



Colorado Independent Redistricting Commissions Staff

1580 Logan Street, Suite 430
Denver, CO 80203
303-866-2652

colorado.redistricting2020@state.co.us

MEMORANDUM

September 13, 2021

TO: Independent Legislative Redistricting Commission

FROM: Colorado Independent Redistricting Commissions Staff

SUBJECT: First State House of Representatives Staff Plan

Summary

This memorandum provide context and information about the first State House of Representatives Staff Plan (staff plan) submitted by the Colorado Independent Legislative Redistricting Commission's (commission) nonpartisan commission staff (staff) on September 13, 2021.

Description of State House Districts by Region

Eastern Plains. The Eastern Plains largely contains the following districts: 61, 65 56, and 64.

Four Corners Area, Western Slope, and Mountains. The Four Corners Area, the Western Slope, and the Mountains largely contain the following districts: 59, 58, 54, 55, 57, 49, 26, 46, and 60.

Pueblo and San Luis Valley. Pueblo and the San Luis Valley largely contain the following districts: 47, 60, and 62.

Northern I-25 Corridor. The Northern I-25 Corridor largely contains the following districts: 53, 52, 51, 61, 50, 48, 63, 13, 11, 10, 12, and 33.

City and County of Denver, East, and North Metro Denver. The City and County of Denver and North Metro Denver largely contain the following districts: 30, 34, 32, 31, 56, 4, 5, 8, 7, 9, 1, 2, 6, 36, 42, 41, 40, and 35.

South Metro Denver and West Metro Denver. South Metro Denver and West Metro Denver largely contains the following districts: 35, 37, 3, 38, 22, 23, 28, 24, 27, 29, and 25.

Douglas County. Douglas County largely contains the following districts: 43, 44, 45, and 39.

El Paso County. El Paso County largely contains the following districts: 18, 14, 20, 16, 15, 19, 17, and 21.

Constitutional Criteria

Mathematical Population Equality. The staff plan complies with Colorado's constitutional standards by making a good-faith effort to achieve mathematical population equality and not exceeding the five percent deviation standard¹. In the staff plan, the most populous district is 2,142 people (or 2.35 percent) over the ideal district size and the least populous district is 2,010 people (or 2.32 percent) under the ideal district size. Taken together, these proposed districts have a deviation of 4.67 percent, which is less than the maximum constitutionally permitted 5 percent deviation.

Federal Voting Rights Act. The Colorado Constitution requires the commission to comply with the Voting Rights Act (VRA) in creating legislative redistricting plans.² Staff considered the VRA in drafting the preliminary plans. The commission has retained a VRA expert who will conduct an analysis of voting patterns in various locations of the state to determine if the minority and the white majority vote as distinct voting blocs and if the creation of a "majority-minority district" is required under the VRA. Because the VRA expert has not yet produced such a report, the only "majority-minority district" staff drew was the district in the San Luis Valley that had previously been required by federal courts.³

Contiguity. All portions of the districts in the staff plan are contiguous to other portions of the same districts.

Preservation of communities of interest and political subdivisions. When it was necessary for staff to divide a city or county to arrive at the required district population, nonpartisan staff attempted to keep communities of interest together, such as keeping the Roaring Fork Valley together when dividing Eagle County and dividing Boulder along Broadway Street. To the extent possible, staff kept municipalities that include portions in two counties together or split those municipalities at the county border. Further, in drawing the staff plan, staff considered the public comments the commission has received and attempted to preserve as many communities of interest as possible.

Compactness. The commission has adopted the use of Reock and Polsby-Popper scores as a measure of compactness. Nonpartisan staff believes that the districts in the staff plan are reasonably compact. Some district border lines are irregular due to municipal boundaries or the shape of census blocks necessary to equalize the population. The commission has adopted a policy that requires staff to provide an explanation for those districts with a Roeck score less than 0.30 or a Polsby-Popper score less than 0.16. Those explanations are provided in the compactness report.

¹ The Colorado Constitution requires the commission to "[m]ake a good-faith effort to achieve mathematical population equality between districts, as required by the constitution of the United States, but in no event shall there be more than five percent deviation between the most populous and the least populous district in each house." Colo. Const. art. V., § 48.1 (1)(a).

² Colo. Const. art. V., §48.1 (1)(b).

³ Sanchez v. Colorado, 97 F.3d 1303 (10th Cir. 1996).

Politically competitive districts. The commission has identified eight statewide races that it believes should be used in determining competitiveness.⁴ The report on election results accompanying the 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 Article V, Section 48.1 (4)(b) of the Colorado Constitution is a restatement of the VRA, as described above, staff considered the VRA in drafting the staff plan. Nonpartisan staff considered communities of interest in creating this plan and does not believe that the electoral influence of any such community was diluted in this plan.

⁴ 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.