

# Mid-decade Redistricting

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## The Issue

Because Trump fears that the U.S. House of Representatives will have a Democratic majority after the 2026 election, he asked Texas’s governor to redraw the state’s electoral map mid-decade in order to create 5 additional Republican-leaning congressional districts. Drawing electoral maps has generally taken place once per decade after the U.S. Census results are known. Texas complied with Trump’s request and immediately revised its congressional district map, in an attempt to gain 5 more Republican-leaning districts and therefore 5 fewer Democratic-leaning districts.

In response to this, California’s governor introduced a ballot initiative (“Proposition 50”) to allow suspension of the state’s citizen redistricting law and conduct mid-decade redistricting when other states indulge in extreme gerrymandering to benefit a particular party. This proposition passed handily. California plans to redistrict to create 5 more Democratic-leaning, and therefore 5 fewer Republican-leaning, congressional districts.

It is worth noting that different states have different laws regarding redistricting. California, like Colorado, has an independent citizen redistricting commission that draws its congressional maps, so redistricting requires an extra step to suspend the usual process. In other states, like Texas, the legislature controls the redistricting process and does not need a constitutional amendment to redraw district maps.

## The National Scene

Mid-decade redistricting to benefit a particular political party is most likely to succeed in states with a single party “trifecta,” when the governor and both houses of the legislature are controlled by one party. There are now calls for additional states with single-party trifectas to perform mid-decade redistricting, essentially gerrymandering, to favor a particular party. Several Republican trifecta states have already done this.

Democrats have 15 trifecta states with 163 U.S. House seats, while Republicans have 23 trifecta states with 176 House seats. The table below shows the Democratic trifecta states. The number of Republican seats in each state shows the potential for redistricting to benefit the Democratic party.

State	Total House Seats	Democratic Seats	Republican Seats
California	52	43	9
Colorado	8	4	4
Connecticut	5	5	0
Delaware	1	1	0

<b>Hawaii</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Illinois</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Maine</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Maryland</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>New Mexico</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>New York</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Oregon</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Rhode Island</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Washington</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>

Among Democratic trifectas, 7 states have no Republicans in House seats, making redistricting pointless. Another 3 Democratic states have only 1 or 2 House seats held by Republicans, making redistricting to create more Democratic seats very difficult. Two Democratic trifecta states, IL and NJ, have 3 Republican seats; one state, CO, has 4; and only 2 states, CA and NY, have more than 4. It is easier to redraw an electoral map to favor one party when there is a large Congressional delegation. For instance, there are 9 Republicans among California’s 52 representatives and 7 among New York’s 26. In Texas, a Republican trifecta, there are 11 Democrats among its 38 representatives.

### **The Situation in Colorado**

A cursory look at Table 1 would suggest that Colorado, with 4 Republican seats, might be ideal for redistricting, but it’s more complex than this table suggests. First, Colorado’s constitution requires that redistricting occur only once per decade, after Census results are available. Once census results are known, a constitutionally established citizens commission is tasked with redrawing U.S. House of Representatives districts as well as state Senate and House districts. Redrawing Colorado’s Congressional district map mid-decade would require a constitutional amendment setting aside this once-per-decade requirement. The current Attorney General supports such an amendment and is working to get it on the 2026 ballot. Even if it succeeds, it could not affect the 2026 congressional results, but it could provide for mid-decade redrawing of the map after 2026.

Colorado has a Democratic trifecta in 2025. Over its history, Colorado has rarely had a trifecta at all, and when it has, it has usually been Republican. Its current Congressional delegation now includes 4 Republican House members and 4 Democratic House members. It is understandable that Democrats, looking at the political landscape from a national perspective, would view Colorado as fertile ground for gerrymandering in order to create another Democratic-leaning U.S. House district, thereby reducing the number of Republican-leaning districts. After all, only 2 other Democratic trifectas have more Republican seats than Colorado—New York and California.

## Colorado’s Problems with Mid-decade Redistricting

### Colorado’s History

Colorado’s history of Democratic control is not as long as California’s. Until 2008, Colorado was a reliably Republican state, at least at the federal level. As of 2025, the number of Democrats among registered voters exceeds the number of Republicans by only 101,000 voters or 2.5 percentage points. Furthermore, as Table 2 shows, Democrats and Republicans together account for only 48.1 percent of registered voters, meaning an unusually high proportion of active voters – 49.8%-- are unaffiliated (a few are members of small parties, e.g., Green, Libertarian). This state-level ratio is replicated across most counties. We have no idea how they are likely to vote. Also, the state’s senate was majority Republican as recently as 2017.

### Then There are the Numbers

Among all the Democratic trifecta states with at least one Republican representative, in only two (CO and OR) is the excess of Democratic voters over Republican voters fewer than 800,000 people. Colorado accounts for the smallest difference, at about 101,000; Oregon is next lowest with 261,000. See Table 2. For these two states, the ability to expand the number of Democratic-leaning house seats is very limited. The numeric difference between Republicans and Democrats is very, very thin. It’s useful to remember that if you reduce the number of Democrats in a solidly blue district in order to increase the number of Democrats in a somewhat red district, you risk losing both to Republicans.

<b>State (#R seats)</b>	<b># Dems</b>	<b>% Dems</b>	<b># Reps</b>	<b>% Reps</b>	<b># Dems less Reps</b>
California (9)	10,396,792	44.8	5,896,203	25.4	4,500,589
Colorado (4)	1,017,086	25.3	916,004	22.8	101,082
Illinois (3)	3,044,805	37.7	2,223,314	27.5	821,491
Maryland (1)	2,231,908	51.7	1,030,415	23.9	1,201,493
New Jersey (3)	2,391,043	38.6	1,568,949	25.3	822,094
New York (7)	5,857,675	47.4	2,817,847	22.8	3,039,828
Oregon (1)	990,000	32.4	729,189	23.9	260,811
Washington (2)	2,713,178	52.3	1,432,497	27.6	1,280,681

Source: Independent Voter Project: <https://independentvoterproject.org/voter-stats>

### The Distribution of Democratic Voters

In addition to the slim Democratic majority in Colorado, there is another issue: the distribution of Democratic voters around the state.

- Democrats are in the majority in Denver and most of its suburbs, the primary exception being Douglas County, which is heavily Republican.
- Democrats are in the majority in a few population centers in different parts of the state, like Larimer County in northern CO, Pueblo County in southern CO, and most of the

small counties with ski areas in the mountains west of Denver. But many of these majorities are thin.

- Republicans are in the majority in virtually all rural areas of the state (with the exception of a few counties with ski areas). That is pretty much the entire Western Slope and the entire eastern plains.
- Republicans have a strong majority in Colorado Springs, one of the few large cities outside the Denver area.

This makes drawing districts that don't look like blue islands in a sea of red quite challenging. Moreover, keeping communities of interest together, which is a goal of redistricting in Colorado's constitution, could be well-nigh impossible.

### **An Alternative**

House district 8 is Colorado's newest district, created by the state's redistricting commission after the 2020 U.S. census. It is the most competitive district in Colorado, evidenced by the fact that a Democrat won that seat in 2022 and a Republican won it in 2024, each time by a very small margin. **It is likely that Democrats' efforts at flipping that seat to Democratic would be more fruitful than gerrymandering the state's entire congressional map for an uncertain result.**