

cartographic perspectives

Number 10, Summer 1991

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cartographic perspectives on the news

CITIZENS MAP POLITICAL DISTRICTS IN MICHIGAN
Common Cause in Michigan is sponsoring a contest to encourage public participation in the highly politicized decennial remapping of State House and Senate seats. For \$25, citizens receive a kit containing 1980 district maps and 1990 census population data by county, city, township and selected census tracts. The Michigan State Chamber of Commerce has donated two \$1,000 prizes for Senate and House redistricting plans that best satisfy Common Cause's reapportionment criteria.

Consistent with Common Cause's goal to "demonstrate how election lines can be redrawn without political interference," the contest kit does not include data on party affiliation or historical voting trends. In fact, contest participants are required to sign a statement affirming that they "have not used political data" to inform their maps.

The four-member Common Cause board of directors will serve as judges. Entries will be judged on five criteria: the contiguity of proposed districts, minimization of population disparity among

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districts, creation of districts in which historically disenfranchised minority groups form a majority (in compliance with 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act), concordance with existing county, municipal and township boundaries, and compactness of districts.

The redistricting process is based on the official results of the 1990 census, though that count is estimated to have missed as much as 2 percent of the population. Citizens of urban minority groups in southeastern Michigan are thought to be disproportionately undercounted. The Democratic Party will likely attempt to adopt the unofficial corrected census for redistricting purposes if a pending California court case provides an adequate precedent.

Michigan's bicameral state legislature is dominated by the

Democratic Party in the House and the Republican Party in the Senate. As of August, both parties had released criteria for their redistricting proposals. Because traditionally Republican districts have generally gained population at the expense of Democratic districts, "politically neutral" criteria like Common Cause's tend to favor Republican candidates. So while the announced Republican criteria are very similar to those adopted by Common Cause, the Democratic Party's criteria allow for greater population disparity among districts (16.4 percent instead of 10 percent) and more frequent deviations from existing jurisdictional boundaries.

As of the August 27 contest closing date, Common Cause Executive Director Karen Merrill reports that 30 contest kits have been sold, with nine Senate plans and one House plan received. Considering the difficulty of the remapping puzzle, Merrill is pleased with the response. While neither political party has released its district map proposal, the Democrats have challenged the Republicans to agree on a compromise plan by January 2, 1992. "If," as Merrill expects, "the legislature is unable to agree on a plan and everything gets tied up in the courts, that might be the time" to introduce the winning contest maps to the public debate.

\$14.6 MILLION GRANT FOR GRAPHICS AND VISUALIZATION

What have come to be known as the Gang of Five — Brown, Cal Tech, Cornell, University of Utah and University of North Carolina — have received funding of \$14.6 million from the National Science Foundation and DARPA to establish the National Science and Technology Center for Computer Graphics and Scientific Visualization. No separate facility

will be established. The Center is administered by the University of Utah. Each school receives \$500,000 per year for the next five years, with the possibility of extension for five more years.

"It's really not very much money," says Andries van Dam of Brown University, "when you consider that it costs us \$35,000 for a graduate student." John Hughes, also at Brown, points out, however, that as a result of the funding, several U.S. hardware manufacturers have granted equipment credits to the schools.

"This has allowed us to hire more research assistants and buy some peripheral equipment that until now we haven't been able to afford," says Hughes.

When the Center is fully operational, the five schools plan to have online access to one another's file systems through some kind of Andrew File System (AFS) network. How best to disseminate information about work going on at the Center to people outside the five schools has not yet been determined. "At the moment," according to Hughes, "we think it should be electronic."

Pixel 2:2, July/August 1991

UTAH FLIPS FOR FRENCH

An eight-page spread in the French magazine *LeFigaro* included glowing accounts, pictures of breathtaking scenery and a map that turned the Beehive State upside down [sic] and placed Idaho and Wyoming within its borders.

Depending on how you look at it, the map shows one Utah valley floating in the Great Salt Lake not far from the Arizona border. Wyoming is a stone's throw from Ogden, Utah, and Idaho appears to be the State's northernmost community.

The response from state tourism officials? *C'est la vie.*

The Associated Press, July 22, 1991