Boundaries That Matter: Redistricting Congressional Election Districts

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Boundaries That Matter: Redistricting Congressional Election Districts

Presented to the First Unitarian Church of Cleveland

February 26, 2017

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After every decennial census in the U.S. politicians are very interested in maps.
The Importance of Election Boundaries

When the Lines are Drawn with One Party in Control

Congressional Redistricting in Ohio

Who Decides?

- In Ohio – the state legislature
  - every 10 years after the census

- Population of each district must be as close to the average in each state as “reasonably possible”. (therefore equal populations within a state)

- Voting Rights Act of 1965 – minority representation

- There are no other requirements.
But there are other possible considerations

**Compactness**

**Communities of Interest.** e.g., keep whole counties or municipalities together

**Competitiveness.** Maximize the number of legislative districts that could be won by either party.

**Representational Fairness.** Minimize the difference between proportions of votes for the political parties and the legislative seats won by those parties.
Representational Fairness

Congressional Wins and Percentage of Vote for the Controlling Party in Ohio, 2002 - 2016

Additional seats won:

2  3  2  -1  3  3  3  4
Competiveness

Percentage of Votes for Congressional Candidates for Party Not in Control of Redistricting
2002 - 2010

Only 1 district averaged between 45% and 55% - considered to be “competitive”

Only 4 districts averaged between 40% and 60%

In 14 of the 18 districts there was no change in which party won in any of the 5 elections of the decade.
Within states, when boundaries don’t reflect the preferences of the electorate,

votes don’t count the same.
One could argue that votes were equal in only the one Congressional district that was deemed competitive on the previous slide.
National Picture
National Congressional Fairness, 2012

20 seats won by Republicans more than their share of votes would indicate.
National Congressional Fairness, 2014

17 seats won by Republicans more than their share of votes would indicate.
21 seats won by Republicans more than their share of votes would indicate.