

# Teacher Background for Redrawing Democracy – 9th–12th Honors/AP Level

This is simply for a refresher and to hopefully save you some Google-ing!

## Redistricting and Gerrymandering: What Teachers Should Know

### Redistricting Overview

Every 10 years after the U.S. Census, states redraw voting district lines to adjust for population changes. The Constitution requires this to uphold equal representation.

### What is Gerrymandering?

Gerrymandering is the manipulation of those district boundaries for political advantage.

- **Cracking:** Breaking up voter groups to dilute their power.
- **Packing:** Concentrating voters into a few districts to limit their influence.
- **Legal Focus:** While racial gerrymandering is illegal under the Voting Rights Act, the Supreme Court has ruled that **partisan** gerrymandering is generally beyond federal courts' reach, though some states are addressing it with reforms.

## Georgia-Specific Background

- After the 2020 Census, Georgia's Republican-led legislature drew maps challenged in federal court for reducing Black voter influence.
- In 2023, a federal court ruled that Georgia's maps violated the Voting Rights Act, requiring new maps.
- Georgia's 2024 elections operated under the new, court-approved maps, adding one majority-Black congressional district.
- Georgia remains under scrutiny from national voting rights groups.

## National Context and Developments

- **Allen v. Milligan (Alabama, 2023):** The Supreme Court upheld Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, requiring fairer representation for Black voters.

- **Wisconsin (2023):** The State Supreme Court ordered redrawing of legislative maps due to unconstitutional district shapes.
- Several states (California, Arizona, Michigan) have implemented independent redistricting commissions to create less partisan, fairer maps.
- Gerrymandering has been estimated to provide Republicans a ~16-seat advantage in the U.S. House (Brennan Center, 2024).

## Where to Use This in Class

Topic	Useful Activities
<b>Legal Precedents</b>	Assign case briefs (Baker v. Carr, Shaw v. Reno, Allen v. Milligan); have students present cases or write short responses.
<b>Georgia Case Study</b>	Analyze Georgia’s redistricting history using current maps, demographic data, and court summaries.
<b>Quantitative Tools</b>	Teach compactness measures (Polsby-Popper, efficiency gap) and apply them using mapping software (e.g., Dave’s Redistricting Tool, ArcGIS).
<b>Comparative National Trends</b>	Research suggests that independent commissions are debated in terms of their effectiveness; students are assigned argument essays on reform measures.
<b>Civic Action</b>	Have students create policy proposals, public service announcements, or presentations connecting their redesigns to real-world reform.