

Talking Points for Petitioners on  
*Austinites for Geographic Representation's*  
10-1 with a Redistricting Commission Plan

- **What is different this time is that we've formed the first grassroots coalition ever for a specific geographic representation plan;** and the largest coalition for promoting that we switch to a district system in nearly 40 years. It includes Democrats, Republicans and Independents, the NAACP and LULAC, environmentalists, neighborhood activists and business people and numerous more organizations and individuals.  
**This is why this time, we will succeed!**
- **This plan, for the first time ever in Austin, includes an Independent Citizens Commission to draw the ten districts selected in a manner that is free of the influence of City Hall politics and special interests.**
  - The members will be chosen from interested private citizens that will be banned by law from having ties to City Hall political, lobby or business interests and chosen to ensure diversity on the committee
  - The district lines draw will have to follow federal laws that comply with one man-one vote and minority representation standards and we can require that they follow natural features and neighborhoods while being as compact as possible
  - The process will be open to the public for discussion and input before any decisions are made
- For 40 years, Austin hasn't had a system representative of the whole city. It has had **Two Super Districts: *District WEST* that has 10% of the Austin population but has been the home to 50.4% of all the Council Members in the last 40 years and 15 of 17 Mayors and, *District REST*, that has 90% of the Austin and has been home to 49.6 % of all Councilmembers and 2 of 17 Mayors in 40yrs.** South Austinites make up 42% of the total population of Austin but in 40 years as a part of *District REST*, they have elected 18% of the Councilmembers and one Mayor.  
*WE are working for system geographic representation where every 10% of Austin elects 10% of the Councilmembers!*
- **This 10-1 plan will meet the standard set by two federal judges and the requirements of the US Department of Justice (DOJ) under the Voting Rights Act.** Two federal Judges (Roberts & Nowlin) have found that Austin is the largest city in the nation where one African-American and one Hispanic can be elected in an "at-large" or, more accurately stated, in a Two Super District system. The effect of these court cases is that any plan for geographic representation that replaces the current at-large plan must **meet the same standard of creating the opportunity to elect at least one African- American and one Hispanic.** Otherwise, under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, a plan that would do less would commit "retrogression" and be unacceptable to the Dept. of Justice. Because the African-American population in Austin over the last 40 years has steadily declined to 7.7% in the 2010 Census, while the Hispanic population percentage of the City has steadily increased, the critical issue is: how many districts it takes to draw a legally acceptable African-American District.  
There are the **two Federal Court cases that require us to have one African- American district that will pass DOJ muster under VRA.** *Austinites for Geographic Representation* has redistricting experts that have analyzed 8 and 10 district plans and **only a 10 district**

**plan provides an African-American district that will meet DOJ standards of an African-American opportunity district.**

- **Austin is the largest disproportionately representative municipality in the nation (at 1:812,500/each councilmember representing more than most US congresspeople do!); and the largest city in Texas and one of the largest in the nation not to have geographic representation.**
  - Houston 2.1million...9 Districts
  - San Antonio 1.3Million...10 Districts
  - Dallas 1.2million...14 Districts
  - Ft Worth 741,206...9 Districts
  - El Paso 649,121...8 Districts
  - San Jose 945,942...10 Districts
  - San Francisco 805,235...9 Districts
  - Boston 616,594...9 Districts
  - Nashville 601,222...35 Districts
  - Denver 600158...11 Districts
  - Milwaukee 601,222...35 Districts
- **The AGR plan will put an end 40 years of minorities all too often being represented in appearance, and not in reality on the City Council.** NAACP-Austin reminded everyone that two federal Judges have said we are the only city in Texas or in the nation that allows at least one African- American and Hispanic get elected under current Two Super District System. However, they point out often, the “Minority Councilmember” is someone the non-minority voters chose. **It is time to end the Two Super Districts system that has condemned Austin minority voters to four decades of apparent - but no real - representation.**
- **Every level of government we vote for here from School Board, County to Legislature to Congress has geographic representation except Austin.** You have to remember that geographic representation was the original idea of such ‘ward healers’ as James Madison, Ben Franklin and George Washington so we are hardly the first to support it. **The Two Super District System is one of those weird things about Austin we can do without while we try some real democracy.**