

Redistricting Scenario – Miami City Commission

Redistricting Criteria

Enacted by the City of Miami City Commission:

In the post-2010 redistricting, the following redistricting criteria shall be followed:

1. Each commission district must achieve substantial equality of population within the deviation permitted under the case law, based on total population as reported by the U.S. Census bureau in the P. L. 94-171 redistricting data file for Miami.
2. The City must not engage in racial gerrymandering.
3. The new commission districts must not dilute the voting strength of politically cohesive minority communities.
4. All districts must be composed of contiguous and reasonably compact geography.
5. When possible, communities of interest should be preserved. Communities of interest include areas that have similarities of interests, such as social, cultural, and economic interests common to the population of the area.

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SOCIAL SCIENTIST

You have been asked to help a loosely defined, fragile coalition of community organizations and local leaders come up with a redistricting proposal for the upcoming public hearing. The group has defined your goals as:

1. Help figure out how best to preserve the voting strength of black and Latino voters and avoid divisive conflict between the two groups.
2. Gather evidence that will justify the continued use of majority-minority districts and guard against racial gerrymandering claims.

Possible questions to ask community members:

1. What black and Latino candidates have run against each other and in which districts?
2. What is your “community of interest”? How do you define your community? What do you have in common with your neighbors, what distinguishes your neighborhood from other areas in the city?
3. What are the natural neighborhood boundaries in the City? What features (rivers, freeways, railroads, etc) divide the city?
4. Have there been incidents of voter suppression in recent elections?

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NAACP Members

You are a member of the Miami NAACP. You recently attended a statewide legal redress training on redistricting and want to examine what options are available in redrawing Miami's city commission districts.

You have been invited to participate in a multi-racial coalition designed to create a "Unity" plan, that is supported by Hispanic groups and African-American groups in the City, to avoid a "divide and conquer" strategy by the white establishment. You are skeptical, and somewhat concerned that Latino members of the coalition are simply trying to co-opt the NAACP for their own goals.

You value collaboration but believe it is time that Miami have two African-Americans on the City Commission.

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NALEO Members

You are a member of the Miami chapter of the National Association of Latino Elected Officials. (NALEO). You recently attended a regional meeting in Atlanta, learning more about the redistricting process, and you want to examine what options are available in redrawing Miami's city commission districts.

You have been invited to participate in a multi-racial coalition designed to create a "Unity" plan that is supported by Latino groups and African-American groups in the City, to avoid a "divide and conquer" strategy by the white establishment. You are skeptical, and somewhat concerned that Black members of the coalition are simply trying to grab more seats than they deserve.

You value collaboration but believe it is time for Latinos to get the respect your numbers justify. You want to protect incumbent Latino elected officials and see more Latino seats on the City Commission.

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POWER U members

You are a member of Power U. You have been invited to this meeting to develop a “Unity” redistricting plan. You want to make sure your neighborhood, Overtown, has strong representation on the City Commission.

Power U is working to prevent the displacement of low-income families by increasing community control over current housing, new development projects, and the revitalization of Overtown. Overtown has been in steady decline since I-95 was built right through the heart of this once bustling neighborhood. More than half of the residents have been displaced since then. The real estate boom in downtown Miami is presenting a new threat to the remaining residents. As part of the mayor's vision for Miami to be the global city of the South, public land and resources are being leverage to build for the wealthy. Low-income housing is disappearing as it is either torn down after evicting residents, or allowed to decay to the point where it is unsafe for people to live there; what remains is transferred to the private development of condos and upscale retail.

Power U uses community organizing and leadership development to empower Overtown residents to speak out about the issues that affect them and their community. Community leaders are identified and selected to participate in our College of Leadership. After developing basic leadership and organizing skills, they work to organize community members to participate in actions that are aimed at improving conditions. Power U's biggest campaign was the fight against the Crosswinds' proposal to build luxury condos on public land in Overtown. For three years, Power U and residents spoke out at town hall meetings, rallies, and in the media about the negative impact of this proposal. Residents also worked together to develop a vision for that land and have presented this to the City and County Commissioners. During a public ceremony, they named the land Sankofa, a West African word that means, "We must go back and reclaim our past so we can move forward; so we can understand why and how we came to be who we are today." The fight against the Crosswinds project is won but Power U will not stop holding elected officials accountable. They are working with community leaders and experts to monitor the new tender process and hold officials accountable for their recent promises about providing low-income housing.

You are not interested in participating in black/latino fights over city power. You want a plan that results in Commissioners who you can wrest away from the control of developers.