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**Some Cities Object to Being Carved Up by Redistricting**

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There are no guard towers, or Checkpoint Charlies, or even walls. But scores of American cities, counties and metropolitan areas are being divided again — splitting apart families, neighbors and, most important, voters with similar interests and needs — as states engage in the once-a-decade process of drawing the lines of new Congressional districts.

And mayors and local officials in many places are none too happy about it.

Austin, a liberal island in Texas that has long been carved into multiple districts, would still be divided in three under a plan that was drawn up last week by a Texas court. In North Carolina, where Republicans drew maps that are expected to give them a big advantage, a [lawsuit](http://www.wral.com/asset/news/state/nccapitol/2011/11/03/10333848/Dickson_et_al_v._Rucho_et_al.pdf) complained that one of the new districts seeps into pieces of 19 different counties and has so many twists and turns that its perimeter is 1,319 miles long.

Toledo was splintered into three Congressional districts in the map that Ohio Republicans passed this fall — to the dismay of its mayor, Michael P. Bell, who worried that his city’s clout in Washington would be diluted if its representatives had to weigh the competing needs of different areas.

“I think, for us, having one representative that’s going to carry our water would be more beneficial,” said Mr. Bell, an independent, adding that there was talk of replacing the recently passed map with a new one that would split the city into two districts. “We want to make sure that our issues are covered.”

Gerrymandering, of course, is nearly as old as the Republic and is practiced with relish by both parties. But for local officials concerned with governing, oddly shaped Congressional districts that do not follow city or county lines can make life that much more complicated. And when urban and metropolitan areas are broken up and combined with rural areas, mayors say, fewer voices are left to vigorously push an urban or metropolitan agenda in Washington.

When Utah gained a fourth Congressional seat this year, local officials in Salt Lake County hoped that their booming metropolitan area would dominate at least one of the new districts. They sought what they called a doughnut hole-shaped district, centered on the county. But their county happens to have the highest concentration of Democratic voters in the heavily Republican state, so the Republicans who drew the maps opted for what they called pizza-slice-shaped districts that contained pieces of Salt Lake County in the center and broadened out. In the end, the map they passed split Salt Lake County into three of the state’s four districts, stretching some of them into far more conservative, rural corners of Utah.

“We asked for a doughnut hole, we expected a pizza, and instead we got a plate of scrambled eggs,” said Peter Corroon, the Democratic mayor of Salt Lake County. “We are essentially urban areas that lose their voice under this kind of gerrymandering. What happens is, because we’re so lopsided politically, even if a Democrat wins in one of those districts, their legislative policies have to be so much focused on the rural areas.”

Salt Lake City was granted its plea to be kept whole — but instead of being paired with its suburban and regional neighbors, the city, which has a population of about 185,000, was placed in a rural-dominated district that stretches all the way to the Nevada and Arizona state lines.

Salt Lake City’s mayor, Ralph Becker, said he worried that whoever was elected to represent the district would be torn between the needs of the urban and rural areas, which are sometimes at odds. Salt Lake County has been expanding its mass transit system and trying to protect its watershed, Mr. Becker said, while many rural areas are pushing for more highway money and for fewer restrictions on the use of federal land.

“We now are combined with areas that have virtually no relationship to our issues,” Mr. Becker said.

Cities have long been underrepresented in Congress, political scientists have found. As far back as 1963, when 31 percent of Americans lived in central cities, only 25.3 percent of the nation’s Congressional districts were situated mostly in central cities, according to [a 1998 study](http://uar.sagepub.com/content/34/2/291) by Harold Wolman and Lisa Marckini. By 1993, they found, the portion of Americans living in central cities had dropped to 28.2 percent, and only 21.4 percent of Congressional districts were primarily urban.

Both parties carve up counties and cities when it suits their needs. Illinois Democrats drew a map this year that gave them a big advantage in part by stretching several urban Chicago districts so that they absorb small bits of the Republican-leaning suburbs that surround them.

In Texas, the Republican-drawn maps that Gov. Rick Perry signed into law this summer would have split Austin into six districts and would have forced one Democratic incumbent, Representative Lloyd Doggett, to seek re-election in a strange new district that was to have run along Interstate 35 from Austin to San Antonio.

The new district would have forced him to run for the seat against a popular Democratic state representative from the San Antonio area, Joaquin Castro. Mr. Castro is running for Congress in his current district. But after a federal court rejected the state’s map last month, on the grounds that it failed to properly gauge its impact on members of minority groups, another court was given the power to draw up an interim map. The new map gave Mr. Doggett his own district and split Austin into only three.

The mayor of Austin, Lee Leffingwell, said he still wished that the city had its own district. “Our voice is better heard with a district that is totally within the city of Austin,” he said.

Not everyone agrees. When officials in High Point, N.C., worried that their city was being split, one council member, Michael Pugh, said he thought that more representatives might be a good thing. “I had rather talk to eight ears than four ears,” Mr. Pugh said, adding that more representatives would get seats on more committees in Congress.

Odd-looking districts that split cities or counties sometimes make sense for reasons other than partisan politics, including creating districts that give power to black or Hispanic voters to comply with the [Voting Rights Act](http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/subjects/v/voting_rights_act_1965/index.html?inline=nyt-classifier). California’s nonpartisan redistricting commission [reported](http://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/downloads/meeting_handouts_082011/crc_20110815_2final_report.pdf) that the Congressional districts it drew split 11 counties and 41 cities.

But many cities want to remain whole. The mayor of Nashville, Karl F. Dean, grew concerned last summer when rumors began swirling that the Republicans who will eventually draw the new maps in Tennessee were thinking of dividing Davidson County, the home of Nashville, to split up its Democratic voters. Mr. Dean wrote to state officials, urging them to keep the district intact.

“No one has made, beyond pure politics, a case for breaking up the district,” said Mr. Dean, who added that the city had benefited by having one representative who knew its needs and could specialize on issues like copyright law, which is important to the music industry. “I get politics as much as anybody — it’s what I do for a living,” he said. “But this does not need to be done.”

*This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:*

***Correction: December 5, 2011***

An earlier version of this article misstated the number of Congressional districts that Austin was originally to have been divided into under a map passed by Texas Republicans earlier this year. That map, which has since been halted by the courts, would have divided the city of Austin into six districts, not four.