Key Takeaways from the 2021-2022 Redistricting Process

During this last redistricting cycle, Tennessee legislators made minor improvements in transparency and public engagement, but most other states involved their residents more deeply.

- Residents in 47 other states could participate in community meetings to share input on the process, an option not available for Tennesseans, and those in 41 states had more time to view draft maps before they became final.

States that encouraged public engagement and transparency in the process benefited from more participation by residents.

- In states where the redistricting process included more public participation, legislators acknowledged that incorporating public suggestions into the final maps allowed them to better reflect communities of interest.

Greater public engagement and transparency in the redistricting process can empower voters and potentially improve our state's low levels of civic engagement.(i)

- More Tennesseans submitted draft maps for consideration (20) and public comments (79) than in previous cycles, but in states where legislators more actively sought public comments, more residents participated. For example, Louisiana saw five times the public participation with nearly 1,000 residents attending the state's series of redistricting meetings, and nearly 400 providing testimony or written comments.(ii)
Public engagement in Tennessee's redistricting process involved **testifying in-person at legislative committee hearings**, **contacting legislators** to share thoughts, and submitting and presenting **draft maps**. In most other states, opportunities for public engagement also included **community meetings** designed specifically to solicit public input into the map-drawing process and **sharing written comments** with committees or online.

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**WHAT IS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE REDISTRICTING PROCESS?**

Public engagement practices of redistricting bodies -- legislative committees and non-legislative redistricting commissions -- in other states.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Meetings to Inform Map Drawing</th>
<th>Soliciting Feedback on Draft Maps</th>
<th>Posting Public Comments Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In 43 states, redistricting bodies held a <strong>series of meetings in communities around the state prior to drawing new district maps.</strong></td>
<td>In 34 states, redistricting bodies held at least one public meeting -- either a community meeting or legislative hearing -- <strong>specifically for residents to share feedback on draft maps before final passage.</strong></td>
<td>At least 39 states welcomed <strong>in-person and written public comments</strong> at community meetings or legislative hearings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents were invited to share comments about how they would like to see their communities represented in new maps.</td>
<td></td>
<td>In 20 of those states, residents could <strong>submit comments through redistricting webpages</strong>, with all but two making comments visible through a public portal.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Recommendations for the 2031-2032 Redistricting Cycle**

Drawing on best practices from peer states, we highlight where there are opportunities to deepen public engagement and enhance transparency in Tennessee’s 2031-2032 redistricting cycle.

Next cycle, Tennessee legislators could:

- Host community meetings around the state to solicit public input.
- Allow more time to view draft maps.
- Continue to accept draft maps from the public, but also allow partial submissions for communities of interest.
- Create a dedicated, interactive, user-friendly webpage to share information with the public.
Prior to this year’s redistricting cycle, ThinkTennessee shared recommendations based on best practices from peer states -- including hosting community meetings to solicit input prior to drafting maps and allowing more time to view draft maps before they became final -- in order to deepen public engagement and enhance transparency.

Other than a five-month delay caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, however, this cycle mostly resembled that of 2011-2012 with only minor improvements to the (1) legislative process, (2) opportunities for public engagement, and (3) transparency.(iii)

**Legislative Process**

This cycle, redistricting committees were bipartisan and held more hearings, but maps were still drawn out of public view.

Both the House and Senate formed bipartisan redistricting committees and hosted webpages to share general information. Both committees held more hearings to share timeline updates and hear public comments, but the legislature's map-drawing process was not discussed.

As with last cycle, redistricting committees oversaw the process in both chambers, with committee members serving as the first step on the path of approving maps, rather than playing a role in the map-drawing process.

There were two notable improvements over last decade. These committees were bipartisan, and both chambers held multiple hearings prior to the start of the January session.(iv)

Both committees again created redistricting webpages sharing general information, such as committee members and guidelines for submitting public maps. The Senate also provided additional tools and training materials for drawing public maps, as well as a link to a portal to submit maps online.

Both webpages shared pictures of draft district maps and an overview with demographic details of proposed districts after they had been introduced in committees.(v)
Tennesseans could sign up to provide comments at three legislative committee hearings -- two in the House and one in the Senate. (vi)

Previously, only one meeting of the House Ad Hoc Redistricting Committee welcomed public comments.

Tennesseans could again submit full-state maps through a member of the legislature to both the House and Senate committees. (vii)

In the past, only the House invited residents who submitted maps to present them to the committee, both chambers did so this time.
Residents had more time to view the draft map for the state House districts, but draft maps moved similarly swiftly through the legislature.

Both chambers made minor improvements to transparency this cycle, with an earlier release of the state House district map. Yet all three maps -- which are approved as legislation -- were introduced in the first week of the session in January, then promptly passed through both chambers. They were all signed by the governor by the first week of February.

### More Time to See Draft Maps

During the last cycle, draft maps were first shared publicly in January of 2012 and passed through both chambers **within 10 days**.(viii) This cycle, while the Senate and U.S. congressional maps followed a similar timeline, the initial draft House district map was shared earlier, **five weeks** before final passage.

### TIMELINE FOR MAP APPROVAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE MAP</th>
<th>SENATE MAP</th>
<th>U.S. CONGRESSIONAL MAP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial Draft Released</strong></td>
<td><strong>Initial Draft Released</strong></td>
<td><strong>Initial Draft Released</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 17, 2021</td>
<td>January 12, 2022</td>
<td>January 13, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passed in the House</strong></td>
<td><strong>Passed in the Senate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Passed in the Senate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 24, 2022</td>
<td>January 20, 2022</td>
<td>January 20, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passed in the Senate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Passed in the House</strong></td>
<td><strong>Passed in the House</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 26, 2022</td>
<td>January 24, 2022</td>
<td>January 24, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total time: 5 weeks</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total time: 1.5 weeks</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total time: 1.5 weeks</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Signed by the governor on February 6, 2022 (ix)*

### Images of Some Maps Were Available Online

Initial draft maps were available for public viewing on committee webpages after they were presented in committees, yet both House and Senate maps were amended from those initial drafts, with those versions unavailable until after they were fully passed.(x)

Maps were shared as images -- a PDF and PNG file -- and were not interactive maps that allowed residents to view districts at street level.(xi)
SECTION #2: OTHER STATES PROVIDED MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY

As in the previous redistricting cycle, Tennessee’s redistricting process included fewer opportunities for public engagement and less transparency than those of most other states. Almost every other state hosted community meetings to solicit public comments prior to or after maps had been drafted, and they provided more time to view and understand draft maps. As a result, more residents in other states were engaged and empowered by their participation in the redistricting process.

Tennessee is One of Only Three States that Did Not Host Community Meetings

Despite the delay in receiving census data, redistricting committees in all but three states -- Tennessee, Kentucky, and Florida -- held multiple community meetings to solicit public input on the redistricting process before the maps were drawn, for feedback on draft maps, or both.

Some, such as Arkansas and Georgia held meetings in the summer, and others such as Alabama and Louisiana hosted meetings in the fall and winter; Texas did both. (xii)

Tennessee is One of Nine States that Did Not Provide Substantial Opportunity to View Draft Maps

In Tennessee, legislators introduced draft maps in committee hearings after they had been drawn and did not include meetings for public feedback on the maps during their drafting process.

Residents in 41 states had more time to see draft district maps before they became final. Most of these states (34) hosted community meetings specifically to gather feedback on draft maps, while others held public legislative hearings on draft maps with open discussion on the rationale for drawing districts.
States have flexibility in designing their redistricting processes, with some incorporating more transparency and opportunities for public engagement. More residents attended meetings and submitted testimony and draft maps in states with more opportunities to participate. Legislators in those states acknowledged the benefits of this increased public engagement, calling it "robust and useful" and resulting in better maps.(xiii)

Drawing on examples from around the country, we share four recommendations to provide Tennesseans more opportunities to participate in the redistricting process during the next redistricting cycle:

- Host community meetings around the state to solicit public input.
- Allow more time to view draft maps.
- Continue to accept draft maps from the public, but also allow partial submissions for communities of interest.
- Create a dedicated, interactive, user-friendly webpage to share information with the public.

**Recommendation #1: Host community meetings around the state to solicit public input.**

Hosting community meetings around the state would allow Tennesseans from all three Grand Divisions to participate in the process. Not all residents have the flexibility to attend legislative hearings at the state capitol.

Tennessee legislators could follow the examples from the 47 states hosting community meetings to solicit public input to: host joint meetings around the state, both before and after maps are drawn, with in-person and virtual attendance, and accept oral and written comments.

**Host Joint House and Senate Community Meetings**

*Louisiana* and *Kansas*, like Tennessee, both have separate state House and Senate redistricting committees. Members of both chambers held joint community meetings around the state to hear from residents.

Kansas held 14 town halls in August 2021 and an additional four in November in each congressional district. Louisiana held nine meetings from October 2021 to January 2022 after work hours to encourage public attendance.(xiv)

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**Peer State Example:**

*Public Engagement in the Redistricting Process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Louisiana residents</th>
<th>Attend community meetings</th>
<th>Provided comment</th>
<th>Submitted written statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>962</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Louisiana residents (xv)
Host Meetings Before and After Maps are Drawn

Before Maps are Drawn

Legislators in Oklahoma and Indiana hosted community meetings before drawing maps. Oklahoma's redistricting committee chairs shared that final maps included suggestions made from "robust and useful" public comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Meetings in Oklahoma</th>
<th>Community Meetings in Indiana</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The open and transparent process, including solicitation of public input, yielded legislative maps this time around that are more compact and better by most standards than the maps adopted 10 years ago."

Oklahoma committee chairs, Representative Ryan Martinez (R-Edmond) and Senator Lonnie Paxton (R-Tuttle) (xvii)

"Public input on redistricting is extremely important to the map-drawing process. We look forward to hearing from Hoosiers from all over Indiana during these meetings."

Indiana state Senator Jon Ford (R-Terre Haute) (xviii)

After Maps are Drawn

Nebraska’s legislature met privately to draft and vote on maps to release to the public for feedback. The Redistricting Committee then held three community meetings, one in each congressional district, to solicit feedback on the draft maps before legislative committee debate on the bills began the following week.

Both Before and After Maps are Drawn

Missouri’s governor-appointed redistricting commissions hosted nine community meetings for residents to provide comments or objections to “help commission members create the new district maps,” and they are required to host at least one after submitting a tentative plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtual and In-person Attendance</th>
<th>Oral and Written Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama residents could attend 28 community meetings hosted by the joint Permanent Legislative Committee on Reapportionment in September 2021 in-person or virtually. (xxi)</td>
<td>Arizona residents had multiple opportunities to provide written or in-person comments, including 20 meetings of the Independent Redistricting Commission’s “listening tour” in the summer of 2021 and 24 “draft map hearings” in November and December. (xxii)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information gathered at the meetings was posted to the committee's webpage and made available for legislators to consider as they drew new district boundaries.
SECTION #3: RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #2: Allow more time to view draft maps.

Tennessee legislators could share draft maps earlier in the process so that more people have time to review them, understand the reasoning behind the decisions, and provide feedback. Best practices drawn from 41 states include: a public comment period, a legislative committee hearing to receive public testimony on drafts, and public legislative committee discussions on drafts.

Provide a Public Comment Period

Before a final vote on district maps, the Arkansas Board of Reapportionment approved draft maps which were then shared with the public for a 30-day public comment period.(xxiii)

Governor Asa Hutchinson called the public comment period an important part of the process, stating that though all suggestions received could not be achieved, changes based on comments had been made, for example keeping cities whole within some of the state's House and Senate districts.(xxiv)

Host a Legislative Committee Hearing to Receive Public Comments

The South Carolina Senate Redistricting Subcommittee posted the Senate staff's draft plan on their webpage and hosted a committee hearing in November 2021 to receive comments on the plan. Members of the public could testify in-person or virtually and send written comments through the mail or email.(xxv)

Host Public Legislative Committee Discussions on Draft Maps

The Florida House of Representatives Redistricting Committee held a public committee hearing to “workshop” alternative plans for the congressional and state House maps. Legislative staff presented two alternatives for each map and explained to the committee members and public watching the rationale behind each version's district lines. (xxvi)

Peer State Example: Florida Workshop of Alternative Plans

Two versions of Florida's congressional districts as presented in a January 13, 2022 Florida House of Representatives Redistricting Committee meeting.
**Recommendation #3: Continue to accept draft maps from the public, but also allow partial submissions for communities of interest.**

Next cycle, legislators could consider allowing partial map submissions representing specific districts or communities of interest. This would follow the example of at least 18 states, including Nevada and Virginia.

While balancing population and other requirements may result in splitting known communities of interest, Nevada’s redistricting website described partial map submissions as useful for understanding local communities within a district. (xxvii)

**Recommendation #4: Create a dedicated, interactive, user-friendly webpage to share information with the public.**

Tennessee legislators could consider enhancing their redistricting webpages by developing one-stop shops similar to those in 18 states this cycle to provide educational and background information, interactive map drafts, and public comment portals.

**Provide Educational and Background Information**

Similar to Tennessee, webpages for Arkansas’ and Utah’s redistricting commissions shared background information and instructions on drawing draft maps, but they also shared helpful “Frequently Asked Questions.” Residents in both states could easily learn who was responsible for drawing district lines, a redistricting process timeline -- including a schedule of meetings -- and guidance on the opportunities to participate in the process. (xxix)

**Share Interactive Draft Maps**

Whereas Tennessee’s draft maps were shared as a state image, New Mexico’s and South Carolina’s legislative webpages shared interactive draft maps where residents could zoom into a district down to the street level. (xxx)

**Montana’s Districting and Apportioning**

Commission webpage also posted interactive draft maps and allowed residents to comment directly on the map. (xxxi)

**Provide a Public Comment Portal**

Residents in 19 states could submit public comments online through redistricting webpages. Some, such as Alaska and Florida, could submit comments directly on the site, while others, such as Georgia and Missouri, could submit comments via an online form. (xxxii) Some states, such as Florida and Arkansas also archived public comments online for anyone to see. (xxxiii)
## 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First House Select Committee on Redistricting Meeting</td>
<td>September 8</td>
<td>Committee members were introduced, overview of anticipated census data provided, and public comments accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Redistricting Meeting</td>
<td>October 18</td>
<td>Committee members were introduced, overview, timeline, and instructions for public map submission provided, and public comments accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Select Committee on Redistricting Meeting</td>
<td>October 27</td>
<td>Public comment accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Redistricting Meeting</td>
<td>December 14</td>
<td>Publicly submitted maps presented by submitters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Select Committee on Redistricting Meeting</td>
<td>December 17</td>
<td>Draft committee map presented, overview of publicly submitted and member plans.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>House Select Committee on Redistricting Meeting</td>
<td>January 12</td>
<td>Committee congressional map presented and passed out of committee with recommendation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senate map passed out of committee unseen as the Senate was still working on it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Member maps and publicly submitted congressional maps presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Public Service Subcommittee Meeting</td>
<td>January 12</td>
<td>Committee congressional map presented and passed out of committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senate map passed out of committee unseen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Redistricting Meeting</td>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>Draft Senate and congressional maps presented and passed out of committee with recommendation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House State Government Committee Meeting</td>
<td>January 18</td>
<td>House, Senate, and congressional maps presented and passed out of committee. The congressional map had four changes since its presentation in House subcommittee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>House, Senate, and congressional maps presented and passed out of committee. The Senate map had been amended since presentation in Ad Hoc Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Publicly submitted Senate and congressional maps presented by submitters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate Judiciary Committee Meeting</td>
<td>January 18</td>
<td>Senate and congressional maps passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>House, Senate, and congressional maps passed. The House map had been amended since its presentation in House State Government Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate Floor</td>
<td>January 20</td>
<td>Senate and congressional maps passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Floor</td>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>House map passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senate Floor</td>
<td>January 26</td>
<td>House map passed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(i) As our latest *State of the State* Dashboard shows, Tennessee's rates of the key indicators of civic engagement -- voter registration (41st) and turnout (46th) - continue to trail our peers. See https://www.thinktennessee.org/state-of-our-state/.

(ii) Louisiana State Legislature. (January 20, 2022). House Committee on House and Governmental Affairs and Senate Committee on Senate and Governmental Affairs meeting. See https://redist.legis.la.gov/default_Meetings.

(iii) Typically, census data collection ends by August, but because of the pandemic it concluded on October 15, 2020. Redistricting data is typically delivered to states by March the following year, but in 2021 the pandemic delayed that until mid-August. This caused states to delay map drawing until the fall of 2021 instead of the typical spring start. See https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/2020-census-data-collection-ending.html and https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/statement-legacy-format-redistricting.html.

(iv) Previously, only members of the majority party were members of redistricting committees in each chamber. This year, four of sixteen House committee members and two of seven Senate committee members were of the minority (Democrat) party. See https://www.capitol.tn.gov/House/committees/Redistricting.aspx and https://capitol.tn.gov/senate/committees/redistricting.html.


NOTES AND REFERENCES


(xv) Louisiana State Legislature. (January 20, 2022). House Committee on House and Governmental Affairs and Senate Committee on Senate and Governmental Affairs meeting. See https://redist.legis.la.gov/default_Meetings.


(xvii) Ibid


(xxiv) Arkansas Board of Apportionment. Events Calendar. November 29, 2021 Board of Apportionment Meeting. See https://arkansasredistricting.org/events-calendar/.


