



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Legislation Text

File #: 21-874, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

From: County Administrative Office

Agenda Section: Departmental

SUBJECT:
2021 Redistricting Effort in Humboldt County

RECOMMENDATION(S):
That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive the staff report and presentation on the 2021 redistricting process; and
2. Provide direction on the oversight mechanism for redistricting.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:
General Fund (1100)

DISCUSSION:
On March 16, 2021, your Board heard a presentation from the Clerk-Recorder's Office on changes in Elections Code that affect the 2021 redistricting process. This process, conducted every 10 years following each Federal Census count, guides where elections district boundaries are drawn, both nationally and within Humboldt County. In 2019 and 2020, the California Legislature passed Assembly Bill (AB) 849 (Fair and Inclusive Redistricting for Municipalities and Political Subdivisions (FAIR MAPS) Act of 2019) and AB 1276 consecutively, revising Elections Code, Section 21500 et seq. The legislation established new process parameters for redistricting and included changes affecting meeting requirements, timelines, decision-making authority and process requirements.

Your Board directed staff to implement a redistricting plan of action that follows parameters set by the above legislation and meets the mandated deadline of December 15, 2021. In response, staff has contracted with Redistricting Partners, LLC. to support the county in effectively navigating the complex regulatory framework, assist in drawing district lines and to enhance neutrality. Redistricting Partners is a specialized firm providing services for organizations and local governments in redistricting.

Redistricting Partners will work with the county to conduct presentations, gather and document public input, and utilize public hearings as a means for determining initial criteria for draft maps and amending maps that have been produced. In addition to redistricting services for the county,

Redistricting Partners will be facilitating the online interactive mapping tool, DistrictR, developed by Tufts University, to support public engagement through draft map creation and submission. Redistricting Partners' presentation today serves as both an introduction and kick off for the county's redistricting process.

Staff is also working with the California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP) to develop resources and engage in community outreach efforts. CCRP led the California Complete Count Census 2020 in the county and will build on their expertise and community networks to support the 2021 redistricting process, working in collaboration with Redistricting Partners and county staff.

Your Board may choose the oversight mechanism that would best meet the requirements and timeline available for redistricting.

Option 1. As a Board, you may choose to lead the process in open session, adhering to the following guidelines (Pursuant to Elections Code Section 21507.1):

- Before adopting a final map, the Board shall hold at least four public hearings at which the public is invited to provide input.
 - At least two of which shall be held *before* the Board draws a draft map or maps of the proposed supervisorial district boundaries.
 - At least two of which shall be held *after* the Board has drawn a draft map or maps of the proposed supervisorial district boundaries.
 - At least one public hearing or public workshop shall be held on a Saturday, on a Sunday, or after 6 p.m. on a weekday Monday through Friday.

If a public hearing is consolidated with a regular or special meeting of the Board that includes other substantive agenda items, the public hearing shall begin at a fixed time regardless of its order on the agenda, except that the Board may first conclude any item being discussed or acted upon, including any associated public comment, when that time occurs.

- A consultant may be used to conduct one or more public workshops in lieu of holding one of the public hearings required by paragraph (1) of subdivision (a).

Option 2. Your Board may choose to enact a redistricting commission. Any commission must exclude elected officials and government employees. Types of commissions include:

- 1. Independent Commissions:** Independent commissions function separately from the Board of Supervisors to review and approve district maps. Qualifications for serving on an independent commission are designed to ensure political neutrality and are outlined in Elections Code, Section 23003. Independent commissions are adopted to depoliticize the redistricting effort.
- 2. Advisory Commissions:** Advisory commissions function under the authority of the Board of Supervisors to review and recommend Board approval of maps. There are additional limitations on who can serve on advisory commissions and your Board may impose

additional requirements for commissioners. Advisory commissions are adopted to increase community participation.

- 3. Hybrid Commissions:** Hybrid commissions are a blend of independent and advisory commissions that review and recommend Board of Supervisor's approval of two or more maps. Your Board must accept one of the proposed maps. Qualifications for serving on an independent commission are designed to ensure political neutrality and outlined in Elections Code, Section 23003. The hybrid commission reserves the right to reject amendment requests by the Board.

The level of autonomy, time required and need for Board involvement vary with each option. A commission may be established through Board Order, Resolution, or Ordinance. The Board of Supervisors may select commission members in a variety of ways. The four primary methods employed for selected commissioners are summarized below and differ based on the degree to which they remove the Board of Supervisors from the selection process:

- **Political Appointment:** The Board of Supervisors has two options for making political appointments to an advisory redistricting commission: (1) each Board member can appoint a commissioner; or (2) the Board solicits community member applications and uses a set criteria to collectively select commissioners. The political appointment system, option one, enables commissioners to act as a proxy for the Board member who elected them.
- **Independent Appointment:** The Board of Supervisors may conduct an open application process and appoint a selection committee to choose commissioners based on pre-determined criteria.
- **Random Draw & Commission Appointment:** The Board of Supervisors may conduct an open application process and appoint an independent selection committee to create a sub-pool of qualified candidates based on pre-determined criteria. Selected commissions are then chosen at random from the sub-pool.
- **Retired Judges:** The Board of Supervisors may form a selection commission consisting of retired judges selected by random draw. The select commission would make appointments based on pre-determined criteria.

The selection committee must consider a variety of eligibility qualifications when selecting commissioners to ensure commissioners are politically independent and knowledgeable about the county's diverse communities.

The presentation today will provide greater insight into how your choice will affect local redistricting efforts in the coming months.

Staff recommends Option 1 due to the time constraints of finalizing and adopting district boundary

maps. A redistricting committee would require additional time for committee selection and education prior to the public input process. Missing the deadline of December 15, 2021, may require the county to turn the process over to the superior court for completion, at the county's expense (Pursuant to Elections Code Section 21509(a)).

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Overall costs will vary depending on the model and type of oversight group your Board chooses to enact and number of meetings planned. The County Administrative Office, budget unit 1100103, has included \$100,000 in the adopted budget for fiscal year 2021-22. This includes the costs of contracts with Redistricting Partners and CCRP.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework by inviting civic engagement and awareness of available services, fostering transparent, accessible, welcoming and user friendly services and by providing community-appropriate levels of service.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Redistricting Partners
California Center for Rural Policy

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff has recommended Option 1 due to the time constraints of finalizing district boundary maps by December 15, 2021. Your Board may select another option; however, this may place constraints on meeting the deadline for map adoption by December 15.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: G-3, L-2, I-1
Meeting of: 06/07/2011, 06/21/2011, 03/16/2021
File No.: 16-3965, 16-3900, 21-273