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NEWS RELEASE

Redistricting Panel Unveils Grid Maps

Diagrams Only a Starting Point; Commissioners Will Modify to Meet Criteria

PHOENIX (Aug. 14, 2011) – Arizona's Independent Redistricting Commission has released two sets of grid maps, one of which will form the basis for drawing the state's new congressional and legislative districts.

These grid maps are on the commission's website, at azredistricting.org/Maps/default.asp.

The panel is scheduled to start working on draft district maps this week. It has a business meeting Wednesday, Aug. 17, at 1 p.m. in the Phoenix City Council Chambers. After brief remarks by retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the five commissioners will discuss some housekeeping matters. If time permits, the commissioners could choose which set of grid maps to use as a starting point. Or they could wait until a mapping meeting tentatively scheduled for Thursday in Casa Grande, time and location to be announced. Agendas are posted at azredistricting.org/Meeting-Info/default.asp once they are official.

Grid Maps a Starting Point

The Arizona Constitution mandates that redistricting begin with a grid map. This is to ensure that the commission starts over from scratch every 10 years.

But these grid maps reflect only two of the six criteria the commissioners are required to consider:

- Equal population; and
- Compactness and contiguousness.

In drafting the new district maps, commissioners must modify the grid maps to account for four other criteria:

- Compliance with the U.S. Constitution and the Voting Rights Act;
- Respect for communities of interest;
- Incorporation of visible geographic features, including city, town and county boundaries, as well as undivided census tracts; and
- Creation of competitive districts where there is no significant detriment to other goals.

During an Aug. 3 business meeting, the commission directed mapping consultant Strategic

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Telemetry to create two sets of grid maps – one by starting in the center of the most concentrated population district and moving counterclockwise, the other by starting in the southeast corner of the state and moving clockwise. To reach those starting points, the commissioners used multiple flips of a coin – a 1965 quarter, to be exact.

Looking Forward

Commissioners are planning to spend the next few weeks creating draft maps that will be the subject of public hearings planned for mid- to late September – with the goal of revising and completing the maps by the end of October.

Redistricting is done every 10 years to reflect updated census figures and, at the congressional level, accommodate any gain or loss of representatives. This time around, Arizona will gain another seat in the House of Representatives, for a total of nine.

In 2000, Arizona voters approved Proposition 106, creating the Independent Redistricting Commission and establishing a process and criteria for drawing new district lines. Before that, the state Legislature redrew the lines.

This is only the second time an independent commission is doing the redistricting.

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