

## **Importance of Certain Geographic Political Boundaries as Communities of Interest in Redistricting**

### **Questions:**

- When redistricting for a certain level of government (Congress, State House, County Commission) when is it most important to treat a unit of lower government or geography as a community of interest?
- When does it matter more or less of “splitting” counties, municipalities, school districts across multiple districts of the higher level being drawn?
- What geographic units matter much less?
- What are the obstacles to respecting other political boundaries when their preservation matters more?

### **Position:**

- When the level of government being redistricted has substantial and important influence over the lower political unit, the importance of minimizing splits or division is of substantial importance.
- The political control over the lower level of government by the higher level of government creates one form of a “Community of Interest.”

### **Example for Discussion:**

The treatment of counties in post-2020 redistricting in Alabama

- Especially for the four bodies redrawn by the Alabama Legislature
  1. Seven (7) Congressional Districts
  2. Eight (8) State School Board Districts
  3. Thirty-five (35) Alabama State Senate Districts
  4. One Hundred five (105) Alabama House Districts
- The Legislative Redistricting Committee adopted a common set of guidelines for the redistricting of all four bodies (attached)
- Other than the convenience of a county having a single U.S. Representative, there is little “control” the U.S. House exercises over counties that is not relevant to the state as a whole. This key misperception caused some to draft remedial Congressional plans that emphasized minimizing county splits.
- However, Alabama has essentially no home rule for local governments and counties must look to their State Legislative delegations for a multitude of basic governmental functions.
  1. The Legislature has standing committees for local legislation for many larger counties.
  2. A Legislator (House or Senate member) is on a given county’s Committee if any portion of their district is in the county.

### Alabama (1901) Constitutional Requirements

- Limits Alabama to 105 House Members and 35 Senators
- **Section 199:** It shall be the duty of the legislature at its first session after the taking of the decennial census of the United States in the year nineteen hundred and ten, and after each subsequent decennial census, to fix by law the number of representatives and apportion them among the several counties of the state, according to the number of inhabitants in them, respectively; provided, that each county shall be entitled to at least one representative. [Note: For smallest county to be proportionally whole district, Alabama would need 650 House seats]
- **Section 200:** It shall be the duty of the legislature at its first session after taking of the decennial census of the United States in the year nineteen hundred and ten, and after each subsequent decennial census, to fix by law the number of senators, and to divide the state into as many senatorial districts as there are senators, which districts shall be as nearly equal to each other in the number of inhabitants as may be, and each shall be entitled to one senator, and no more; and such districts, when formed, shall not be changed until the next apportioning session of the legislature, after the next decennial census of the United States shall have been taken; provided, that counties created after the next preceding apportioning session of the legislature may be attached to senatorial districts. No county shall be divided between two districts, and no district shall be made up of two or more counties not contiguous to each other.

**TASK:** Best align county delegations by allocation whole districts where possible (subject to relevant Federal regulations & precedent)

**Alabama Population Overview & District Size**

<b>TOTAL POP</b>	<b>5,024,279</b>	
Hispanic of Any Race POP	264,047	5.3%
NH - White POP	3,171,351	63.1%
NH - Black or AfAm POP	1,288,159	25.6%
NH - All Other Races POP	300,722	6.0%
<b>TOTAL VAP</b>	<b>3,917,166</b>	
Hispanic of Any Race VAP	166,856	4.3%
NH White VAP	2,564,544	65.5%
NH Black VAP	976,732	24.9%
NH - All Other Races VAP	209,034	5.3%

Total Population	5,024,279
Perfect House District	47,850
Minimum House	45,458
Max House	50,243

- State has 67 counties ranging in Population from 7,730 to 674,721
- AL Legislature adopted +/- 5% for district variance

**Methodology Used for “Proof of Concept”**

1. Any County that can be “self-contained” with fixed number of whole districts
2. Any county with Population > Minimum District Size, Receives District(s)
3. Combine Residuals from #2 with Counties < Minimum for 1 District

**Potential Ideal Configuration with Methodology**

	Counties	Districts	Population	Residual Pop Min	Residual Pop Max
Self Contained	9	48	2,270,009		
Contain 1+ District	19	32	1,913,706	305,930	459,050
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>4,183,715</b>	<b>305,930</b>	<b>459,050</b>
Less 1 District	39	25	840,564		

- 30 of 80 Initial Districts with White VAP < 45%
- 36% of VAP in Counties < 1 District Non-White

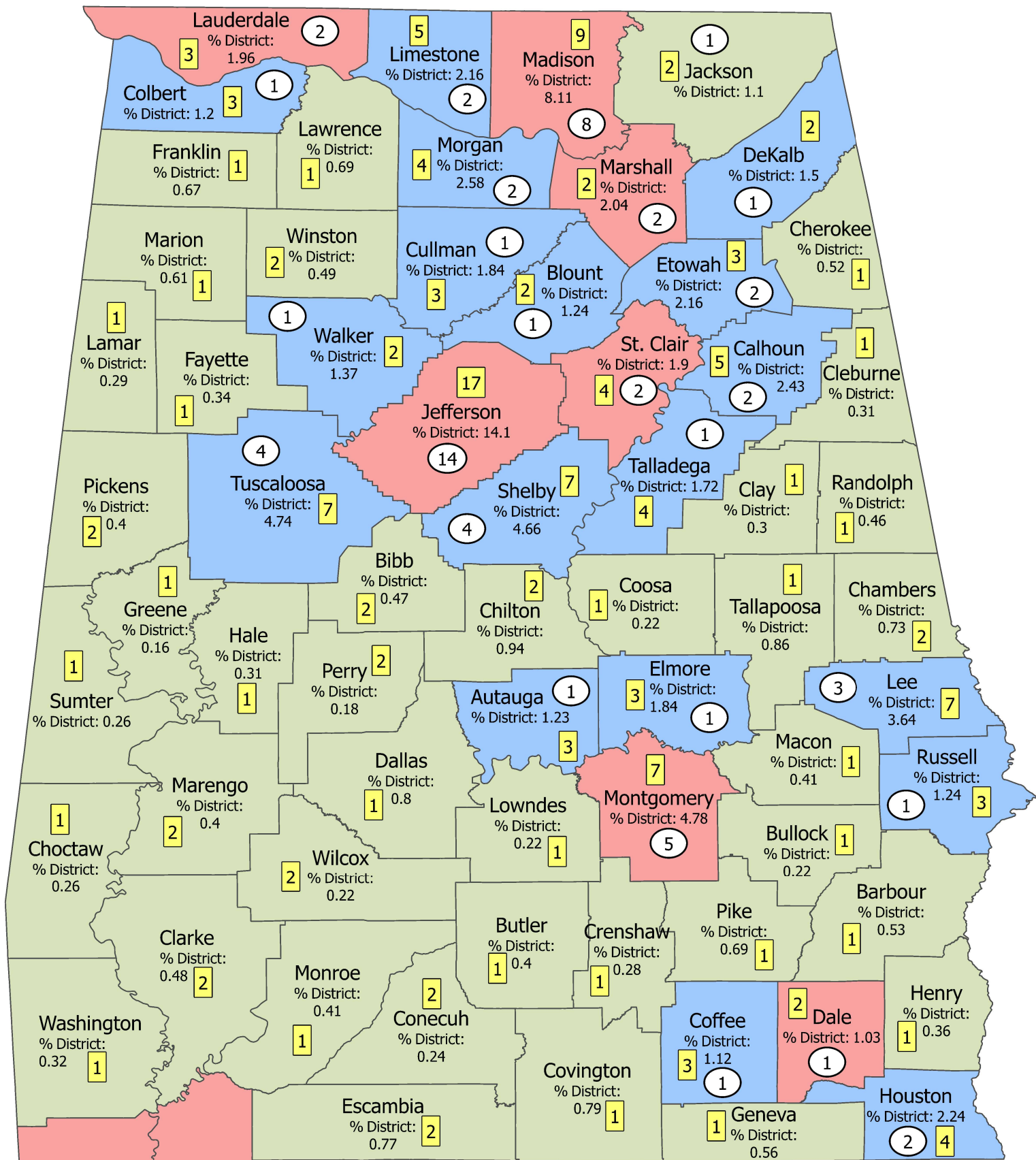
## Actual 2023 Alabama State House Data

	Districts	Minimum Race Percent VAP	Maximum Race %	Avg Race %
White VAP > 50%	77	52.6%	92.8%	76.9%
BVAP > 50%	26	50.5%	69.0%	56.8%
Other	2			

- Only 1 county is “self-contained” with 2 districts.
- There are 182 combinations of District and County
- Following County-level map shows number of “perfect districts” based on population.
- Number in yellow box = number of districts actually in county
- Number of districts in white circles show whole districts that should be allocated to county based on population.

### Major Issues in Implementation & Impact on Representation

- Incumbent protection was driving factor for Legislature.
- Practice of using more conservative white populations coupled with more progressive counties continues history of rural counties having disproportionate influence.
- Substantial lack of majority-minority districts and “opportunity” districts in areas that are experiencing high growth and rapidly diversifying populations.



### Legend

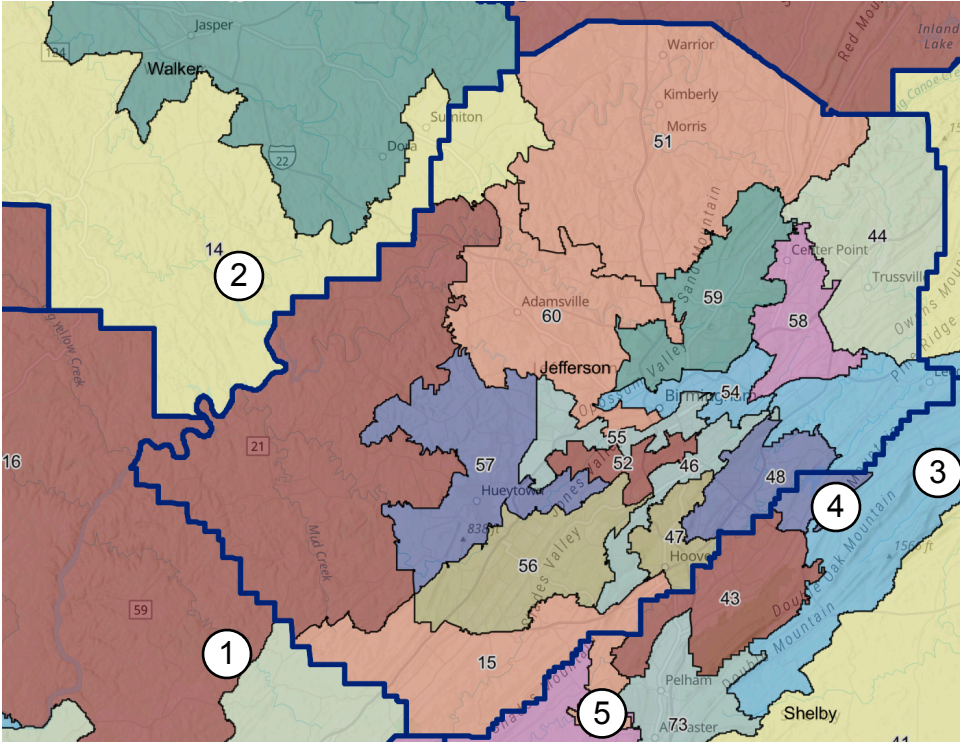
#### Alabama Counties

#### Category

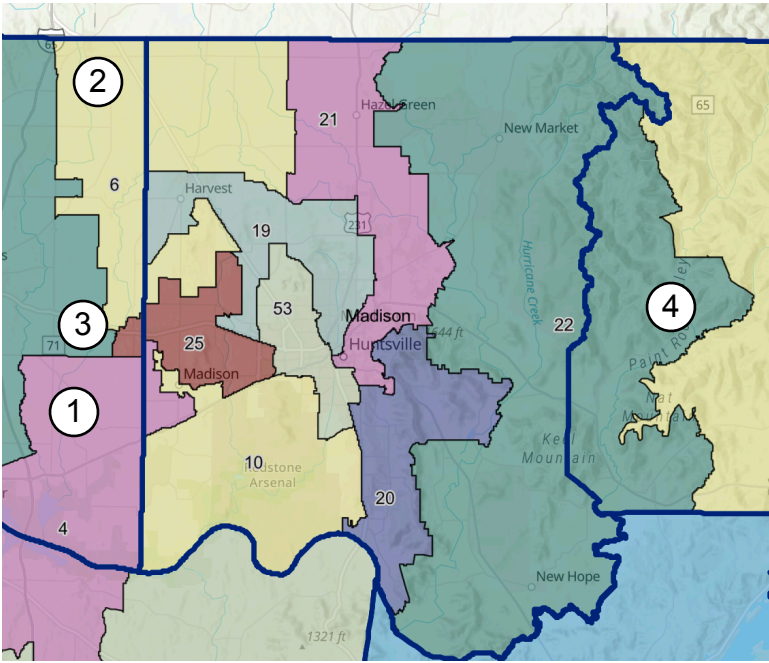
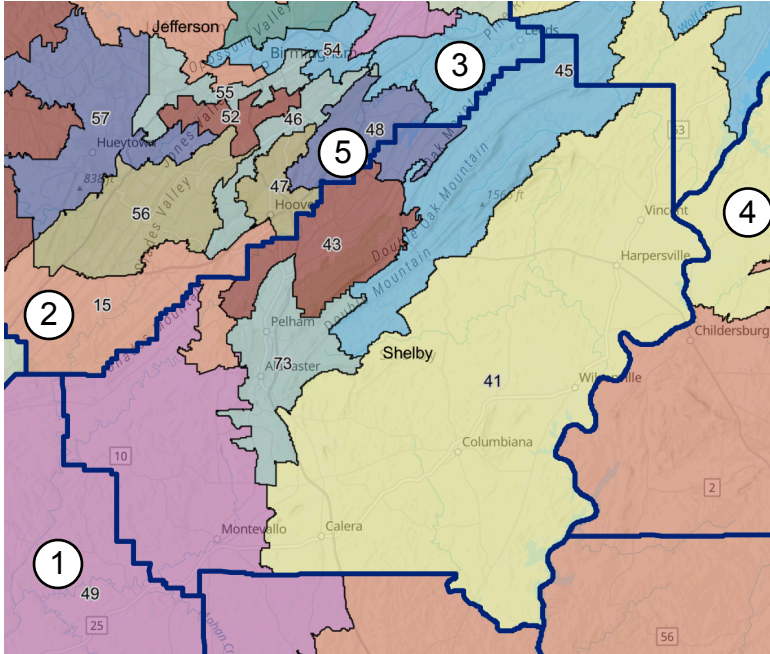
- < 1 District
- > 1 District
- Self Contained

### Jefferson County - Enacted

*Numbers show where multiple districts split counties*



### Shelby County - Enacted



### Madison County - Enacted