

## *Auditor's Report*

TO: COUNTY COUNCIL  
FROM: F. MILENE HENLEY, AUDITOR  
SUBJECT: Redistricting  
FOR MEETING OF: Tuesday, December 14, 2010

### ISSUE

The nation will be re-drawing legislative districts and voting precincts during 2011 and 2012, based on the information derived from the 2010 national census. San Juan County will participate with local redistricting and re-precincting. This report is an overview of that process for informational purposes only. No action is required at this time.

### ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – List of Existing San Juan County Precincts  
Attachment B – Map of Existing San Juan County Precincts  
Attachment C – District to Precinct Cross-Reference  
Attachment D – Map of Existing San Juan County Council Districts  
Attachment E – Redistricting Timeline

### BACKGROUND

Every ten years the US Government conducts a national census of the population. The census serves many purposes, but one of its main purposes is to re-draw district lines for legislative and other governing districts to reflect changes in population. Counting just from the beginning of 2010—and the census itself begins long before the beginning of 2010—the entire process takes almost two and a half years. Players in the re-districting and re-precincting processes include the State Redistricting Commission, local jurisdictions, county legislative authorities, and county election administrators. The roles of each of these, and the timeline for establishing new district and precinct boundaries, will be discussed in this report.

### PHASES

The redistricting process may be thought of in 3 phases. Phase 1 is the preparatory phase. Extending from 2010 through the middle of May 2011, it is the time during which county elections offices review existing precinct and district boundaries and open communication

with stakeholders. Ideally, this phase ends with clean voter registration records and an “ideal” re-precincting plan.

Phase 2, from the middle of May 2011 through the end of 2011, is the period when district lines are re-drawn. All jurisdictions which have internal districts, including the County, are responsible for reapportionment of those districts consistent with not only equal population size, but also “communities of related and mutual interest.”

Phase 3, from January 1 through May 4, 2012, is the period during which the state redistricting plan is adopted and local boundary and precinct changes are finalized. All boundary changes must be complete by 30 days prior to the opening of candidate filing week.

## PHASE 1 – PREPARATION

Phase 1 is a preparation time for county elections offices. It may begin any time in 2010 or 2011. As a practical matter, as a small county with a small staff, San Juan County will not begin to work on this phase until 2011. We are hoping for no spring elections to allow us the necessary time to complete it.

Voter Registration. Preparation begins with reviewing voter registration files. In particular, district and precinct boundaries must be reviewed. District boundaries include not only county districts, but also internal districts of all other jurisdictions within the county. Street files of all registered voters will be reviewed for completeness, accuracy, and format. USPS address standards are typically used. Note that the longer a voter has been registered, the more likely the registration is to have addressing and other errors.

Precincts. Once our voter registration data is cleaned up, the next target is to re-design precincts. Precincts exist to make elections run smoothly. They organize voters into groups that share geography and community, and provide an orderly way of issuing the correct ballot to each voter. Sometimes political subdivisions cause precincts to have subdivisions which require different “ballot styles.” A ballot style is a unique ballot which represents a combination of races and issues which apply only to voters in a certain geographic area. For example, the Town of Friday Harbor is comprised of two precincts, yet all Town voters receive the same ballot style, because every jurisdiction that serves any part of the Town serves all of it. At the other extreme, tiny Blakely and Decatur islands comprise a single precinct, but have two ballot styles, because the islands are in different school districts. Attachment C cross references districts with precincts, and gives a sense of how many ballot styles there might be in any given election. In the 2009 general election, San Juan County had 21 different ballot styles.

Precinct boundaries, as with district boundaries, ideally follow clear, visible physical features, such as streets, railroads, or rivers. San Juan County’s rural nature can make precinct lines hard to identify; we have few roads, and fence lines and even property boundaries can shift over time. Other boundaries are as clear as the edge of an island. All will need to be examined during 2011 for clarity and accuracy.

Precincts have both numbers and names. Numbers are required by law, and are easier for computers to deal with, but names lend familiarity to the precincts. Our current precinct numbers and names are included as Attachment A; a precinct map is included as Attachment B. The current numbering and naming system is not particularly logical—for example, Precinct 3 is named Orcas 4, and Precinct 5 is named Orcas 3—and one change we know we will be making is to re-name and re-number precincts.

Finally, precincts are currently limited by law to no more than 900 registered voters. Many of ours are over that limit, as are many in many other counties. This disparity is an outgrowth of the state's transition to vote-by-mail. The statutes exempt "absentee voters" from the 900 count. All voters are now "absentee," but most counties no longer track them as absentee voters. Legislation has been proposed in the past and will be proposed again in 2011 to resolve that problem, but for planning purposes we are assuming that the limit will remain. For this reason, as well as because of increased population over the last 10 years, we know that we will be increasing the number of precincts in the county.

Some of these changes are long overdue. In reviewing past precinct changes, the Elections Supervisor learned that no changes were made to precincts following the 2000 census.

The goal of the Elections Office is to clean up existing precincts and re-draw "ideal" precincts in the spring of 2011. Final precinct divisions will depend on the County's new districting plan, but early work on precincts can save time later on for both the districting committee and elections staff.

Stakeholders. Elections will be at the center of the redistricting effort, but the process will involve many jurisdictions and departments. The third part—third on the list, but not third chronologically—of Phase 1 involves opening lines of communication with all stakeholders in the redistricting process. Early in the year we will contact the commissions of all jurisdictions in the county to solicit their assistance in clarifying their district boundaries. This task is easier in this county than in many because of our island nature: many of our districts have boundaries which are coincident with shorelines. On the other hand, many do not. For example, all islands, even the small ones, are included in some school district. Port districts may or may not include outer islands. This is our decennial opportunity to make sure we have defined all district borders correctly, and to verify that information with the districts.

Other stakeholders in the process will include other county departments, including Council, Public Works (especially GIS), and the County Assessor. We will work to keep all interested parties informed of our progress, and our needs, throughout.

The Next Step. The State Redistricting Commission will be appointed in January of 2011, and will receive Federal census data from the US Census Bureau no later than April 1. The State then has 45 days—until May 16, 2011—to deliver census data to local jurisdictions. With the delivery of data to the counties, Phase 2 begins.

## PHASE 2 – REDISTRICTING

During Phase 2, all local jurisdictions with internal districts are responsible for the reapportionment of those internal districts. In San Juan County, there are only three such districts: the County, the Port of Friday Harbor, and the Orcas Island School District. This discussion will focus on the County's redistricting process, but with the understanding that the Port and Orcas Schools will be going through a similar process, and that elections staff will be assisting them, as well.

County Redistricting Plan. With Phase 2, the Council gets involved. The charter describes the Council's role vis-à-vis redistricting in Section 4.34:

### **Section 4.34 - Legislative Body - Districting Committee**

- (1) Commencing with the 2010 census, within sixty days after each federal decennial census data is received from the State Redistricting Commission or its successor, a six (6) member Districting Committee, consisting of one (1) member from each Legislative District, shall be appointed by the Legislative Body. Members of the Districting Committee shall:
  - (a) Serve without salary but shall be compensated for reasonable-out-of-pocket expenses.
  - (b) Meet within thirty days of its appointment to draw a redistricting plan for the county that shall be submitted to the Legislative Body for adoption following a public hearing.
- (2) No later than eight months after receipt of the census data, the Legislative Body shall adopt a districting plan by ordinance.

San Juan County's redistricting task will be easier than that of many counties. We can be reasonably certain, for example, that the entire County will be in one Congressional district and in one state legislative district. Our redistricting will be limited to Council districts only. Existing Council Districts are shown in Attachment D.

The primary goal of districting is to ensure that each district comprises as nearly as possible equal portions of the population of the county. As with precincts, populations of similar communities and interests should, to the extent possible, be kept together. Boundaries should follow clear, visible geographical features. Elections staff will be available to assist the districting committee—and the districting committees of the other multi-district jurisdictions in the county—with this process.

Meetings of the committee are public and must be duly noticed. In addition, the County must hold at least one public hearing on the redistricting plan at least one week before adoption of the plan.

Precinct Plan. Once the redistricting plan is adopted by Council, elections staff will begin planning district and precinct boundary adjustments. Solid preparatory work done during Phase 1 will pay off at this point of Phase 2. Once drawn, these draft precinct lines will be reviewed with political parties as well as with Council members. Once tentative agreement is reached, it is recommended that all maps be forwarded to the County's GIS department for mapping revisions. Final precinct lines must be adopted by Council.

Eight months may seem like a long time, but.... Statute (RCW 29A.16.050) says that by the eighth month after receipt of the data, the governing body must prepare a plan for redistricting. But there are several steps to the process, and time will be an issue.

First, neither the charter nor statute address who may serve on the county's districting committee. The State Constitution offers some guidance, in the limitations that it places on members of the State Redistricting Commission:

No elected official and no person elected to legislative district, county, or state political party office may serve on the commission. A commission member shall not have been an elected official and shall not have been an elected legislative district, county, or state political party officer within two years of his or her appointment to the commission. (WA Constitution Article II Section 4.3 (3))

The Council would be well-advised to agree on the qualifications of and procedure for selecting county redistricting committee members long before those members must be appointed.

Second, the charter says that the Council must appoint a districting committee within 60 days of receiving census data from the state. Data will be received by May 16; that nominally gives the Council until July 15 to appoint a committee. However, if the Council were to wait 60 days to appoint its districting committee, the committee would lose two months of valuable time to develop the districting plan.

Third, after adoption of the districting plan, a precincting plan must also be adopted. The precincting plan leads us into the third and final phase of redistricting, and will once again require a concerted effort on the part of elections staff.

For all these reasons, I recommend that the Council:

1. Agree on a procedure for appointing districting committee members in the first quarter of the year,
2. Be prepared to make its appointment of the districting committee by the end of May, after the census data is delivered from the state in mid-May, and
3. Request that the plan be prepared in time for adoption by the end of November, rather than December, giving elections staff time to work on precincts during December.

### PHASE 3 – COMPLETING THE PROCESS

All local plans must be submitted to the County Auditor by December 31, 2011. The State plan must be submitted to the Legislature by January 1, 2012. The Legislature has until February 10 to make any changes. If the legislature makes no changes, the plan goes into effect on that date.

Work shifts back to the county elections offices at that time. All adopted district and precinct plans have to be entered into the counties' voter registration data bases by 30 days prior to

candidate filing, which opens June 4, 2012. Legislation proposed for 2011 would move candidate filing two weeks earlier in the year, beginning in 2012. If that legislation passes, the deadline for finalizing district and precinct changes will also be two weeks earlier.

## CHARTER REVIEW

At the same time that San Juan County Elections is finalizing district and precinct plans, a newly elected Charter Review Commission will be meeting. It is possible that the commission could recommend changes to the number or the location of districts in the county. Any change recommended by the commission would, of course, have to be adopted by a vote of the people. But it is worth noting that if the result of the charter's first review is a change in districts, we may have to go through much of the same districting effort in 2013 as we will in 2011.

## RESOURCES

Most elections offices across the state increase staffing during redistricting. San Juan County Elections did not request any increase in staffing, though we did request that we not temporarily reduce staffing, as we did in the last odd year. We have a great elections staff, and they are committed to completing this project on a timely basis. If necessary, the Auditor will shift some help from the accounting or customer service divisions of the office to assist. But it will undoubtedly be a challenge to complete the work before us, and no one in this department has been through it before.

We will also require assistance from other departments, in particular, the Assessor and GIS. We will need the assistance of the Assessor's cartographer with legal descriptions; in precinct review, in district boundaries, and in precinct finalization, GIS assistance will be essential. We have no budget to pay for these interdepartmental services. It is my hope that the Council, the Administrator, the Assessor, and the Public Works Director will work with us to ensure that we get the help that we need.

The good news is that staff time is probably the only resource we need.

## CONCLUSION

I have included as Attachment E a timeline for redistricting. Although no action is required of the Council at this time, I recommend that key dates be entered into the Council calendar now. The Auditor and Elections Office will work closely with the Council and other interested departments to keep you apprised of our progress and our needs through the coming year.

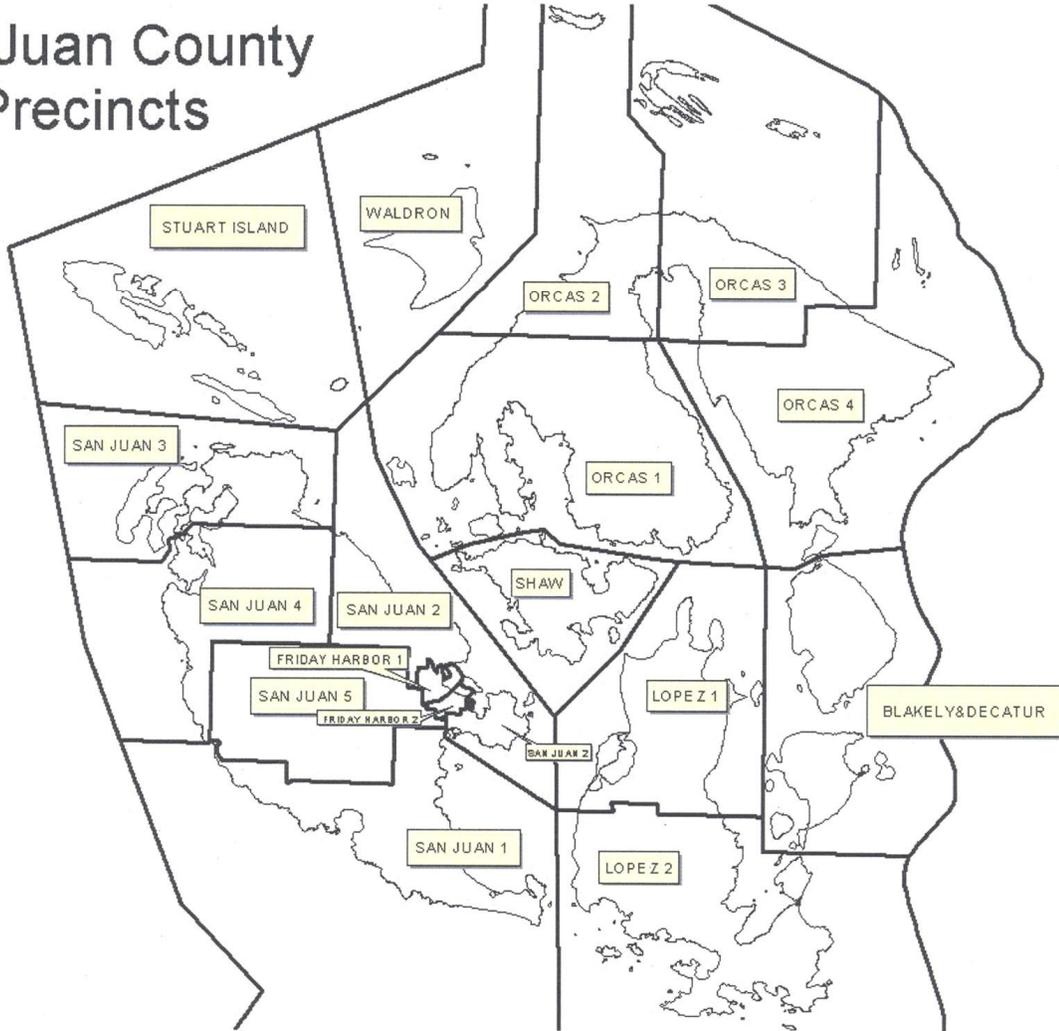
It's an exciting process, and we're excited to be here at the right time to get to participate in it.

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**List of Existing San Juan County Precincts**

<b>Precinct #</b>	<b>Precinct Name</b>
001	Blakely/Decatur
002	Orcas 1
003	Orcas 4
004	Orcas 2
005	Orcas 3
006	Lopez 1
007	Lopez 2
008	Shaw
009	Stuart
010	San Juan 1
011	San Juan 2
012	San Juan 3
013	San Juan 4
014	San Juan 5
015	Waldron
101	FH 1 N & W
102	FH 2 S & E

**ATTACHMENT B**  
**Map of Existing San Juan County Precincts**

**San Juan County  
Precincts**





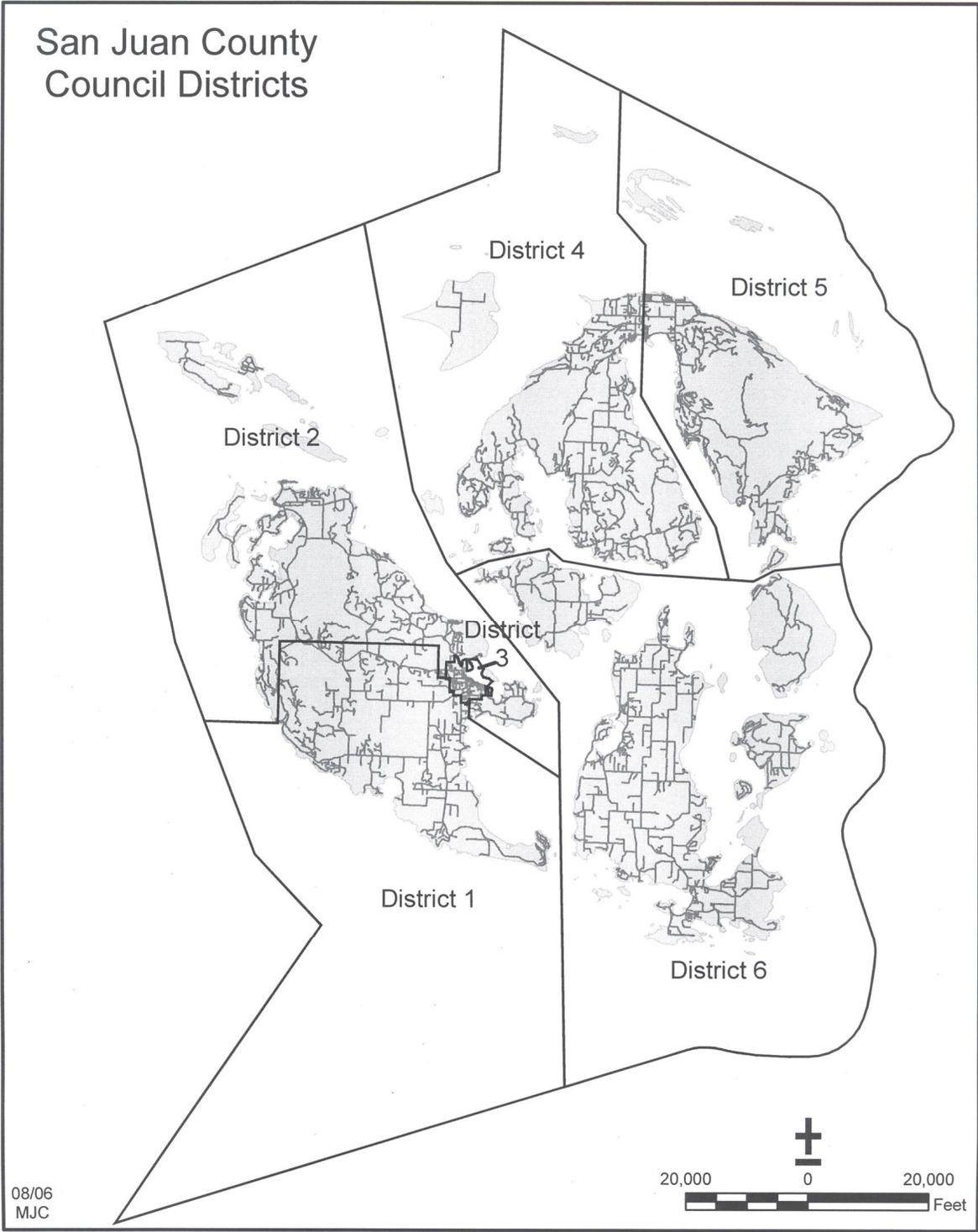


## ATTACHMENT C

### District to Precinct Cross-Reference, page 3

District Range: All		Friday Harbor 2	
003 Orcas 4			
004 Orcas 2		<b>P102</b>	
005 Orcas 3		Fh 2 S & E	
006 Lopez 1		1 Precinct	
007 Lopez 2		0 Portion Precincts	
008 Shaw			
009 Stuart			
010 San Juan 1			
011 San Juan 2			
012 San Juan 3			
013 San Juan 4			
014 San Juan 5			
015 Waldron			
15 Precincts			
0 Portion Precincts			
<b>Decatur/Blakeley</b>		<b>Orcas 3</b>	
<b>P01</b>		<b>P05</b>	
001 Blakeley/Decatur		Orcas 3	
1 Precinct		1 Precinct	
0 Portion Precincts		0 Portion Precincts	
<b>San Juan 1</b>		<b>Lopez 1</b>	
<b>P010</b>		<b>P06</b>	
010 San Juan 1		Lopez 1	
1 Precinct		1 Precinct	
0 Portion Precincts		0 Portion Precincts	
<b>San Juan 2</b>		<b>Lopez 2</b>	
<b>P011</b>		<b>P07</b>	
011 San Juan 2		Lopez 2	
1 Precinct		1 Precinct	
0 Portion Precincts		0 Portion Precincts	
<b>San Juan 3</b>		<b>Shaw</b>	
<b>P012</b>		<b>P08</b>	
012 San Juan 3		Shaw	
1 Precinct		1 Precinct	
0 Portion Precincts		0 Portion Precincts	
<b>Decatur/Blakeley</b>		<b>Stuart</b>	
<b>P01</b>		<b>P09</b>	
001 Blakeley/Decatur		Stuart	
1 Precinct		1 Precinct	
0 Portion Precincts		0 Portion Precincts	
<b>San Juan 1</b>		<b>Friday Harbor 1</b>	
<b>P010</b>		<b>P101</b>	
010 San Juan 1		Fh 1 N & W	
1 Precinct		1 Precinct	
0 Portion Precincts		0 Portion Precincts	
<b>San Juan 2</b>		<b>Friday Harbor 1</b>	
<b>P011</b>		<b>P101</b>	
011 San Juan 2		Fh 1 N & W	
1 Precinct		1 Precinct	
0 Portion Precincts		0 Portion Precincts	
<b>San Juan 3</b>		<b>Friday Harbor 1</b>	
<b>P012</b>		<b>P101</b>	
012 San Juan 3		Fh 1 N & W	
1 Precinct		1 Precinct	
0 Portion Precincts		0 Portion Precincts	

**ATTACHMENT D**  
**Map of Existing San Juan County Council Districts**



## ATTACHMENT E Redistricting Timeline

Phase 1	{	<b>2010</b>	<b>Census data gathered</b>
		<b>2011 Jan – May</b>	<b>Elections staff works on voter registration files and precinct/district boundaries</b>
		Feb 8	Special Election
		<b>Mar 31</b>	<b>Recommended date by which SJ Co Council should establish procedures for appointing Redistricting Committee</b>
		<b>April 1</b>	<b>State must receive census data from Feds</b>
		April 26	Special Election
Phase 2	{	<b>May 16</b>	<b>Counties &amp; other local jurisdictions must received census data from State</b>
		May 17	Special Election
		<b>May 31</b>	<b>Recommended date by which SJ Co Council should appoint Districting Committee</b>
		June 6	Candidate Filing opens
		Aug 16	Primary
		Aug 31	Certification of Primary
		Nov 8	General Election
		<b>Nov 15</b>	<b>Recommended hearing date for County redistricting plan</b>
		Nov 29	Certification of General Election
		<b>Nov 29</b>	<b>Recommended adoption date for County redistricting plan</b>
		<b>Dec</b>	<b>Ideal time for elections staff to work on precinct plan</b>
<b>Dec 31</b>	<b>County Auditor must receive redistrict plan from local jurisdictions, including County</b>		
Phase 3	{	<b>2012 Jan 1</b>	<b>State Redistricting Commission submits state plan to the Legislature</b>
		Jan 8	Legislature convenes
		<b>Feb 7</b>	<b>Legislature must pass amendments by this date</b>
		<b>Feb 10</b>	<b>Plan is adopted if not amended</b>
		Feb 14	Special Election
		April 24	Special Election
		<b>May 4</b>	<b>All boundary and precinct changes must be finalized by every jurisdiction unless the 2012 election does not apply to that jurisdiction</b>
		June 4	Candidate filing opens
		Aug 21	Primary Election
		Sept 5	Certification of Primary
		Nov 6	General Election
Nov 27	Certification of General Election		
<b>Nov 28</b>	<b>Begin redistricting changes for any jurisdiction that was not involved in the 2012 election, with completion by May 3, 2013</b>		

Regular election year event  
**Redistricting activity**