

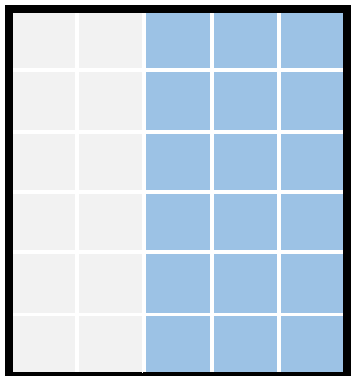
Rules of Redistricting: The Voting Rights Act

Passed at the height of the Civil Rights Movement in 1965, the **Voting Rights Act** (VRA) prevents the systemic and widespread voter discrimination experienced by people of color. In recent years, the Voting Rights Act has been used to block voter suppression laws, such as demands for voter identification, voter registration purges, and making voter registration harder. The process of voting is not only casting a vote on election day. It also includes rules and processes that determine who is eligible, how to register, how to vote, when polls are open, and whether people are put in districts that give them a fair chance of electing their candidate of choice. **Section 2** of the VRA protects voters from discrimination based on race, color, or membership in a language minority group in all these election procedures. The term “minority” is used in the Voting Rights Act and has a specific legal definition.

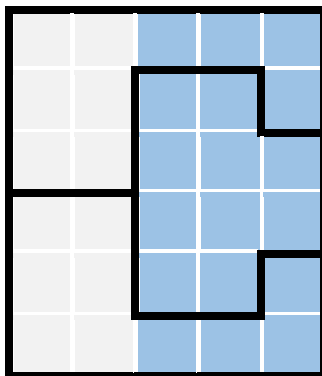
Redistricting has been used at times to prevent minority voters from gaining political power by drawing districts in a way that resulted in those voters having less of a chance of electing their candidate(s) of choice. This is known as **minority vote dilution**, and it commonly occurs in two ways, packing and cracking.

PACKING

Packing is the term used when minority voters are compressed into a small number of districts when they could effectively control more. An example of packing is when mapmakers draw one district that is over 90% of a single minority group (BLUE), when they could draw at least two districts with 50% single minority group.

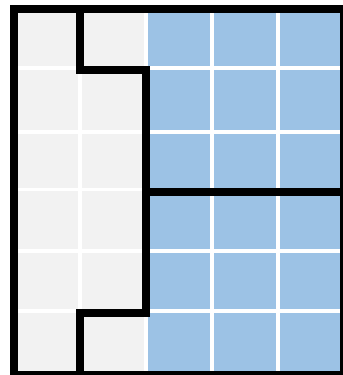


60% Blue wards
40% Gray wards



3 Districts
2 Gray Districts
1 Blue District

BLUE wards are
“packed” into one
district

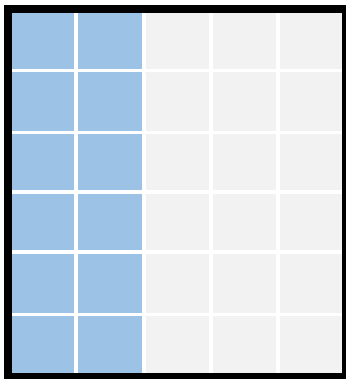


3 Districts
2 Blue Districts
1 Gray District

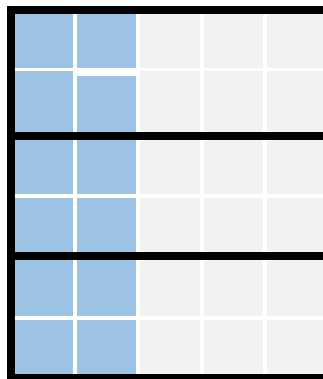
Proportional Outcome

CRACKING

Spreading minority voters thinly into many districts is known as **cracking**, splitting, or fracturing. An example of cracking can occur if three districts are created that have 40% of a single minority population in each. If the minority population (BLUE) were placed within one district where they are 70%, the minority community would have an opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice.

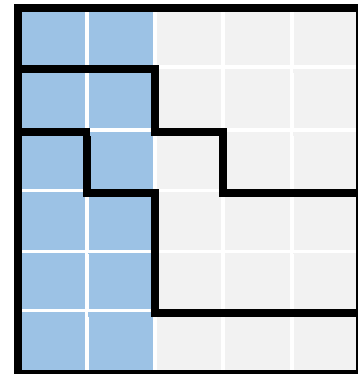


60% Gray wards
40% Blue wards



3 Districts
3 Gray Districts
0 Blue District

**BLUE wards are
“cracked” into 3
districts**



3 Districts
2 Grey Districts
1 Blue District

Proportional Outcome

Understanding the protections available under the Voting Rights Act can help keep your community together and gain greater political access. Providing community stories and examples of historical discrimination is an important way community members can provide evidence to support a Voting Rights Act district being drawn.

The Voting Rights Act, Section 2 protects the creation of **majority-minority districts**, which are districts that contain a majority of a racial or linguistic minority population. The courts have found that are four main criteria that need to be met in order to mandate the creation of majority-minority districts:

- 1) The minority group is sufficiently large and geographically concentrated to make up a majority in a district.
- 2) The minority group is politically cohesive. This means that the individuals that make up the group vote in similar patterns, e.g. they usually vote for the same candidates.
- 3) The white majority votes together to defeat the minority-preferred candidates.
- 4) Given the “totality of circumstances” listed above, the minority group has less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the electoral process and to elect representatives of its choice.

Other types of districts that can be drawn as remedies to historic discrimination, including **minority-coalition districts**, **crossover districts**, and **influence districts**. (See **Redistricting: Key Terms**)