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Congressional Reapportionment: Winners and Losers in 2000
Latest Population Estimates Detail Seat Shifts, Adjustment Still an Issue

The next Census may still be over two years away but already it is clear which states will be among the winners and losers when seats in the U.S. House are apportioned on the basis of the 2000 Census results. According to estimates of the 1997 population recently released by the Census Bureau, if the apportionment were made today, Texas would be the biggest winner with a gain of two seats.

While projections released over a year ago for the 2000 population indicate several states would gain two seats, (Texas, Arizona and Georgia), these new estimates represent the first double seat shift based upon annual estimates for the 1990s. Arizona and Georgia are still on track towards gaining two seats, being ranked 439th and 446th in the overall seat ranking. The new numbers also mark the entry of both Illinois and Wisconsin to the list of losing states, each slated to lose 1 seat.

The general shift of population from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West, a trend established a generation ago, continues. California, the biggest gainer after 1990 with 7 seats, whose growth rate has dropped over the decade, has now rebounded slightly. Based upon the 1997 numbers, California would already be entitled to an additional House seat.

The actual assignment of seats will still require a full Census in April of 2000. In fact, it is this apportionment for which the Constitution requires an

"actual Enumeration" once a decade. Nevertheless, the recent estimates, based upon the 1990 Census and updated through a review of births, deaths and migration, still provide a good clue where the shifts of seats will occur.

Apportionment under 1997 Estimates. In general, the 1997 estimates confirm the earlier annual estimates. If the apportionment were held today, 7 states would gain 8 seats from 8 states. The 1997 numbers include 3 states which had not shown up in the earlier estimates, CA, IL and WI. The 7 states gaining would be AZ, CA, FL, GA, MT, and NV at +1, and TX at +2. The 8 states losing would be CT, IL, MS, NY, OH, OK, PA and WI at -1.

Apportionment under 2000 Projections. Based upon the 2000 projections, the shifts from 1990 would affect 17 states, with 8 states gaining 11 seats from 9 states. States gaining seats over 1990 would be: AZ, GA and TX at +2 and CO, FL, MT, NV and UT at +1. States losing seats over the 1990 census would be NY and PA at -2, and CT, IL, MI, MS, OH, OK and WI at -1 each. These 2000 projections were released in November of 1996 and thus do not reflect any trends found in the 1997 estimates.

Impact of Adjustment on Apportionment. The impact which the much discussed census adjustment issue would have on apportioning the U.S. House is another factor about which political stakeholders are greatly concerned. From a mathematical perspective, it is clear that the winners and losers will only come from certain states. The factors to consider here are a) the population of the state, as evidenced by the current number of seats in the House, and b) the Net Differential Undercount rate from 1990 (estimated by the Post-Enumeration Survey), and c) the actual number of persons which would be added by an adjustment process. Given the large minority elements in the undercount, the actual minority population in a state is an important factor in congressional apportionment as it relates to the average size of a congressional district.

The 1997 estimates confirm the fundamental result of an adjustment through sampling and estimation on apportionment: between states, the shift is likely to be only 1 seat, though it is possible that there could be a shift of 2, or even 3 seats.

States which would lose seats under an adjustment. For both the 1996 and 1997 estimates, adjustment (estimated by the 1990 PES Factors) would produce a shift of a seat from IN to MS. Likewise, based upon the projections for 2000, the shift would be from IN (down from its current 10 to 9) to MS (up from 4 to keeps its current 5). Other states which have been in this shift group most

often include WI (for 5 of the 7 estimates), losing 1 seat and MS (for 5 of the 7), gaining 1 seat.

The 1997 estimates add PA as a loser and AZ as a gainer under an adjustment. A review of annual estimates and projections through 2000 creates a list of the following states as potential losers through adjustment: IL, IN, OH, PA, and WI. Each of these states is indicated as losing a seat, by adjustment, in more than one set of state population estimates or projections.

It is important to bear in mind that the mathematical formula by which the seats in the U.S. House are assigned, the so-called "method of equal proportions" can be very susceptible to small differences in population between any pair of states. Therefore, a difference caused by an adjustment, or an error in the implementation of an adjustment, could cause a seat shift. This is one of the real dangers of using statistical inference to estimate the population in the nation, and, hence, votes on the House floor.

Let History be the Guide. Adjustment, whether done after the fact, or integrated into the process, as proposed for 2000, could affect two, or more states. A review of the situation in 1990 outlines the potential problem.

Contemporaneous with the decision to *not* adjust the 1990 head count numbers, a set of adjustment factors was released in June 1991. Had the adjustment gone forward with this first set of numbers, there would have been two losers for Congressional seats, WI and PA, and two gainers, CA and AZ.

When a second set of revised adjustment numbers were released in July 1992, the number of states had dropped to 2, leaving WI losing a seat to CA (making CA 53 and WI 8), solely by virtue of an adjustment. The reappearance of PA and AZ on the 1997 adjustment list seems to foreshadow a return to the same situation as 1990.

Questions Remaining. Will an adjustment bring a return of uncertainty for apportionment and redistricting? Will the integrated aspect of the "sampling and estimation" technique make it impossible to "back-out" the head-count numbers? Will the voters of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania or Wisconsin lose representation on the House floor due to statistical modeling? Is polling an appropriate method for accurately determining the apportionment of political power in these United States? Does polling meet the Constitutional requirement of an "actual Enumeration"?

These are some of the challenges confronting the Commerce Department as it proceeds with its plan to statistically adjust the 2000 Census.

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