



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

Senator Stan Rosenberg, President Pro Tem
Hampshire and Franklin District
Room 320
617.722.1532
Fax: 617.722.1062

District Office
1 Prince St.
Northampton, MA 01060
413.584.1649
Fax: 413.582.0113

Stan.Rosenberg@masenate.gov

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CONTACT: Tom Mitchell
413-587-6289

SENATE UNVEILS NEW STATE SENATE DISTRICTS

State Senator Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst), Senate Chairman of the Special Joint Redistricting Committee, said today that 92 percent of Massachusetts residents will maintain their current state Senate districts, according to the plan unveiled by the Senate committee members this afternoon at the State House.

“Redistricting is a process that involves balancing local and regional interests, coupled with a few guiding principles,” Rosenberg said. “This map adheres to those principles while addressing the eastward shift of the state’s population.”

Rosenberg said those guiding principles include:

Continuity – Rosenberg described the changes in districts as “incremental,” and said that 92 percent of residents would live in the same districts under the proposed new plan as in the current configuration.

Political balance – Rosenberg said his committee also wanted to make sure that voters had a “fair opportunity” to elect someone who represented the political, demographic and geographic considerations of the various districts.

Population equality – Rosenberg said that all the new districts are within plus or minus 5 percent of the ideal population for a State Senate district, which is 163,691. This deviation is consistent with the court-approved standards for legislative redistricting.

In addition, Rosenberg said the committee was also especially mindful of the following considerations:

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Minority-Majority Districts – The Senate proposal increases the number of minority-majority districts from two to three, adding one new state Senate district in Hampden County while keeping two minority-majority districts in Boston.

County Splits – The new proposal reduces the number of county splits statewide, thereby increasing the number of senate districts that are wholly within county boundaries.

Municipal Splits – Fewer cities and towns are split in the new proposal than in the current state Senate configuration.

Deviation -- Applying the new federal census data to the existing Senate plan, the old districts have an overall range of more than 18 percent. Under the proposed plan unveiled today that range is reduced to less than 10 percent.

Compactness – Rosenberg said the committee’s current proposal creates districts that are more compact than the current configuration.

The new maps are available on-line at:

<http://www.malegislature.gov/District/ProposedDistrictMaps>

Rosenberg said the full Senate is expected to vote on the proposed map the week of October 31st, after two weeks of public comment. The new districts will be used for the upcoming election in November, 2012.

Based on the new map, Rosenberg’s Hampshire and Franklin District would lose three communities (indicated in **boldface**) and pick up three communities (indicated in *italics*)

Hampshire County:

Amherst	Hadley
Hatfield	Northampton
Pelham	South Hadley

Belchertown (Precincts A and D)

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Franklin County:

Bernardston	Buckland
Colrain	Deerfield
Gill	Greenfield
Leverett	Leyden
Montague	Shelburne
Shutesbury	Sunderland
Wendell	Whately
Erving	New Salem
Northfield	<i>Warwick</i>
<i>Orange</i>	<i>Royalston</i>

For other western Massachusetts state Senators, the proposed map looks like this:

Senator Benjamin Downing (D-Pittsfield) loses no communities, but picks up Buckland, Shelburne, Chester and Blandford.

Senator Michael Knapik (R-Westfield) loses Chester, Blandford and eight precincts in Chicopee, and picks up Agawam and one new precinct of Chicopee.

Senator James Welch (D-West Springfield) loses three precincts in Springfield, two precincts in Chicopee and the entire town of Agawam, and picks up 18 new precincts in Springfield for a majority of the city.

Senator Gale Candaras (D-Wilbraham) loses 18 precincts in Springfield, and picks up three new Springfield precincts, precincts A and D in Belchertown to unite it and nine precincts of Chicopee.