



## **ASIAN AMERICAN LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND**

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# **The Census and Political Representation – Redistricting**

The Census is used as the basis for redistricting which determines the political representation of communities. People are grouped into “districts” to elect representatives to the city council, state assembly, state senate, and U.S. House of Representatives. The U.S. Constitution mandates that each type of district contain approximately the same number of people. For example, a city of 100,000 people with ten city council members must draw district lines so that each district represented by each councilmember has approximately 10,000 people.

### **Redistricting is Based on the Census**

A census is conducted every ten years to determine population changes. Because people move and communities grow or shrink, the boundaries of every district are redrawn according to the new census data. This process is called “redistricting.”

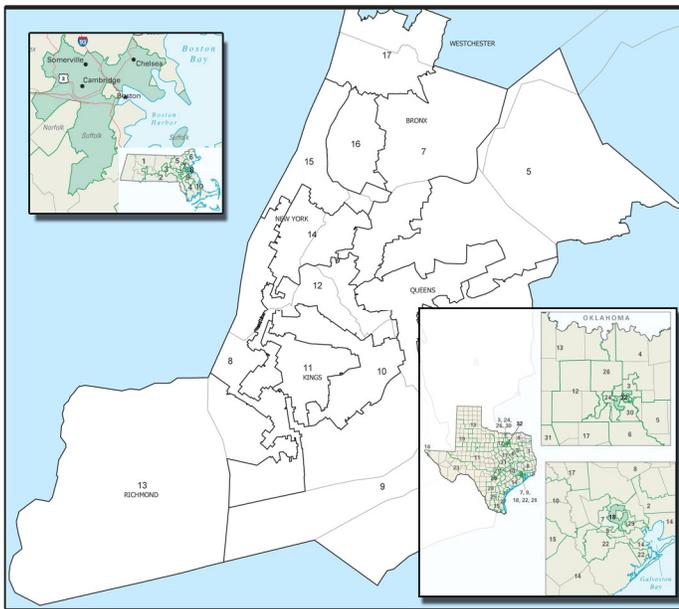
### **Redistricting is Important to Asian Americans**

Redistricting is an opportunity to increase the political influence and representation of Asian Americans by keeping communities together. However, redistricting can also divide or “gerrymander” Asian American neighborhoods, thereby weakening the community’s voting strength.

### **Redistricting Options for Asian Americans**

Census data reports the number, race, and other characteristics of people living in specific geographic areas, such as cities, counties, neighborhoods, or street blocks. Using this data, districts can be drawn to group Asian Americans with common interests so that they can elect candidates of their choice. The following districts can be drawn if the census finds that the Asian American community is numerically large and residentially compact enough.

- **“Asian-opportunity districts”** – Districts where Asian Americans are a majority (at least 50%) of the voters. Here, Asian Americans will be able to elect the representative of the district.
- **“Asian-influence districts”** – Districts where Asian Americans constitute a substantial portion (possibly 20-30%) of the district’s population and may be able to decide the outcome of an election among several candidates.
- **“Multiracial districts”** – Districts where Asian Americans are joined with another minority group with common interests. Though Asian Americans alone may be less than a majority, together the minority groups constitute a majority. They can together elect a representative of the district.



### **Next Steps**

The Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund will work with community groups on redistricting to ensure that Asian Americans have full and fair opportunities to elect candidates of their choice. A complete and accurate count of the Asian American population in the census is a critical first step. Get counted in the census.

**For More Information:** Contact AALDEF at “[votingrights@aaldef.org](mailto:votingrights@aaldef.org)” or 212-966-5932