



Published on *Citizens' Committee for an Effective Constitution* (<http://nyconstitution.org>)

News Coverage on Redistricting Local Standards

A Different Look for Dutchess

[Joshua Simons](#) ^[1] [Ryan Reutershan](#) ^[2] ^[3] ^[3]

05/12/2011

<http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/> ^[4]

Dutchess County adopted a bi-partisan commission process for redistricting the county legislature in 2009. But after the legislative majority changed from Democrat to Republican it abandoned this idea, returning the task to the legislature itself. At the SUNY New Paltz Center for Research Regional Education and Outreach (CRREO) we decided to see what might have happened if the county had gone ahead with the commission process. We drew a 25 district map that honors town, city and village lines as much as possible, while meeting U.S constitutional one-person-one vote standards. Mindful of the Federal Voting Rights Act, we also sought to maximize representation for the county's cities, where much of Dutchess's minority-group population lives. The attached map is the result.

Importantly, we drew this map without giving consideration to partisan registration and voting patterns, or to the residents of incumbent legislators.

The target population for a county legislative district in Dutchess after the 2010 census is 11,900. The most populous district in our map is #22 (East Fishkill), with 12,407 people. The least populous is # 18 (Red Hook), with 11,309 residents. This plan also results in 4 contests pitting incumbents (if all choose to run) against each other, either in primaries or general elections.

They are:

- New District 3 - Rob Rolison (R) vs. Steve White (D) ? City and Town of Poughkeepsie
- New District 7 - James Doxey (C) vs. D.J. Sadowski (R) ? Hyde Park
- New District 9- Suzanne Horn (R) vs. Michael Kelsey (R) ? Pleasant Valley & Washington
- New District 11 - Robert A. Weiss (R) vs. Sandra Goldberg (D) ? Wappinger & Town of Poughkeepsie

Many of these members are among the legislature's most influential: Rob Rolison chairs the body, while Sandra Godlberg is its Minority Leader. Michael Kelsey was among the strongest proponent of the repeal of the 2009 law the created the independent commission.

Political scientists usually use a win by 55% of the vote or more as a standard to identify an election as less competitive. According to this criterion, none of these eight legislators was elected in 2009 in a competitive contest.

It is also true that districts without incumbents have generally been proved to be more competitive than those in which incumbents are seeking election. This plan produces four districts in which there in which no incumbent lives:

- New District 1: City of Poughkeepsie
- New District 8: Hyde Park
- New District 12: Town of Wappinger, Village of Wappingers Falls & Town of Poughkeepsie
- New District 22: East Fishkill

Competition is generally regarded to produce accountability and responsiveness to the people in representative systems. Members less certain of reelection listen harder and think more carefully about consequences before they vote. The districts presented in the attached map seem assured of producing at least eight competitive elections involving at least eight sitting legislators who are well known, but have faced less competitive races in recent years.

Moreover, because the census number permit it and our process gives priority to honoring municipal boundaries, this map preserves two districts that proved competitive in 2009, those is Red Hook, and Rhinebeck / Clinton.

Thus, if it were used, at least two-fifths of the elections for the Dutchess County legislature would likely be competitive in 2013. Additionally, competitiveness may be advanced in other districts due to changes in their lines.

This is not the only way to slice the Dutchess County legislature pie to produce districts ?substantially equal in population? that meet U.S. Supreme Court requirements. It is not even the only non-partisan way to do the job.

But this outcome does show what one result might have been from a process not driven by the interest of a controlling party or incumbent legislators; it therefore provides a basis for comparison for citizens as the redistricting process in Dutchess County proceeds.

CRREO wrote this article in the Opinion section of the Poughkeepsie Journal. Unfortunately, the online version did not display the maps, and the link provided to them is in a format that is not accessible for most people. To ameliorate this issue, We are providing the maps for download as well:

[Current Legislative Districts](#) [5]

[Example of Proposed Legislative Districts](#) [6]

Press Clip Relevance

Local laws that call for independent redistricting can easily be un-done when opponents have a majority in the legislature. A constitutional amendment would ensure bi-partisan redistricting.

Source URL: <http://nyconstitution.org/press-clip/news-coverage/redistricting-local-standards/poughkeepsie-journal-different-look-dutchess>

Links:

- [1] [http://nyconstitution.org/press-clip-author/Joshua Simons](http://nyconstitution.org/press-clip-author/Joshua%20Simons)
- [2] [http://nyconstitution.org/press-clip-author/Ryan Reutershan](http://nyconstitution.org/press-clip-author/Ryan%20Reutershan)
- [3] <http://nyconstitution.org/press-clip-author>
- [4] <http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/>
- [5] http://www.newpaltz.edu/crreo/current_lds.png
- [6] http://www.newpaltz.edu/crreo/proposed_lds.png