 6 consists of western Arapahoe County, including the cities of Centennial, Littleton, and Sheridan. It also includes parts of Jefferson County including the Columbine and Ken Caryl areas and the portion of Bow Mar in Jefferson County. It also includes nearly all of the city of Aurora in Adams and Arapahoe Counties. The population is equalized along the border with Congressional District 4 in Arapahoe County.

Congressional District 7. Congressional District 7 is a Front Range district consisting of the whole counties of Chaffee, Custer, Fremont, Lake, Park, and Teller, plus all of the City and County of Broomfield. Public comments after the release of the Second Staff Plan included requests to keep the City and County of Broomfield whole, which this plan does. It includes nearly all of Jefferson County except for the portion in Congressional District 6 and population moved from this District to Congressional District 4 necessary to equalize the population of the district.

Congressional District 8. Congressional District 8 consists of the eastern portion of Adams County including the cities of Brighton, Commerce City, Northglenn, and Thornton. The Commission recommended that Commerce City be kept whole except for the noncontiguous portions. All of Commerce City is together in this district. The district also includes the portions of Arvada and Westminster in Adams County. It then includes Greeley and the cities in southern Weld County, including Firestone, Frederick, and Mead. The town of Johnstown is split between Congressional Districts 2 and 8 along the border between Larimer and Weld Counties.

Constitutional Criteria

Equal Population. The population of each of the districts is within one person of the ideal district size of 721,714. The difference between the most populous district and the least populous district is one person.

Federal Voting Rights Act. Nonpartisan staff does not believe that there is sufficient voting age population to create a majority-minority congressional district within Colorado that complies with the requirements of the Colorado Constitution. The Commission has not received any comments suggesting that a majority-minority district must be created.

Contiguity. All portions of the congressional districts are contiguous to other portions of the same congressional districts.

Preservation of communities of interest and political subdivisions. When it was necessary for nonpartisan staff to divide a county to arrive at the required congressional district population, nonpartisan staff attempted to keep communities of interest together, such as keeping the Roaring Fork Valley together when dividing Eagle County and keeping cities together when dividing Larimer County. Of the 64 counties in Colorado only eight were split, and all of these counties had to be split in order to equalize population across the congressional districts. To the extent possible, nonpartisan staff kept municipalities that include portions in two counties together or split those municipalities at the county border.

Compactness. Nonpartisan staff believes that the districts are reasonably compact. Some congressional district border lines are irregular due to municipal boundaries or the shape of census blocks necessary to equalize the population.

Politically competitive districts. The Commission has identified eight statewide races that it believes should be used in determining competitiveness.² The report on election results accompanying the Third Congressional Staff Plan shows an average of the difference between the votes cast for Democratic and Republican candidates across these eight elections. A positive number indicates that there were more votes cast for the Republican candidates, and a negative number indicates that there were more votes cast for the Democratic candidates.

Diluting a racial or language minority group's electoral influence. To the extent that section 44.4 (4)(b) is a restatement of the federal Voting Rights Act, nonpartisan staff does not believe that there is an area in Colorado with sufficient citizen voting age minority population to form a majority-minority congressional district. Nonpartisan staff believes that the Commission considered a racial or language minority group's electoral influence in directing the Nonpartisan

² The eight elections are: From the 2016 General Election: Colorado Senator and President; From the 2018 General Election: Governor, Attorney General, Treasurer, Secretary of State, and at-large Regent of University of Colorado; and From 2020 General Election: Colorado Senator.

Staff to create the Third Staff Plan and does not believe that the electoral influence of any such group was diluted in this plan.