

Minnesota Senate district 58, soon to be 59

Written by Lydia Schwartz - Contributing Writer
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As Minnesota's population grows, each legislator needs to represent the additional people more *accurately*. Redistricting is the process of redrawing the boundaries of election districts in response to population changes determined by the results of the decennial US Census. The purpose of this update every ten years is to ensure that the people of each district are equally represented.

While some election district border changes are more drastic than others, Minnesota has also been forced to renumber most of the districts. Meaning that after the elections this fall, State Senate District 57 will become 58, 58 will become 59, 59 will become 60, and so on. Probably the biggest factor in redistricting is the overall trend of urban populations growing at a faster rate than suburban areas. State Senator Linda Higgins (DFL-58) says that the six state senators representing the City of Minneapolis will now be whittled down to five, "diluting the overall power and strength of the city [in the State Legislature]."

To reduce the role that legislative politics might play, Minnesota carries out legislative and congressional redistricting by an independent and bipartisan commission. District judges are required by law to avoid the drawing of boundaries for the purposes of partisan advantage or incumbent protection, a practice called gerrymandering. However, in addition to equalizing the population of districts and complying with federal requirements, judges may attempt to create compact, contiguous districts, and try to keep certain communities within a single district.

According to the Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie's website, the state legislature has the statutory responsibility for redistricting congressional, legislative, and Metropolitan Council districts. County boards are responsible for redistricting county commissioner districts, city councils for redistricting city wards, and school boards for redistricting board member districts. In addition, cities and townships will establish their precinct boundaries as part of the redistricting process, as will counties that have unorganized territory.

The Minnesota State Senate has 67 seats, each with roughly the same population. According to the US Bureau of the Census, in 2000, the Minnesota Senate District 58 had a population 73,265. After the census in 2010, future Minnesota State District 59 has an approximate population of 79,275. Each Senate district each is broken into northern and southern sections (A and B), creating the 134 Minnesota State House of Representative districts. The Democratic-Farm-Labor Party needs to gain four Senate districts, for a total of 34, and is going to have to work very hard in order to regain those seats. The Republican Party of Minnesota currently has the majority with 37 State Senators.

The future House District 59A had a jump in population from 2000 to 2010 by 7,000 residents, for a total population of 39,653. As a result, State Rep. Joe Mullery's district (DFL-58A) has been extended from its current Lowry Avenue N. border, all the way down to W Broadway Avenue to add both the Harrison and Jordan neighborhoods to his constituency.

State Rep. Bobby Joe Champion's (DFL-58B) constituency has also been extended southeast of Hennepin Avenue to include most of downtown Minneapolis and Elliot Park, but does not

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include the Loring Park neighborhood. The western border of District 59 follows Xerxes Avenue N, rather than Washburn, to include part of the Bryn Mawr neighborhood.

Sen. Higgins says that redistricting is much like 'insider baseball' in that it matters a lot at the State Capitol because of the numbers it involves. "Most constituents probably won't even notice a difference," Higgins said.