About This Project

Description

Our Mapping Team

Dr. James Lewis

Jim Lewis

Dr. James Lewis worked with members of the Chicago City Council, Cook County Board and Illinois congressional delegation on remap proposals during the 1990s. He provided expert testimony in U.S. District Court in 1996 regarding Chicago ward map litigation (Barnett v. City of Chicago) and was a fact witness in congressional map litigation in King v. State Board of Elections before the U.S. Court of Appeals in 1995. For more information on his work, see www.jimonchicago.com.

Rob Paral

Rob Paral

Rob Paral is a demographic and public policy consultant with specialties in immigrant, Latino and Asian populations; community needs for health and human service programs; and Midwestern demographic change.

As principal of Rob Paral and Associates, Rob has assisted more than 100 human service, advocacy and philanthropic organizations in understanding the communities they are trying to serve. He works with large-scale data and geographic information systems to develop insight into community assets and needs. More information on Robâ??s work may be found at www.robparal.com.

Methodology

To project population: We started with block-level data from the 2010 Census and adjusted it based on a) block group data from the 2016 American Community Survey, which is an aggregation of 2012 through 2016 and b) more current county level estimates, which gave us magnitudes of change.

To forecast possible electoral outcomes, we used precinct-level partisan vote totals from the 2018 Illinois treasurer and comptroller races, reaggregating the precinct totals as if they were partisan votes in the newly drawn legislative districts.

These races were selected because they are lower-profile statewide races. We anticipated that voters are most likely to vote on the basis of partisan inclination in these races. (In the past, votes for the University of Illinois trustees were utilized for partisan analysis, as those elections were farthest down ballot and the candidates the least widely known, but trustees are no longer elected so that is not an option.) The governor and attorney general races were too highly visible to be useful, and the secretary of state candidate has held office for so long that we donâ??t believe votes for him necessarily represent partisan views. Legislative races are of marginal value for this type of exercise because so many candidates face only token opposition and because local races are often swayed by local knowledge of candidates.

Next we categorized our districts as either Democratic (six point or more Democrat majority), Republican (six point or more majority of Republicans plus Libertarians), or toss-up (difference of less

than six points). While some Libertarians might vote for Democrats and others might not vote at all, we think the best assumption is that those who voted Libertarian in the treasurer and comptroller races would vote Republican in 2022 legislative races, assuming no Libertarians run.

â?? Jim Lewis and Rob Paral

Redistricting Principles

Constructing the BGA map, we followed conventional redistricting principles embodied in decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, the federal Voting Rights Act and the Illinois Constitution. These are rules that even legislators must follow. But mapping is as much art as it is science, and there are infinite variations that can be drawn. So even with these rules, there is plenty of room for creative thinking that can benefit or harm communities across the state.

Because our maps are a simulation, we omitted an important step in a fair redistricting process: public input. An independent commission would hold public hearings and seek feedback from communities themselves before and after drafting the maps.

Among the considerations:

Population: The Illinois Constitution requires that state legislative district populations be substantially equal. For the BGA map, that means each district has about 108,860 people. The need to draw districts close to the same size can conflict with other priorities, such as keeping districts compact.

Shape: Districts are required to be compact and geographically contiguous (meaning every block in a district must be adjacent to at least one other block). The compactness requirement is more ambiguous. Just because a district looks funny doesnâ??t mean itâ??s not compact. Most districts have some shape irregularities at one or more points due to the need to balance district population totals where conventional political and geographic boundaries would not do so.

Minority Representation: Wherever a district can be drawn with a population of at least 50 percent African-American or Hispanic residents, mapmakers should aim to do so. Sometimes a district with a messier shape is in fact drawn to meet these voting rights requirements.

Existing Jurisdictions and Communities of Interest: Itâ??s important that the members of the state legislature collectively represent the interests of the wide variety of people and interests across the state. Often this can be done by following the boundaries of municipalities and counties and trying to keep single jurisdictions intact. However, housing development patterns and local commerce and culture do not necessarily follow administrative boundaries. Thatâ??s one reason community involvement in the mapping process is critical.

Economic Makeup â?? Urban/Rural and Income Levels: Would you rather your representative be more familiar with a commuterâ??s train or a farmerâ??s tractor? On the 2011 map, cities are sometimes carved into pieces, or carved out of their surrounding areas (Decatur, Springfield, Peoria). But policies dealt with by the state legislature have different impacts on people in urban and rural areas. These include public transportation, farm and agricultural policy, environment, mining and others. The BGA map allows the election of a representative to represent a mostly, or sometimes exclusively, urban

or rural area. In every instance where a city center could be contained within a single district, we did so.

Government policy decisions also impact people of various income levels and occupations differently. Peopleâ??s positions on tax policies, school funding, labor, affordable housing, health care and other issues are highly mediated by their income levels. It makes good policy sense to have representatives accountable to a wide range of economic interests, from the very affluent to the poor â?? or if a community sharing an income level is large enough, to ensure that they are kept intact.

Geography: In some instances, we thought the geographic features of an area tended to define commonality of interests for many residents. This resulted in districts that could be diverse in other ways, but shared long stretches of the Chicago and northeastern Illinois lakefronts, stretches of the Mississippi River or the less densely populated southernmost portion of the state.

Hereâ??s how these considerations helped shape the districts on our maps.

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

Owing to a projected decrease in Illinois population relative to the rest of the nation, Illinois will almost certainly lose one of its 18 congressional districts, and possibly two. For this map, we modeled the possible effects of losing one and so we draw 17 districts. The congressional map has an ideal total population per district of 755,664 persons.

We expect that Chicago and some of its suburbs will have African-American population losses of around 200,000, making maintenance of three African-American majority districts difficult. For this map, we apportioned the Chicago areaâ??s African-American population equally among the 1st, 2nd and 7th districts, maintaining essentially the 2011 configuration, albeit with much lower black population per district. The 1st and 2nd districts each have their farthest north points on Chicagoâ??s South Side and extend south through mostly African-American neighborhoods in Chicago and Cook suburbs. Population change results in the 1st and 2nd districts extending as far as Joliet to the east and Kankakee to the south, in order to make necessary population.

Since the redistricting following the 1990 Census, Chicago has had a single Hispanic majority district, the 4th. We estimate that Chicago will have sufficient Hispanic residents by 2021 that a majority Hispanic district can be drawn including most of Chicagoâ??s South Side Hispanics. We number this the 4th district. We have included the North Side Hispanic population in a single district that we number as District 5. The district also includes most of the cityâ??s Northwest Side neighborhoods, extending past Oâ??Hare Airport. While close to a majority Hispanic district in total population, it is far below majority in voting age population. Nonetheless, we believe such a district would afford North Side Hispanics a viable opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice should an able candidate run and the population organizes and votes.

The balance of Chicagoâ??s Northwest Side and many north Cook suburbs are included in District 6, which borders District 5 on its south. District 9 comprises the North Side Chicago lakefront and extends as far north as Evanston, and also includes several North Side inland Chicago neighborhoods.

To the south, District 3 includes many of Chicagoâ??s Southwest Side suburbs from Elmhurst to the north, Tinley Park to the southeast and Romeoville to the southwest.

Moving further from the city counterclockwise, District 10 includes the North Cook suburban lakefront and Lake County. District 11 includes McHenry County and DuPage suburbs as far south as Batavia. District 8 reaches from Carol Stream on the north to Aurora on the southwest and to Naperville and Bolingbrook on the southeast. District 70 is an â??exurbanâ?• district extending from the Wisconsin border through Rockford to DeKalb in its center to Kane County.

The balance of the state consists of five districts. District 17 runs the length of the Mississippi River from the Wisconsin border to Calhoun County. District 16 is parallel to it, north to south, and includes the Peoria and Springfield areas in the center of the state. To its east is District 13, which includes the Bloomington-Normal and Champaign-Urbana areas.

The southern portion of the state has two districts. District 12 is centered on the East St. Louis area, which comprises about half of the population of the district. It includes the small towns and rural areas surrounding it. District 15 includes the Carbondale area, the Shawnee forests and the transportation corridor including Mount Vernon and Marion. It extends as far north as Shelby and Edgar counties in south central Illinois.

STATE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS

The shapes of individual legislative districts are best thought of within the context of the sub-region where they are located, as the shape of one is to some degree dependent on the shape of those adjoining it. In some instances, a community of interest may be unique to a particular district; in others, it may extend across several districts.

Districts have been renumbered to correspond as closely as possible to the numbering of the 2011 districts. However, population change and different mapping choices make some of the numbers only marginally relevant, and in some cases irrelevant, to the 2011 numbering.

Chicago, North Lakefront

While containing some economic diversity, the north Chicago lakefront is unique in its string of highrises extending for miles from downtown through Edgewater to the north. The area is home to highly affluent Gold Coast residents and a mixture of middle- and upper-income residents farther north. Rogers Park blends into Evanston sociologically, and the Purple CTA line extends into the south portion of Wilmette. District 14 (Rogers Park, Edgewater, Uptown), District 12 (Lakeview and Uptown), and District 63 (Lincoln Park and North Loop) comprise the Chicago portion, and the furthest north, District 18, encapsulates Evanston and the southernmost neighborhoods of Wilmette.

Chicago, Near North Side

In the 2011 map, these four districts each contained Hispanic majorities, and in the BGA map they continue to do so. The area as a whole is populated by the remnant of white working-class households, increasing numbers of young and middle-aged professionals and Latinos, many of whom are of Puerto Rican ancestry. The region centers on Humboldt Park, known for its annual Puerto Rican Independence Day celebrations. District 4 is comprised of portions of Humboldt Park, Logan Square and West Town; District 3 centers on Belmont Cragin; District 39 centers on Portage Park, including parts of Hermosa and Logan Square to the southeast; and District 40 has the eastern portions of Avondale, Irving Park and Albany Park.

Chicago, Northwest Side

The balance of the North Side extends from west of the lakefront to the Oâ??Hare region on the west. District 16 includes West Ridge, Lincoln Square, Lincolnwood, Forest Glen and North Park. District 11 includes North Center, Logan Square and West Town.

To the west, District 20 includes Jefferson Park, Norwood Park, Edison Park and suburban Park Ridge, which is similar in demography to these Chicago neighborhoods. District 19 encompasses Portage Park, Harwood Heights, Dunning, Elmwood Park, River Grove and Norridge.

Chicago, West Side

Chicagoâ??s West Side extends from downtown as far west as Maywood and, with the exception of Oak Park, is mostly populated by African-Americans. The 2011 map divided this area into four majority or plurality African-American districts, and the BGA map does the same. While an argument can be made for drawing all of Oak Park into a single district, both maps bisect it north/south, in the interest of maintaining two western districts that would seem more likely to elect African-American candidates than if the western suburban section were its own district. Given the extreme segregation of African-Americans in Chicago, the highly charged issue of policing and the high correlation between poverty and being African-American across the West Side, these neighborhoods concentrate communities of interest justifying the configuration on both maps.

District 9 is North Lawndale, East Garfield Park and the Near West Side. District 10 extends from Cabrini Green on the Near North Side and picks up the balance of Garfield Park, a portion of Austin and the southern portion of Humboldt Park. District 7 includes most of Austin and the northern portion of Oak Park and River Forest. District 8 is a suburban district including a portion of Austin, the southern portion of Oak Park, Maywood and Broadview.

Chicago, Near South/Southwest Side

This area consists of seven districts reaching from Chinatown in the northeast to Midway Airport at its southwest. The region is characterized by a mixture of white working-class people and Hispanic residents, most of whom are of Mexican descent. The integration of Hispanics and whites across the area means that most of the districts are roughly equal mixes of both. The districts reaching farthest northeast are predominantly Hispanic. Chicagoâ??s Chinatown is a community of interest culturally, socially and economically and continues to be located in a district (our District 2) containing the Pilsen neighborhood and most of McKinley Park. These seven districts each had Hispanic majorities or pluralities in the 2011 map and continue to in the BGA map.

Berwyn and Cicero are too large to comprise a single district, so Berwyn and Riverside and a portion of Cicero comprise District 24, while most of Cicero, with working-class suburbs McCook, Hodgkins and Countryside, comprise District 23. In District 21, South Lawndale extends southwest with Garfield Ridge and Summit along the southeast canal and industrial corridor. District 1 picks up working-class communities of Brighton Park, New City and Gage Park. To its southwest are working-class communities West Elsdon, Clearing, Bedford Park and Bridgeview, comprising District 22. Burbank is the largest community in District 32.

Chicago, South Side and South Suburbs

In this region, we contend most with the significant population losses in Chicago documented by the Census this decade. Significant losses in the African-American population force the choice between maintaining the 2011 pattern of districts, most with smaller African-American majorities or pluralities, or keeping the African-American concentrations at higher numbers, but drawing fewer such districts. We opted to maintain the number of districts. This provides the opportunity for the state legislature to mirror the population it represents overall, but this will happen only if minority residents of those districts field candidates, organize and vote. These districts average about the same voting age population as the comparable districts in the 2011 map.

In our view, African-Americans living in the south portion of Chicago and many parts of the south Cook suburbs constitute a community of interest owing to high levels of racial segregation and policy interests associated with poverty, civil rights protections, policing and strategies for crime reduction. This is not to say that particular neighborhoods within this region are not different from one another, for they are. However, we believe there is sufficient commonality of interest that the districts across this region should be drawn with that in mind and that it remains important that African-Americans across that region have an opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.

Achieving these goals led to some of the more irregularly shaped districts in the 2011 map, and the BGA map faces many of the same demographic challenges. Still, the BGA districts are more compact than the 2011 districts.

The districts can be grouped into four geographical sub-regions:

South Side Lakefront

District 26 is built from the historic Bronzeville region of Chicago. The district includes some or all of the Loop, Near South Side, Douglass, Oakland, Grand Boulevard and Kenwood.

District 5 encompasses the University of Chicago and includes some or all of Washington Park, Hyde Park, Woodlawn and Greater Grand Crossing.

District 33 focuses on the industrial areas in the southeast portion of Chicago, including most or all of South Shore, South Chicago, Calumet Heights, East Side and Hegewisch.

District 25 encompasses another portion of the industrial southeast Indiana border, including South Deering, Burnham, Calumet City, Lansing, Lynwood and Sauk Village.

Working-Class South Side

These districts were designed to be at least 50 percent African-American while including adjacent non-African-American working-class neighborhoods. While the specific boundaries of the 2011 districts are different from those in this area of the BGA map, the basic demographic compositions are very similar.

District 6 includes major portions of New City, the north part of Englewood, Chicago Lawn and Ashburn.

District 31 includes portions of Englewood, Auburn Gresham, Evergreen Park and Oak Lawn.

District 35 includes portions of Englewood, Auburn Gresham, Washington Heights, Morgan Park and Mount Greenwood.

District 27 includes portions of Roseland, Morgan Park, Calumet Park, Blue Island and Alsip.

District 28 includes portions of Chatham, Roseland, West Pullman, Riverdale, Robbins and Crestwood.

South Cook Suburbs

District 30 comprises part of Dolton, Harvey, Phoenix, Markham, East Hazel Crest, Homewood and part of Tinley Park.

District 38 comprises Hazel Crest, Olympia Fields, Richton Park, Matteson, Franklin Square and Country Club Hills.

District 80 comprises South Holland, Flossmoor, part of Chicago Heights, Park Forest, University Park and Monee.

District 29 includes part of Calumet City, Ford Heights, part of Chicago Heights, South Chicago Heights, Steger and Crete.

Far Southwest Cook/Will Suburbs

District 36 is centered on the Palos region, also including Worth and portions of Orland Park.

District 37 comprises Orland Hills, Mokena and New Lenox.

District 82 includes Orland Park, Lemont and Homer Glen.

District 34 is primarily rural but includes Kankakee.

Lake County, Lakefront

This region consists of three districts â?? 60, 61 and 58 â??that are similar to those on the 2011 map. In keeping with the principle of drawing small cities that have distinct geographies as single districts wherever possible, Waukegan and most of North Chicago are drawn as a single District 60. That leaves the beachfront area to its north, bound on its north by the Wisconsin border, as District 61. District 58 captures the largely wealthy suburbs extending from Highwood on the north to Wilmette on the south, including most of Northbrook. Relatively speaking, they are homogenous neighborhoods consisting of single-family homes with enclaves of apartments housing retirees and local workers.

Western Lake County and McHenry County

District 62 is located in west central Lake County. It includes (from north to southeast) Antioch, Lake Villa, Lindenhurst, Round Lake Beach and Glenwood Park.

To its south is District 59, including Libertyville, Mundelein, Vernon Hills, Lincolnshire and Riverwoods.

On the western side of Lake County is District 51, including the Fox Lake area, Round Lake, Wauconda and Hawthorn Woods.

Two districts â?? 66 and 64 â?? are mostly in McHenry County. District 64 comprises the north section with Spring Grove, Wonder Lake, McHenry and Woodstock. District 66 centers on Crystal Lake and its

surroundings.

Northwest Cook Bedroom Communities

District 15 comprises the easternmost portion of this region and includes Skokie, Morton Grove and most of Niles, a fairly continuous middle-class bedroom community.

To its northwest lies District 17, which centers on Glenview but includes parts of Niles and Northbrook, which are economically similar.

To its west is District 53, built around Arlington Heights, Mount Prospect, Prospect Heights and a portion of Wheeling to the north.

District 57 to its northwest includes much of Buffalo Grove, Long Grove and part of Lake Zurich.

District 52 to its west is typified by higher income suburbs centered on Barrington, Cary and their surrounding areas.

District 54 includes most of Palatine and Rolling Meadows, some of Inverness and a portion of Hoffman Estates.

Oâ??Hare/Northwest Suburban Commercial/Residential

The area to the south, west and north of Oâ??Hare International Airport has been heavily influenced by the commercial and industrial areas surrounding it. This includes major office parks and shopping centers such as Woodfield Mall and its surroundings.

District 55 includes Oâ??Hare, many of the warehouse areas surrounding it and three municipalities shaped by that location â?? Rosemont, Des Plaines and Elk Grove Village.

To the west, District 56 is centered on Schaumburg and its large commercial concentration and includes Roselle.

District 44 includes Hoffman Estates, Streamwood and portions of Hanover Park.

District 77 includes the industrial suburbs Wood Dale, Bensenville, Franklin Park and Northlake.

DuPage Bedroom Communities

District 45, in the northwest corner of DuPage County, includes a variety of unincorporated residential areas, Bartlett, portions of Hanover Park, Bloomingdale and Carol Stream.

District 46, to its east, includes Glendale Heights and Addison.

District 48 includes most of Glen Ellyn and Wheaton.

District 47 centers on Elmhurst and includes Villa Park and Lombard.

District 42 includes West Chicago, Winfield, Warrenville and portions of Aurora and Naperville.

District 81 Includes most of Downers Grove and Lisle.

District 41 contains most of Naperville.

Northern Will County

District 98 Includes Romeoville and most of Lemont.

District 85 includes Bolingbrook and a small portion of Naperville.

Most of Joliet comprises District 95.

District 97 includes a small portion of Joliet plus Shorewood and Plainfield.

Kane, Fox River, Satellite Cities

District 43, a Hispanic majority district, follows a portion of the Fox River, including Carpentersville to the North through Elgin on the south. Elgin and its suburbsâ?? population is too large to fit in a single district.

District 49 follows the Fox River further south, including South Elgin, St. Charles, Geneva and most of Batavia.

Continuing south, District 83 is focused on Aurora but cannot capture all of it, and District 86 concludes the urbanized stretch of the Fox River with Romeoville, Yorkville and their commercial and residential developments.

District 50 includes a number of small residential developments to the west of the Fox River community that borders rural Illinois.

District 65 includes communities west of Carpentersville including West Dundee, Huntley and other residential developments.

Northwest Illinois and Rockford

District 71 extends from the Wisconsin border on its north along the Mississippi River to the Rock Island area. Rock Island itself and adjacent suburbs are captured in District 72. District 89, also along the Wisconsin border, includes Freeport, and extends to the western edge of Rockford. The Rockford area is too large to fit in a single district; most of Rockford is included in District 67. District 68 to its east captures the suburbs, and District 69 surrounds District 68 to the northeast and south, capturing other smaller urban areas near Rockford.

Central Illinois

A large set of districts are located in central Illinois, an area dominated by agriculture. For districting, we can think of it as having several sub-regions:

Mississippi River

On the Mississippi River is District 100, comprised of Calhoun, Jersey, Greene, Pike, Scott and much of Morgan counties. Its largest urban center is Jacksonville. To its north is District 94, comprised mostly of Adams, Hancock and McDonough counties and including Quincy and Macomb. District 108, adjacent to East St. Louis, contains the rural portion of Madison and Macoupin counties and a portion of Montgomery County. To its east are District 107 and District 110, which contain rural counties reaching to the Indiana border and lack any large urban areas.

Inland Cities

In the centermost portion of the state, a number of districts each encompass an urban area with sufficient population to constitute a district by itself. These are Springfield (District 87), Decatur (District 96), Champaign-Urbana (District 103), Bloomington-Normal (District 105) and Peoria (District 92). In each of these places, a district was created that focuses on the central portion of a city. Because of population totals, some division was necessary in Champaign-Urbana, Bloomington-Normal and Peoria. In the case of Peoria, District 91 to the southwest encompasses the majority of Peoriaâ??s suburbs, which extend in that direction. The much smaller northern suburban portion is located in District 89. District 101 includes most of the outlying areas of Champaign-Urbana, while District 104 extends east to include Danville. District 88 and District 102, although mostly rural, include the outlying areas of Springfield.

Central Farmland

The balance of the central Illinois districts is almost entirely rural. District 73 extends northeast from Peoria toward the Chicago area. District 74 and District 79 extend from the Mississippi to the central portion of the state, with Galesburg the largest city in District 74 and Princeville in District 79. District 76 is largely defined by the modestly urbanized corridor running from LaSalle through Ottawa to Morris on the east along the canal/river system. District 90 to its north traverses the state west to east, from Sterling and Dixon to the Kendall County exurbs.

East St. Louis

The East St. Louis region encompasses an urban population of around 400,000 centered on the Illinois side of St. Louis in St. Clair and Madison counties. Like the current map, the BGA map has four districts, in our case somewhat oriented from east to west. Starting south, District 114 includes East St. Louis and extends southwest to include Belleville, a mostly continuous urban area. To its east is District 113, with Fairview Heights, Oâ??Fallon and Scott Air Force Base. To the north is District 112, extending from the river and Granite City through Collinsville to Troy on the rural edge. District 111 is farthest north, encapsulating Alton on the Mississippi River and Edwardsville to the southeast.

Southern Illinois

Southern Illinois includes six districts in the southernmost area of the state. District 118 includes Alexander, Pulaski, Massac, Union, Johnson, Pope, Hardin, Saline and Gallatin counties. These counties mostly border the Mississippi and Ohio rivers and comprise one of the lowest-income areas of the state. The district includes the Shawnee National Forest. To its north is District 117, which includes the centers of Jackson and Williamson counties. This is an â??urbanâ?• rural district including the Carbondale-SIU area and Marion, key urban centers north of the Shawnee National Forest area.

District 116 follows the Mississippi River north, from west of Carbondale through Randolph and Monroe counties, reaching the southern edge of the East St. Louis region. To its east lies District 115, a rural district including Perry, Washington, Clinton and Bond counties, which have no major urban areas. To its east is District 99, a north-south economic corridor including Salem, Centralia, Mount Vernon and Frankfort, through Fayette, Marion, Jefferson and Franklin counties north to south. District 109 is another rural district bordering the Ohio River and Indiana, including Hamilton, White, Wayne, Edwards, Wabash, Clay, Richland and Lawrence counties.

Q&A with Dr. James Lewis

Your assignment was to draw legislative and congressional maps that 1) follow the redistricting requirements spelled out in state law and the Illinois constitution; 2) conform to the federal Voting Rights Act and 3) ignore political considerations, including past voting behavior or addresses of incumbents.

Could you briefly discuss the state and federal requirements mentioned above?

Drawing maps is complicated because all of these factors must be accommodated as much as possible. Put simply, districts should be as compact as possible, and each districtâ??s geography must be contiguous. To satisfy the constitutional principle of one person, one vote, they must be more or less equal in population. They must be drawn rationally, which means they respect natural boundaries, other political boundaries and communities. And they must be drawn so that where a racial/ethnic group could constitute a majority population in a district, it would theoretically be able to elect a candidate of its choosing. We drew the maps based on total population, although a districtâ??s voting age population can be a factor in litigating racial/ethnic representation.

Youâ??ve mentioned other considerations, such as ease of administration (ie, how hard is it for the representative to traverse the district, hold constituent meetings, etc.) or similar commerce. Why are those important to a fair map?

While this is not a legal principle, it stands to reason that since the purpose of legislative districts is to facilitate representation, then a lawmakerâ??s ability to visit all portions of his/her district should be considered in its design. This is probably one of the reasons districts should be as compact as they can be while accommodating the other requirements.

Explain how these considerations shaped the boundaries in the BGA congressional map. Where did you decide to start and why?

We started by drawing polygons with roughly the required average district population around communities of interest across the state: small cities, communities defined by economic type, race or ethnicity and local governmental jurisdictions. We then completed the districts around the periphery of the state, since you can make adjustments toward the center but not beyond the stateâ??s boundaries. Next we looked at the racial/ethnic composition of our map and made adjustments so the resulting legislature should look basically like the overall population of the state. Finally, we adjusted the boundaries of all the districts to equalize the populations.

What conflicts did you encounter and what compromises resulted?

The biggest conflict is between the need to create districts that reflect the race/ethnicity of Illinois while also keeping them as compact as possible. In most of the state this is not a problem, but in the Chicago area it is quite difficult. Consequently, the Chicago portion of our state legislative map looks a lot like the map the General Assembly adopted in 2011.

Probably the next biggest problem is making the Chicago suburban districts align as closely as possible with municipal boundaries. Many suburbs have highly irregular boundaries resulting from annexations of formerly unincorporated land. Aligning those boundaries with legislative districts isnâ??t always possible. Because total populations donâ??t match well either, suburban municipalities sometimes must be split into multiple legislative districts. The 2011 maps had to do that and so did ours.

Youâ??ve said you donâ??t really like the word â??gerrymander.â?• Why not?

Ever since Massachusetts Gov. Elbridge Gerry approved an irregular district in Boston in 1812, the term has had a pejorative meaning â?? as was intended when first used. The salamander-shaped districts were drawn to defend partisan interests. Since the 1970s, many irregularly shaped districts have been drawn for a really good reason: to assure that legislatures had sufficient racial/ethnic diversity. Some of their shapes rival the worst politically manipulated districts. On the other hand, I donâ??t know that thereâ??s anything inherently perfect in every district being a perfect square, triangle or hexagon.

Letâ??s drill down a bit here on that last question by looking at some individual districts on your maps. Your Congressional District 5 isnâ??t as convoluted as the current District 5, but it still has some suspicious-looking features (those claws at the top, for example, but also, it meanders quite a bit). Ditto for District 1. Also, how were you able to eliminate the District 4 â??earmuffâ?• ?

The so-called â??earmuffâ?• was eliminated because we believe the Hispanic population in and around Chicago is now large enough to elect a Hispanic congressman from a South Side District 4, and to create a North Side Hispanic â??influenceâ?• district in our District 5, which encompasses much of Chicagoâ??s Northwest Side. While an â??influenceâ?• district might not elect a Hispanic representative, its Hispanic population would constitute a political interest that candidates would be wise to respect. The â??clawsâ?• are a conscious attempt to include largely Hispanic neighborhoods in this district.

We believe the Illinois African-American population remains large enough to warrant three African-American districts, though well-intentioned people could disagree. If Chicagoâ??s population losses continue through the 2020 Census, this could require more discussion.

We drew three districts that we consider highly likely to elect African-American representatives, although each is only about half African-American. Largely because of the African-American population loss in the city, our District 1 had to be drawn a bit farther south and east than the current District 1.

Overall, how is your congressional map different from the map approved in 2011?

To accommodate the projected loss of one congressional seat, we had to reconfigure the Chicago suburban districts. Our map also reflects the decision to recast the 2011 Hispanic-majority district into a likely Hispanic district and a Hispanic â??influenceâ?• district. Downstate, we were able to draw districts

that are more compact than on the 2011 map.

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