
State Government Committee

SJR 8210

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to advance the date for completion of the redistricting plan.

Sponsors: Senators Schoesler, Nelson and Mullet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Secretary of State to submit to the voters at the next general election, a constitutional amendment adjusting the deadline for completion of the state redistricting plan to November 15 of each year ending in one.

Hearing Date: 2/23/16

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

Since 1983 the State Constitution has required a redistricting commission (Commission) to be formed every 10 years in order to adjust congressional and state legislative district boundaries. As provided for in the Constitution, the Commission must be established in January of each year ending in one, and must complete a redistricting plan as soon as possible following the federal decennial census, but no later than January 1 of each year ending in two. Within eight months after receiving the federal census data, local governments with internal districts are also required to adjust district boundaries.

State and federal law require voting districts boundaries be drawn to:

- represent equal numbers (to the extent practicable) of people based on decennial census population data;
- contain contiguous and compact territory;
- coincide with the boundaries of local political subdivisions and areas recognized as communities of interest; and

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- separate districts by natural geographic barriers, artificial barriers, or political subdivision boundaries.

A redistricting plan must not favor or discriminate against any political party or group. If the Commission fails to approve a redistricting plan through a majority vote by January 1 in a year ending in two, the Supreme Court must adopt a plan by April 30 of that same year. The Legislature may amend a redistricting plan through a two-thirds vote of each house within the first 30 days of the legislative session immediately following the Commission's completion of the plan.

In order to amend the State Constitution, a proposed amendment must first be approved by a two-thirds vote of each house of the Legislature and subsequently approved by a majority vote of the voters at the next general election.

Summary of Bill:

The Secretary of State must submit to the voters at the next general election an amendment to the State Constitution requiring the Commission to complete a redistricting plan by November 15 of each year ending in one.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.