

Reapportioning School Board District Boundaries



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Now that the U.S. Census Bureau has released the results of the 2020 Census, we know that Indiana will continue to have nine United States congressional representatives. We also know that the members of the Indiana General Assembly will use the results to redistrict, or draw new boundaries, for both the U.S. House and Indiana House election districts. (Indiana legislative leaders released their proposed maps just this week.)

But did you know that some school boards will have to use the new census data to determine whether school board member district boundaries may also have to be changed?

For those school boards that consist of “electoral” districts, wherein a board member must reside in a particular district and is elected only by the voters of that district, Indiana law requires the school boards to use the decennial census data to ensure that the electoral districts are “as near as practicable equal in population.” See IC 20-23-8-8(a)(4). This review must occur by December 31 of the year next following the year in which a decennial census is taken. The review must also result in the school board adopting a resolution that either changes existing boundaries to make the electoral districts as near as practicable equal in population or recertifies the existing boundaries.

The U.S. Census Bureau released redistricting data in August 2021, with additional information released thereafter on September 16, 2021. While COVID-19 presented numerous challenges to the collection of census information and resulted in delays in releasing the information, school boards with electoral districts should make every effort to review the data and assess the need to change district boundaries as soon as possible in order to meet the December 31, 2021 deadline.

Once a board completes this review, if the board determines that the boundaries of the electoral districts do not need to change, the school board must certify to the circuit court clerk of each county in which the school corporation is located that the electoral districts are as near as practicable equal in population. If the school board determines that the boundaries need to change, then the board must initiate an amendment to the plan by adopting a resolution that identifies the new electoral districts. See IC 20-23-8-8.5. The plan amendment must be published in the newspaper and voters within the school corporation have 120 days to file petitions protesting the plan change or initiating an alternative plan. After completion of this process, the board must file the amended plan and maps of the new electoral district boundaries with the circuit court clerk(s).

According to a recent survey by ISBA, less than 15% of school boards in Indiana have electoral districts. If, however, your board is one that has electoral districts, it is important to secure census data from local government officials to conduct this review. Be sure also to consult with your local attorney on these requirements.