

**Module 8: Politics**  
**Topic 3 Content: Reapportionment**

**Introduction**



**Demi Tracy:** Welcome to WUSG News. For this episode, we have asked Pilar de la Casa and Bill O'Law to join us live, via satellite. Are you there, Pilar?

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**Reapportionment**

## Reapportionment



- Redistribution of seats in the House of Representatives
- Caused by significant shifts in population size
- Occurs every ten years, after the Census

**Pilar de la Casa:** Absolutely, Demi. Reapportionment is a term used to describe the redistribution of seats in the House of Representatives. There are 435 seats in the House, which are distributed among the states based on population size. The number of seats has been set by Congress, so when a significant shift in population occurs, the seats are redistributed based on the changes. For example, if one state has a sharp increase in the number of residents, it may gain a seat in the House; but in order for it to do so, another state must lose a seat. The Constitution requires that reapportionment occur every ten years, following the Census. Bill, would you care to explain the concept of redistricting?

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**Redistricting**

An infographic titled "Redistricting" with a dark background. On the left, a white box is divided by a dashed diagonal line, with "District 1" on the left and "District 2" on the right. Below this box is a list of three bullet points. On the right side of the infographic is a cartoon illustration of a man with dark hair, wearing a grey suit, white shirt, and dark tie, looking slightly to the left with a neutral expression.

**Redistricting**

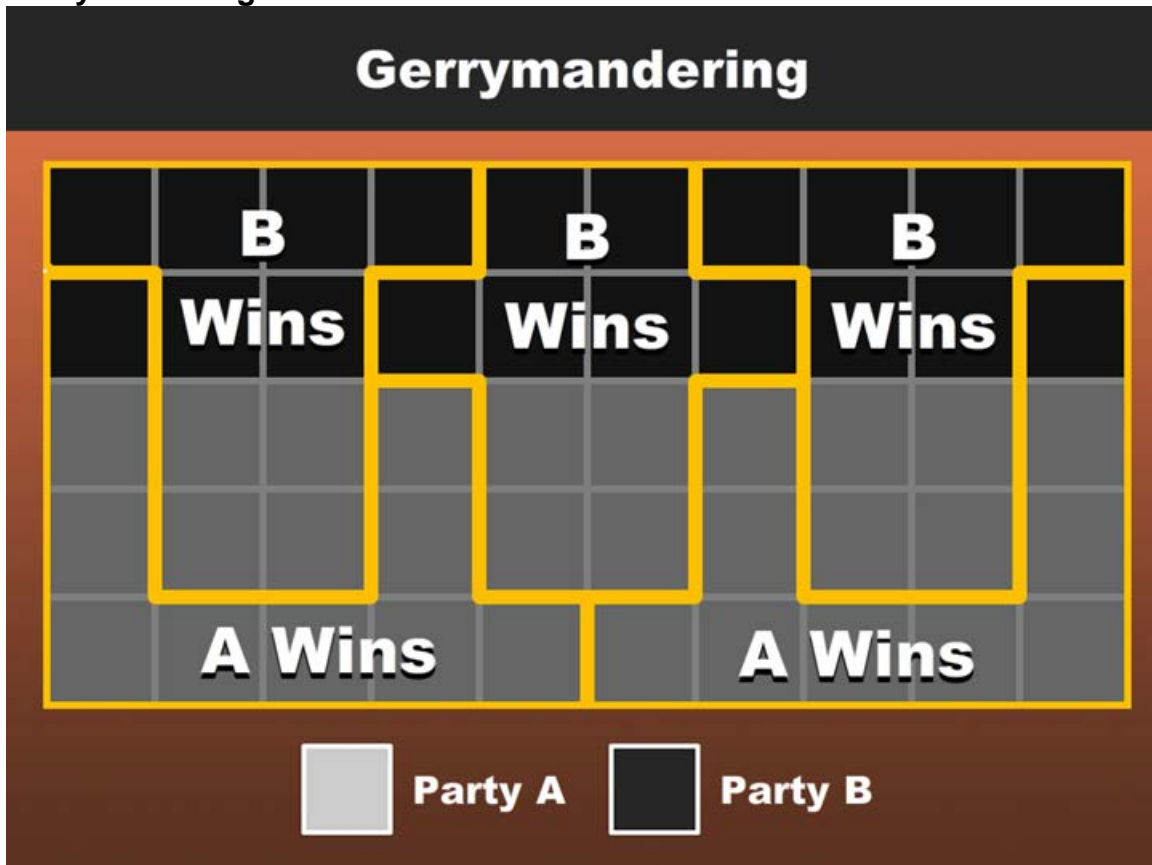
**District 1** / **District 2**

- The process of redrawing legislative boundaries
- Intended to maintain a balance of representation in the House
- Can be used to benefit one political party over another

**Bill O’Law:** It would be my pleasure, Pilar. If the Census shows that the population of a state has changed significantly, the boundaries of the state’s legislative districts may be redrawn. This process of redrawing legislative boundaries is known as redistricting. Redistricting can have a major impact on elections. Its intended purpose is to maintain a balance of representation in the House of Representatives; however, it has also been used to benefit one political party over another.

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**Gerrymandering**



**Bill O'Law:** Gerrymandering is a topic mentioned frequently in debates about government. Gerrymandering occurs when legislative district boundaries are redrawn to intentionally benefit one political party over another. Instead of drawing districts in a uniform way, the boundaries are “creatively” drawn for the benefit of one party. The newly drawn boundaries are set up so that a majority of voters in a district favor one political party over the other. The end result is a significant advantage during elections, which leads to a nearly guaranteed a seat in the House of Representatives.

The reason gerrymandering is possible is that the majority party in the legislature is responsible for redrawing the districts. This is the case in Virginia, where the General Assembly's majority party redraws state and Congressional districts. Some other states have attempted to limit gerrymandering by partially or completely removing legislators from the process. Instead, the state and Congressional districts are drawn by non-partisan commissions. Is there anything else I missed, Pilar?

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**One Man, One Vote**

**One Man = One Vote**



- Gerrymandering was used to discriminate against minorities in the past
- States failed to draw districts based on population
- Many urban centers of population were underrepresented
- *Reynolds v. Sims* (1964) required state legislatures to redistrict based on population

**Pilar de la Casa:** I think you just about covered everything, Bill. I would like to briefly mention the concept of one man, one vote. Gerrymandering is used today to benefit a political party, but in the past it was used to discriminate against minorities. In some states, because of a failure to draw district boundaries based on population, urban populations, which typically had more minority voters, were underrepresented in the government. Basically, a city of 500,000 people might have the same representation as a town of 5,000. The Supreme Court decision in *Reynolds v. Sims* (1964) required state legislatures to redistrict so that each district had roughly the same size population. The majority opinion in this case used the phrase, “one man, one vote” to explain that every citizen should have an equal voice in the government.

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**Ending of Episode**



**Demi Tracy:** Thank you, Pilar. Thank you, Bill. I would also like to point out that the U.S. Senate is an exception to the idea of one person, one vote, since it has two representatives per state, regardless of the size of its population.