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## NEWS RELEASE

# Public Had Strong Influence on Redistricting

PHOENIX (*Feb. 3, 2012*) – When Arizona’s Independent Redistricting Commission approved final congressional- and legislative-district maps on Jan. 17, it completed a process that included citizens from all over the state.

Commissioners held 58 business meetings and 43 public hearings in locations all around Arizona – a staggering 359 hours and 15 minutes over 11 months. Attendance at those meetings and hearings was 5,364. More than 1,800 additional people watched on the Internet via the panel’s website, [azredistricting.org](http://azredistricting.org). The commission also entertained 2,350 requests from the public to speak at those sessions.

“I want to thank the public that came to all these meetings, because without you, we couldn’t have done this,” said Chairman Colleen Coyle Mathis. “Hearing your perspectives on your regions and how they fit the six constitutional criteria for districts was the key to everything. You gave us great guidance, and we appreciate that. So thank you for coming to those hearings, for coming to these meetings, all of it, and for participating online.”

The final numbers indicate a commendable amount of public participation:

- The 43 public hearings covered 53 locations around the state thanks to the power of videoconferencing. More than 3,500 Arizonans signed in, and 1,528 of those filled out yellow request-to-speak forms. To make this possible, staff logged almost 29,000 miles in state vehicles.
- The 58 business meetings – also public – were held in 19 locations, mostly in Greater Phoenix, Greater Tucson and Casa Grande. More than 1,800 people attended, and the commissioners entertained 822 public requests to speak.
- The commission received 7,403 written comments at meetings and hearings, in the mail, via email, by fax, hand delivered or through its website.
- Individuals and groups submitted 224 proposed maps.
- The website offered users the opportunity to try free, online mapping software, and a “how to” webinar presented by mapping consultant Strategic Telemetry drew 50 participants. About 45 people used the online software to create their own maps. Some of those are posted for public viewing at [azredistricting.org/Maps/Citizens-Submissions.asp](http://azredistricting.org/Maps/Citizens-Submissions.asp).

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"I believe that we have not missed one individual in this state who has submitted information to this commission," said Deputy Director Kristina Gomez, who oversaw public outreach and was responsible for scheduling meetings and hearings.

Public participation was what voters had in mind in 2000 when they chose to amend the Arizona Constitution to create the Independent Redistricting Commission. The move took the decennial map drawing out of the back rooms of the Legislature and placed it in the hands of civilian volunteers.

#### **Technology Enables Higher Participation**

Technology proved to be a valuable component of the commission's outreach efforts. Almost every meeting and hearing was streamed live on the Internet at [azredistricting.org](http://azredistricting.org). Those webcasts attracted more than 1,850 distinct viewers. They also opened the process to individuals who could not attend in person, and facilitated news coverage.

Videoconferencing enabled people to participate from multiple locations in Coconino, Yavapai and Yuma counties, and from places such as Clifton, Holbrook and Winslow.

The website also offered members of the public opportunities to fill out an online comment form; look at proposed maps; sign up to receive meeting notices and news releases; and view transcripts and videos from past meetings and hearings.

In the realm of social media, 229 people "liked" the commission's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/azredistricting](http://www.facebook.com/azredistricting)) and 258 followed its Twitter feed ([@AZredistricting](https://twitter.com/AZredistricting)).

#### **Additional Public Outreach**

Community outreach representatives sent redistricting information to libraries, colleges, school districts, local governments, chambers of commerce, community groups and minority organizations.

The commission also participated in an Oct. 18 news briefing organized by New America Media, a collaboration of more than 5,000 ethnic media across the country. Vice Chairman José M. Herrera took part in a panel discussion at the event, which drew journalists serving the Latino, Native-American, Chinese and Filipino communities, among others.

Herrera also contributed an article about the importance of redistricting to the November 2011 issue of *Latino Perspectives* magazine.

The public information officer worked with print and broadcast journalists from all over Arizona, as well as a few from New York and Washington, encouraging them to cover redistricting and answering their questions throughout the process. Various commissioners, the executive

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director and commission attorneys found the time to be interviewed on television programs such as KTVK-Channel 3's *Politics Unplugged*, Arizona Public Media's *Arizona Illustrated* and KAET-Channel 8's *Horizon*.

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**Factoids**

- During the two rounds of public hearings, the commission held nine sessions on Indian reservations: four in the Navajo Nation, two in the White Mountain Apache Nation, two in the Tohono O'odham Nation and one in the San Carlos Apache Nation.
- The most frequent venue for business meetings was the Fiesta Resort Conference Center in Tempe, which hosted 23.
- Among the interest groups and local governments submitting proposed maps were the Hispanic Coalition for Good Government, the cities of Flagstaff and Scottsdale, Greater Arizona Success, the Navajo Nation, the Pinal County Governmental Alliance, the AZ Minority Coalition and the Eastern Arizona Counties Association.
- Average time viewers watched webcasts at [azredistricting.org](http://azredistricting.org): 36 minutes, six seconds.
- The second most common Internet provider used by website visitors, behind Cox Communications, was the U.S. House of Representatives.
- The ZIP codes from which the most people signed up to receive the commission's newsletter were 85006 in central Phoenix, 85929 in Lakeside and 85358 in Wickenburg.
- The website's Maps page was its most popular, followed by the Meeting Info page.
- Traffic on the website peaked in early October, when the commission adopted draft maps, and in mid-December, when it adopted tentative final maps.