



ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD

Alaska Redistricting Board Meeting
September 17, 2021 | 9:00 a.m.
Anchorage Legislative Information Office, Denali Conference Room, 1st
Floor, 1500 W. Benson Blvd, Anchorage, AK 99503

The Alaska Redistricting Board met on September 17, 2021. Present participants are below:

John Binkley
Melanie Bahnke
Bethany Marcum
Budd Simpson
Nicole Borromeo
Peter Torkelson
TJ Presley

Chair of the Board
Board Member
Board Member
Board Member
Board Member
Executive Director
Deputy Director

Agenda

- Call to Order and Establish a Quorum
- Adoption of Agenda
- Public Testimony
- Presentations from Third-Party Map Drafters
- Board Discussion on Proposed Maps
- Public Testimony
- Next Steps
- Public Hearings & Outreach
- Adjournment

Call to Order

Mr. Binkley called the meeting to order on September 17, 2021 at 9:05 a.m. With all board members present, a quorum was established.

Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Binkley moved to have a brief presentation by the Executive Director to update on the status of the redistricting process.

Mr. Simpson moved to adopt the draft agenda with the addition of a brief presentation by the Executive Director before public testimony. Ms. Borromeo seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director Presentation

Mr. Torkelson stated that the board has met the constitutional deadline and adopted two initial draft proposed plans, a product of a ten-to-twelve-day mapping session. Following the adoption of the two plans, the board continued to work toward greater compactness and fewer deviations; the board also addressed concerns expressed about Southeast Alaska and will be bringing new versions of this area to the September 20, 2021 board meeting. At that meeting, third party maps will also be reviewed, and the board will decide which maps to adopt for the public outreach tour while also looking at revisions to their own proposed maps.

Mr. Torkelson emphasized that the redistricting process is a public process and that the board will now enter a six-to-seven-week public outreach process with a goal of intending as much public input as possible. With COVID-19 restrictions in consideration, the board will also open up its website as a place for the public to provide feedback at any time. Today, the board invites third party groups to present their maps and offer their perspectives.

Public Testimony

Public comment was given as follows:

- Anchorage resident, Tahnee Conte-Seccareccia, asked the board to ensure that the process for redistricting is nonpartisan and focused on ensuring that all Alaskans have adequate representation. Ms. Conte-Seccareccia expressed concern on how some areas in Anchorage, but also Greater Alaska, are being split or combined.
- Former legislator, David Guttenberg, addressed District 32 on the map, stating that to get from the west side to the east side of the district, you must drive through three other districts; this results in a gerrymandered district.
- Fairbanks resident, Calvin Rogers, expressed concern about the way the proposed maps that split up Fairbanks shows great injustice to the Fairbanks community.
- Downtown Anchorage resident, Lois Epstein, noted that she is a resident on West 15th Avenue and L Street. Ms. Epstein stated the following concerns: 1) In District 12 in Version 2 of the maps, the district extends from downtown to Spenard and past the Ted Stevens International Airport which is a concern as her representational interests lie within the downtown neighborhood. 2) Both adopted map versions have excessive population numbers in the Fairbanks region for Districts 31 through 35, resulting in less representation for Fairbanks residents than in other parts of the state. 3) The board should identify senate districts as it is impossible to fully assess representation without doing so.
- Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) resident, Major Felicia Wilson, stated that the JBER district is divided in a way that splits the communities according to the areas that surround the three gates. Major Wilson expressed concerns with Districts 20 and 21 on the map as multiple neighborhoods extend to Mountain View; this is overly expansive. Major Wilson urged the board to remember that JBER and its residents are not monolithic.
- Fairbanks resident, Rose O'Hara-Jolley, expressed concern about the inequities displayed in the proposed maps, dissecting communities and diluting votes into two or more house districts and reduces residents' abilities to accurately represent themselves. The proposed maps have also overpopulated districts and created areas where voters are underrepresented.
- Anchorage resident and President of Ahtna, Michelle Anderson, stated that Ahtna supports the map submitted jointly by Ahtna, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Fairbanks Native Association, Sealaska, and Doyon. The villages within the Ahtna region have strong ties with united cultures. It is important that these villages remain unified.
- Anchorage resident, Karen Baker, expressed opposition to the proposed maps as the maps,

especially in the interior and southeast areas of the state, are gerrymandered. Ms. Baker urged the board to not adopt the proposed maps.

- Anchorage resident, Leon James, addressed the Board Composite Version 1 map and noted that combining Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough does not represent a socio-economically integrated area as both areas have distinctly different interests and geography. Additionally, District 18 is spread too far and goes over the population target. Mr. James noted that the district includes areas (e.g. the east and west sides of Boniface) that are distinctly different and represented by different community councils.
- Anchorage resident, Emily Becker, lives in the Airport Heights neighborhood, which is currently District 19. The Board Composite Version 1 map splits the Airport Heights in half and puts Airport Heights Elementary School in District 18; this also puts 70% of families who attend this school in District 20. Cutting the community in this way would weaken the voices of families.
- Anchorage resident, Constance Quinley, stated that Board Composite Version 1 has parts of Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough combined; these communities do not go together. East Anchorage and Eagle River are not compatible and are both distinctively different from one another. Ms. Quinley suggested that if balancing the population for redistricting purposes is needed, JBER citizens should be included rather than East Anchorage.
- Fairbanks resident, Kasey Casort, expressed disappointment in the proposed maps that seem to be gerrymandered. Ms. Casort expressed support for the map that will be submitted by Alaskans for Fair Redistricting and asked the board to reference this map moving forward for her community.
- Juneau resident, Will Muldoon, noted that when you deviate using the “white board approach” to Southeast Alaska districts going from east to west and north to south, the inverse of this creates a non-compact district. If the Southeast Alaska maps in both proposed maps were to stand, Alaska may find itself in litigation over these maps.
- Dyea resident, Kathy Hosford, stated that for the last ten years, Dyea has been grouped with Downtown Juneau and Douglas; this has never made sense to Dyea residents as they believe they have more in common with the northern part of Juneau. Ms. Hosford suggested combining Dyea with District 34 and making Downtown Juneau and Douglas its own district.
- Gulkana resident, James [Squyres](#), noted that there is little in common between the Delta and Whittier communities and each community should be separated to better represent their communities. Mr. [Squyres](#) expressed opposition for the way District 36 was drawn in the proposed maps.
- Anchorage resident, Beverly Churchill, reiterated some points that have been made in prior testimonies: 1) Anchorage and the Mat-Su Borough should not be combined as they are distinctly different communities. 2) Ms. Churchill encouraged the board to review the community councils as they are divided by neighborhood and represents what makes the neighborhoods distinct in Anchorage. 3) It is not in Eagle River’s best interest to be combined with East Anchorage. Ms. Churchill suggested that the board add Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) to Eagle River instead as there are more connections between the two areas.
- Anchorage resident, Jamie Rodriguez, shared some examples in which the proposed maps are gerrymandered. One example shared was in Juneau, Ketchikan, and Anchorage where representatives were taken out of their districts and moved into neighboring districts.
- Anchorage resident, Lynette Pham, noted that East Anchorage and Eagle River are two distinct communities and grouping these two communities together takes away from the voices of the two communities. Additionally, the proposed maps splits Ketchikan into two districts and disconnects the Ketchikan International Airport from the district.
- Chugiak resident, Gretchen Wehmhoff, noted that on the Board Composite Version 2 map, the board is moving in the right direction by separating the Mat-Su Valley from Anchorage and by combining similar areas such as Eklutna, Birchwood, and Chugiak in District 22.

- Anchorage resident, Judith Conte, noted that the proposed maps are not politically neutral. Merging West Anchorage, Spenard, and Downtown Anchorage together as they are in the proposed maps is unacceptable as each of these areas are culturally, demographically, and socio-economically distinct and would benefit from independent representation. Additionally, Anchorage and the Mat-Su Valley are distinctly different on many levels. Ms. Conte urged map drawers to use integrity when drawing maps.
- Fairbanks resident, Lee Drake, testified in response to Robin O'Donoghue's earlier testimony regarding the proposed maps where Mr. O'Donoghue noted that the proposed District 31 was a substantial departure from the current District 5. Mr. O'Donoghue argued that Chena Ridge, Ester, and Goldstream Valley should be one district based on socio-economic integration of the communities with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. Ms. Drake suggested combining Eielson, Salcha, and Moose Creek to be integrated with the westside of the Tanana and Chena Rivers as Salcha and Moose Creek are highly dependent on Eielson Air Force Base. Additionally, Ms. Drake noted the projects that are in the Salcha and Moose Creek areas with strong ties to the academic world.
- Anchorage resident, Forrest McDonald, noted that on the Board Composite Version 2 map, Downtown Anchorage is split three ways to Muldoon, Kincaid, and Midtown; this is too partisan and results in a more stretched out and less compact Anchorage map. Additionally, Mr. McDonald noted that some callers giving public testimony are being coached on their testimonies and are part of political groups that do not represent all of Alaskans' interests. Mr. McDonald encouraged the board to take steps to prevent partisan activist groups from subverting the public process.
- Juneau resident, David Hanna, agreed with Dyea resident, Kathy Hosford, who testified earlier regarding the underrepresentation of the Upperland Canal district.
- Fairbanks resident, Elizabeth Dalton, expressed support for the Fairbanks area in the proposed maps as all the current incumbents remain in their present districts. Additionally Ms. Dalton agreed with Mr. McDonald's sentiments regarding some testifiers being coached on their public testimonies.
- Anchorage resident, David Nees, expressed support for the Board Composite Version 2 map and noted that community councils do not have much influence on the legislative process as they were set up to advise the Anchorage Assembly. Mr. Nees encouraged the board to review how many legislators' districts are changing and using that as a metric to determine whether the maps are gerrymandered.
- Anchorage resident, Robert Hockema, noted that it seems the maps were deliberately drawn with partisan intentions as certain incumbents have been combined in certain districts together. The maps seem to make districts less competitive and forces House majority coalition members to run against each other, thus reducing the amount of incumbents that the House GOP has to run against in the 2022 elections. Mr. Hockema implored the board to reconsider the maps.
- Representative Geran Tarr asked the board to consider holding public testimony outside of business hours as this would be beneficial to Alaskans and give the board an opportunity to hear from more diverse voices in the community.
- Anchorage resident, Yarrow Silvers, addressed the Anchorage portion of the maps which seem to have not been drawn with transparency and without indication of how the board arrived to those maps. Specifically, the way East Anchorage was drawn in the Board Composite Version 1 map has diluted votes and has residents underrepresented. District 19 was drawn in a way that appears to be gerrymandered in favor of an incumbent. Additionally, the Board Composite Version 1 map removes Chianshtnu Park from East Anchorage and places it into Eagle River, indicating that the map does not adequately take socio-economic factors into consideration.
- Petersburg resident, Donna Marsh, urged the board to reconsider the proposed maps and proposed for the board to keep the maps as they are presently drawn, especially Southeast Alaska.

- Anchorage resident, Robin Smith, expressed concern for the proposed maps not currently identifying House district pairings to form the senate districts as the Alaska Constitution requires. Without this being defined, the plan is incomplete. Additionally, Ms. Smith expressed concern for the proposed maps not respecting board and city boundaries, and there does appear to be partisan gerrymandering in the proposed maps.
- Anchorage resident, Bruce Barnsworth, asked the board to think of how a map would look if all individual board members had no allegiance to any political party; doing so would be acting in the spirit of the state's founders.
- Anchorage resident, Brian Hove, noted that in the southside of Turnagain in Anchorage, this area is much more connected to the airport than they are to the downtown area and that drawing the map in a way that connects Turnagain with the downtown area is problematic.
- Anchorage resident, Ellen Jaimes, noted that she noticed that in both maps, several community council districts are split up and asked the board to follow the community council boundaries. Additionally, in the Board Composite Version 1 map, Ms. Jaimes expressed opposition for combining Anchorage with Eagle River and the Mat-Su Borough.

Presentation from Third-Party Map Drafters

Sarah Obed, Tanner Amdur-Clark, and Marna Sanford presented a third-party map drawn in partnership between Doyon, Ltd., Tanana Chiefs Conference, Sealaska, Ahtna, and Fairbanks Native Association.

Ms. Obed introduced the map and noted the following:

- The map was drawn within the guidelines of the Alaska Constitution and includes compactness, contiguity, socio-economic integration, and equal representation.
- The collective also worked to develop rural districts that considers local government and ANSCA regional boundaries.
- Two additional factors were kept in mind during the map drawing process: minimal population deviation and undiluted voting power of the residents; the map has a maximum population deviation of 6.1 percent.
- Boundaries on the map were drawn with respect to natural features such as watersheds, river systems, islands, and coast lines.
- To a practicable extent, communities of interest were combined.
- There are concerns about District 2 in both proposed maps by the board and whether it is visually non-compact due to reasons unrelated to the geography of the coast lines.

Mr. Amdur-Clark and Ms. Sanford reviewed the map with the board. The following clarifications were made:

- Clarification from Mr. Binkley was requested on the Denali Borough, Mat-Su Borough, and Cantwell. The Denali Borough connects with Mat-Su Borough around Cantwell which is part of the Ahtna region.
- Palmer is one district.
- Port Graham and Seldovia are paired in District 37 with the Aleutians and Dillingham as they are maritime-based communities and keeping these communities together keeps them socio-economically integrated. This would make more sense than pulling populations from the interior rural communities that are north of the district.
- Girdwood has conjoined with the northern part of the Kenai Peninsula due to socio-economic integration of the communities. Additionally, Girdwood is serviced by Whittier and has a strong relationship with that community.

Mike Wenstrup and Erin Parker presented a third-party map drawn by the Alaska Democratic Party and noted the following:

- The map consists of 40 House districts containing a cohesive group of voters bound by socio-economic similarities, and adheres to municipal, borough, and city boundaries.
- Accessibility and accurate representation for Alaskans were both priorities in preparing the map.
- Overall, the map has a population deviation of under 10 percent.
- Rural districts were approached in a manner that applies standards of unifying cultural interests to the maximum extent possible in less densely populated areas.

Mike Wenstrup and Erin Parker reviewed the map with the board. The following clarifications were made:

- The group attempted to not break borough boundaries. Any broken boundaries in the map were only broken once.
- Anticipating the arrival of the F-35's at the Eielson Air Force Base, the group tried to be conservative with population deviation in this district while acknowledging that the population will grow. The group attempted to not overpopulate the district, but also attempted to avoid under populating the district by the projected population growth. Ms. Borromeo asked Matt Singer, the board's legal counsel, to give guidance on whether the board should be considering projected changes in population. Mr. Singer advised that the United States Census data is the only population that the board is permitted to consider.
- Turnout and historical partisan responses were reviewed during the map drawing process, but community cohesive was a priority throughout. The map adheres to the Alaska Constitution guidelines.

Steve Colligan and Randy Ruedrich presented a third-party map drawn by Alaskans for Fair and Equitable Redistricting. The following items were noted:

- The map can be viewed on the Alaskans for Fair and Equitable Redistricting website.
- The Alaska Constitution states that districts must be relatively integrated in socio-economic areas; the courts have found that any borough meets these criteria. Therefore, everything in a borough is equally socio-economically integrated and the group looked at natural manmade barriers to create boundaries within the map.
- Currently, the map has an overall population deviation of 3.36 percent.
- While the rest of the state has a population surplus, Southeast Alaska and Fairbanks have a population deficit. Thus, Fairbanks and Southeast Alaska must be treated uniquely.
- Mr. Ruedrich noted that Saxman is more closely associated with Sitka from a socio-economic standpoint. Mr. Binkley answered that after presenting the board's proposed plans, about 35 residents from Ketchikan commented that Saxman is more socio-economically connected to Ketchikan than Sitka. Mr. Ruedrich noted that they will continue to work with the board to improve their map.
- The plan was audited to ensure that no blocks were left out in the process.
- Mr. Singer noted that he does not recall that the Alaska Supreme Court has weighed in on prioritizing rural boundaries versus ANCSA boundaries.

Mr. Ruedrich reviewed the map with the board. The following items were clarified:

- No political data was used to draw the maps, only census data was used.
- The group worked with their Alaska Native corporation partners to give feedback on the maps during the process.

Mike Brown, Manager of the Mat-Su Borough, presented a third-party map and noted the following:

- The Mat-Su Borough recently adopted a resolution directing Mr. Brown to develop a state redistricting plan that allocated the borough with 6 house districts and 3 senate districts. Specifically, the borough is requesting that the board adopt the following districts for the borough: Eastern district, Goose Bay district, Houston northwest district (this district can be paired with the Denali borough), Wasilla district, Palmer district, and a Southern district between Palmer and Wasilla.
- If the board determines it is necessary to include additional populations to areas extending outside of the borough, the borough supports including residents to the east toward Glenallen, but not toward Anchorage.
- If boundaries of the borough must be crossed, the borough prefers to cross to the east where it does not extend into a separate municipality.
- Mr. Brown asked the board to consider combining the areas east of Palmer (Butte, Lazy Mountain, and Knik River) with the district that extends east to Sutton as this combination closely aligns with how residents are represented at the local government.
- The borough is not opposed to pairing Valdez with communities east of the Mat-Su Borough.

Robin O'Donoghue and David Dunsmore presented a third-party map drawn by Alaskans for Fair Redistricting and noted the following:

- Mr. O'Donoghue read a letter from organization's chair, Joelle Hall, to the board.
- The group's process included preliminary research using data from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, weekly coalition meetings, educational public outreach to increase engagement in the process, regional mapping input sessions, and collaboration with existing coalitions and organizations.
- The largest deviation upward is 2.67 percent and the largest downward deviation is 2.21 percent.
- The maps respect borough, municipality, and city boundaries while ensuring that communities are fully represented. The Anchorage, Matanuska Susitna, Fairbanks, and Fairbanks North Star boundaries were broken once, the Kenai Peninsula boundary was broken twice, and the Ketchikan Gateway boundary was not broken.

Mr. Dunsmore reviewed the map and the key differences between the group's plan and the board's proposed plans.

Senator Tom Begich presented a third-party map drawn by the Senate Minority Caucus and noted the following:

- This is not to be construed as an endorsement of the group, but rather as an example of how a map may meet the constitutional requirements that are before the board.
- The plan has an overall deviation of 3.14 percent which was a result of moving the city of Deering into District 39 from District 40.
- The map meets or exceeds the required deviation standards that have been set.
- By retaining boroughs and only going beyond boroughs to address population surplus, socio-economic standards are adhered to as recognized in court decisions.
- Maps that have been presented by other parties reduce the voting power of the Fairbanks North Star Borough and gives more voting power to other communities. Packing 5 districts into the Fairbanks North Star Borough could lead to litigation. This map resolves that issue.
- Senator Begich referred to the language in the Hickel v. Southeast Conference case that states that "a municipality should not be made to contribute so much of its population to

districts centered elsewhere that it is deprived of representation which is justified by its population.”

- The map maintains contiguity between all House districts.
- If the board chose to opt for a smaller deviation number in rural districts, the board could shift Deering into District 39 rather than District 40.
- Districts 37 through 40 on the map all fall within the allowable deviation and are significantly more balanced in population than the wider deviations shown in other presented maps. The map also associates the districts with their hub communities, does not violate rural boundaries, and follows the Yukon and Kuskokwim rivers.

Senator Begich reviewed the map with the board. The following clarifications were made:

- The map shows that you can meet all the constitutional obligations at the highest possible standards with low deviations, compactness, contiguity, and with respect to socio-economic boundaries. It is not endorsed by the Senate Minority Caucus, but all members of the caucus reviewed, commented, and drew the map prior to the presentation of the map.
- Senator Begich gave the rationale behind including Cordova in District 6: In prior redistricting processes, Cordova was included in interior districts. The inclusion of Cordova and/or Valdez can be done through the Richardson Highway. In terms of population, Cordova is an unorganized borough, therefore it can be included in an area that would include interior districts while still being held up constitutionally. Additionally, from a process standpoint, once the original map is drawn, it is adjusted according to compactness, contiguity, and socio-economic integration, then the map is adjusted to meet deviations. Finally, additional populations are found for the interior district to maintain the coherence and integrity of the southeast, northwest, and southwest sections of the map. Also, including Cordova in District 6 is a way to include the Doyon villages within a district.
- Mr. Binkley requested that Senator Begich provide the map’s senate pairings.

Public Testimony

Public comment was given as follows:

- Anchorage resident, Steve Aufrecht, made the following recommendations to the board: 1) Each board member should publicly record all involvement of non-board members with map drawing and how they’ve helped, 2) the board should make a policy to not protect and/or target incumbents, and 3) board members should not consult with non-board members regarding map drawing except in public meetings, and if the board receives information or suggestions about map drawing from the public, they should provide a written report of this for the public to be notified.
- Glenallen resident, Karen Linnell, expressed concern for the representation of the unorganized boroughs and combining them with pieces of other boroughs with larger communities. This results in the rural communities’ voices being lost.
- JBER resident, Major Felicia Wilson, thanked the board for considering the public’s questions and concerns.

Next Steps

The following next steps were identified:

- The board will hold a public meeting on September 20, 2021; this will be the last meeting prior to entering the public outreach phase. Public testimony will be taken at the beginning and end of the meeting and third-party maps will be discussed with potential changes made to the board’s initially proposed maps.

- The public outreach phase will begin on September 27, 2021. Each visit will generally consist of two board members and one staff member with a goal of holding hearings in the evenings. The board intends to visit 20 to 30 communities over the next month.
- Ms. Marcum asked that all testifiers follow up verbal testimonies with a written testimony. Written testimonies can be provided on the website after which it is uploaded to a database for the board and staff to easily access.
- The board agreed to work with staff over the weekend to further analyze the third-party maps and re-enter into a public session on September 20, 2021. The board intends to adopt the maps as soon as possible, but they may find that more time is needed to review and discuss the maps prior to making a final decision. Thus, the board agreed not to commit to a certain date for adoption of the maps.
- Ms. Marcum requested guidance from the board's legal counsel during the September 20th public session. An executive session will be placed onto the agenda for the board to receive guidance.
- Mr. Torkelson cautioned the board members about the public outreach schedule and noted the five-week window the board currently must reach 20 to 30 communities, equaling 5 to 6 communities per week. The schedule may be adjusted as needed, although there is some pressure for the board to reach a resolution soon.

Adjournment

Ms. Borromeo moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Marcum seconded the motion.

The board adjourned at 3:17 p.m.