

Gerrymander Exercise

Directions:

1. Show students the attached map call “My State: 1990”
2. Explain the three symbols used in the map: R, D, I. Each stands for a unit of population which has a majority of voters registered as Republicans, Democrats or Independents.
3. Ask them how voters in each district would likely vote? A: They would tend to vote along party lines.
4. Ask them how that information would be available? A: Board of Elections records that are publicly available.
5. Assuming voters followed party lines, how many delegates from each party would be elected to the legislature? A: Let them calculate likely results for each district.

Task:

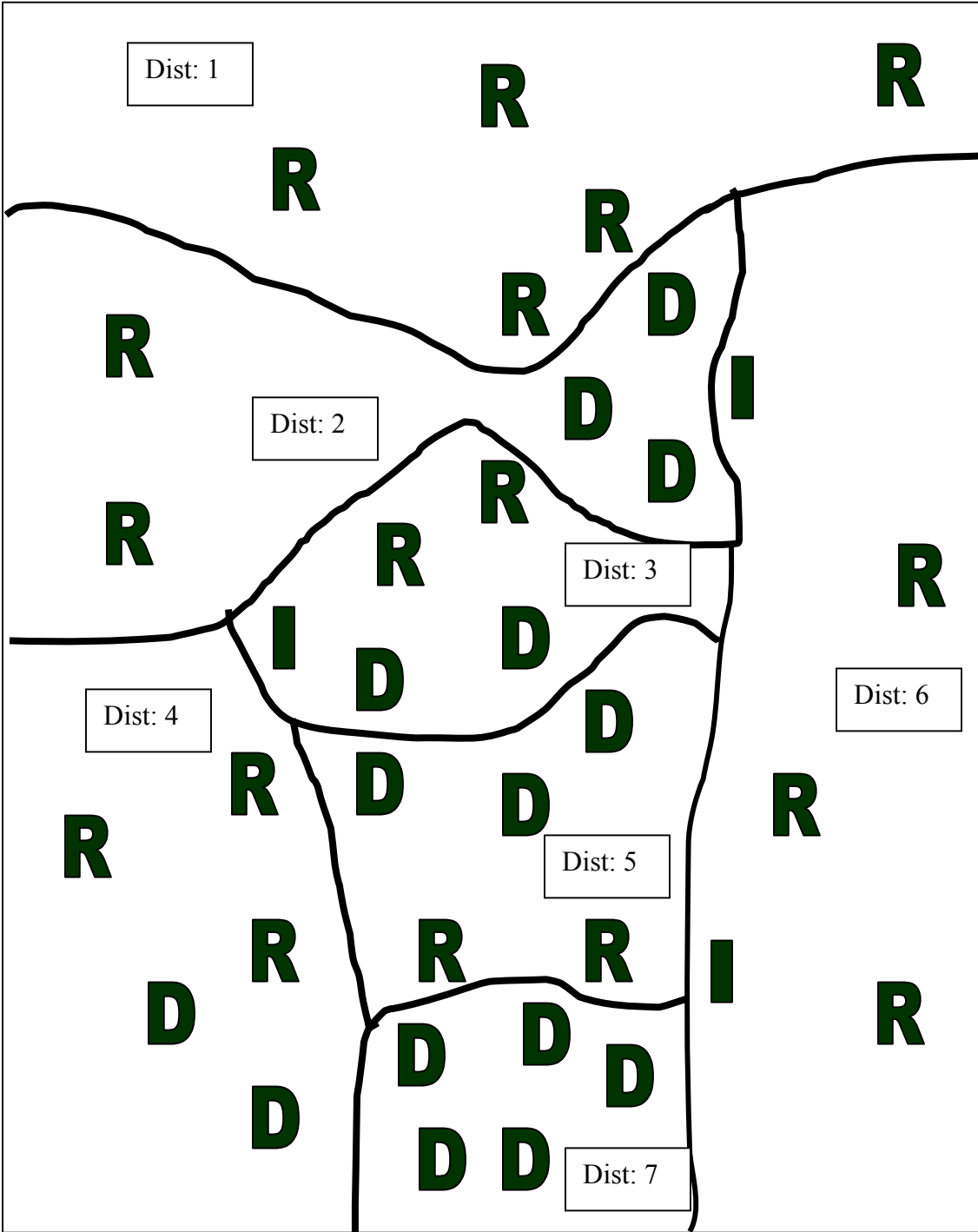
Tell the students that they have been asked to serve as consultants to the state legislature. The results of the 2000 census have been reported. The state legislature now has to redraw the district lines to reflect changes in population. Divide the students into two groups: Republican and Democrats. Working individually (or in groups) ask them to develop legislative districts that will favor their party. Rules:

1. All legislative districts must contain the same number of population units.
2. District must be contiguous – no split districts allowed

Follow up:

1. Compare the results. Hint: If you turn My State: 2000 into an overhead you can project it on a whiteboard. Trace the map symbols and let students add their district lines.
2. Discuss the historical roots of the term gerrymander.
3. Ask students to research district lines in your state, county, or local area
4. Hold a contest among students to bring in the most outrageous district lines
5. Discuss the impacts of gerrymandering on the legislative process. Is it fair to the voters?
6. Research and discuss the demographics of party affiliation.

| My State 1990 | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|
| District: Party | 1: | 2: | 3: |
| | 4: | 5: | 6: |
| | | 6: | 7: |



My State 2000

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|----|----|
| District: Party | 1: | 2: | 3: |
| 4: | 5: | 6: | 7: |

