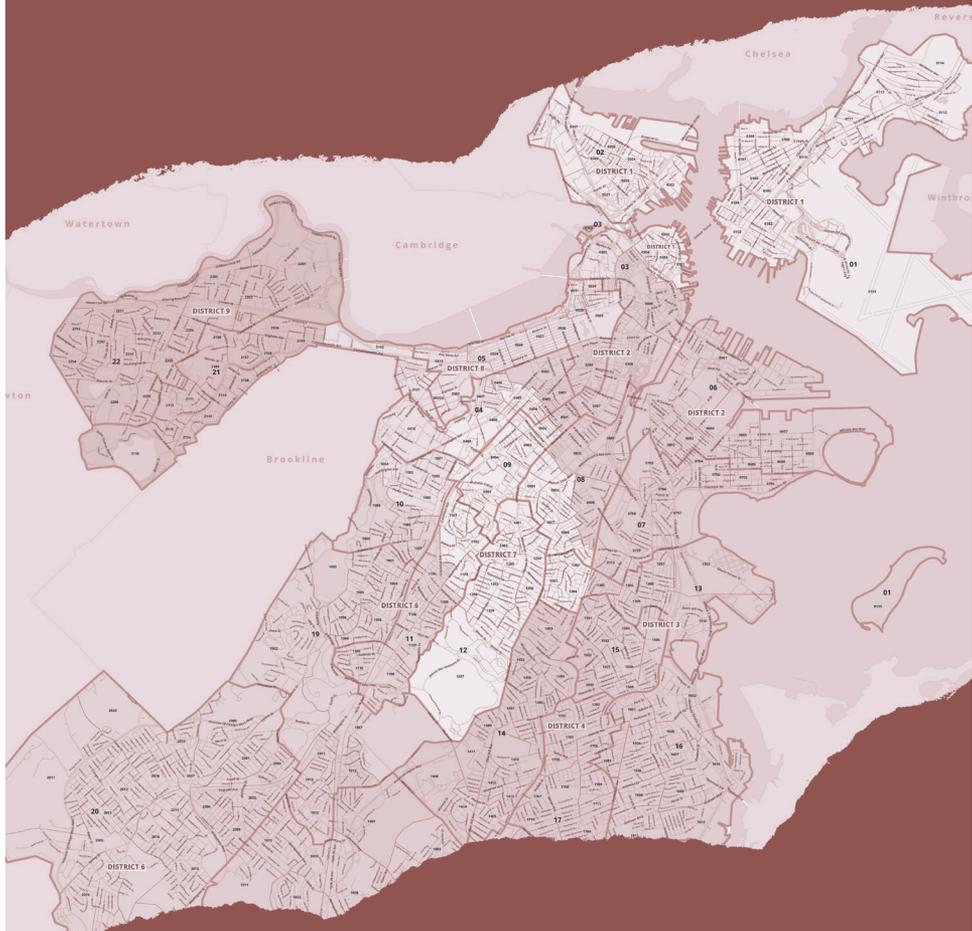


LCR

LAWYERS FOR CIVIL RIGHTS BOSTON



Democratizing Redistricting in 2021

Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR) protects and expands voting rights for people of color and other traditionally disenfranchised groups. As part of this work, we are proactively ensuring that the forthcoming redistricting process across the Commonwealth is fair, equitable, transparent, and community driven.

Contents

- 5 Project Goals
- 6 Executive Summary
- 9 Key Strategies
- 11 Planned Activities
- 13 Needs Statement



Democratizing Redistricting in 2021

Project Goals

LCR and our partners will ensure an open and equitable redistricting process – one that helps communities of color secure meaningful representation by candidates who understand and respond to their interests. Success on this front will result in a redistricting process across Massachusetts that is accessible and transparent, allowing communities to participate directly in the critical line-drawing process. Widespread community participation is critical to creating viable, well-designed districts that are accountable to diverse constituents. Together, we can ensure democracy works for all.

Executive Summary

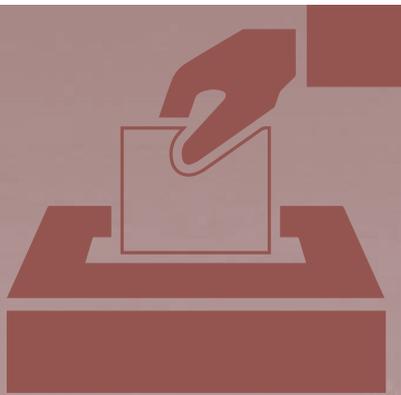
With the 2020 Census coming to a close and a comprehensive, multi-pronged effort underway to ensure that all Massachusetts residents are counted, Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR) is proactively working to ensure that the forthcoming redistricting process across the Commonwealth is fair, equitable, transparent, and community driven.

Armed with the new data from the 2020 Census, we will strategically focus on redistricting as it affects Congressional and state legislative districts – seeking to maximize the number of opportunity districts for people of color to elect candidates of their choice in the Commonwealth. We will also propose redistricting maps for key urban centers that draw district lines for local offices such as city council and/or school committees, including Boston, Worcester, Springfield, and Lowell.

This initiative is critical to connect residents and voters to the democratic institutions that, in far too many places, have failed to reflect and represent them for decades. Political and social exclusion are intertwined and the harm is compounded generationally. Redistricting represents an opportunity to change the status quo and to support a more diverse, equitable, representative and accountable democracy.

LCR is uniquely situated for this work because we have both expertise in the highly technical legal issues at the heart of redistricting, and a long track record of success empowering voters in communities of color through complementary legal and community-driven work. **In the last redistricting cycle, LCR was instrumental in creating Massachusetts' 7th Congressional district, represented by the first Black woman elected to Congress from Massachusetts.** We have close partnerships and relationships with communities of color that will be essential to promote civic engagement and to diversify and democratize the redistricting process.





Key Strategies

Redistricting will begin immediately following the release of Census 2020 data, with final district lines expected to be drawn by the end of 2021. We are confident that the robust community education and outreach that is already taking place on the ground, with leadership from our organization and many dedicated grassroots groups, will lead to a comprehensive Census count. In order to fully capitalize on the investments being made across the state in support of a complete count, we must build on the momentum created by Census outreach to foment equally robust community engagement strategies for the redistricting process.

Redistricting represents a critical opportunity for communities of color. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and other laws are powerful tools that allow our communities to advocate for district lines to be drawn in a manner that maximizes their voting strength. But that opportunity can easily be lost if proactive steps are not taken. Many other groups will have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo and will be backed by their own legal counsel and demographic experts. LCR will harness the strength of our pro bono network of attorneys to bring expert legal support to the most diverse and low-income communities throughout this process. Coupled with strong ties to grassroots groups working on the ground in these communities, we are uniquely positioned to build bridges that will ensure residents can access the information, tools, and legal resources needed to fully exercise their power in the redistricting process.

By pairing an intensive community engagement process – with ample opportunities for diverse perspectives and community interests to be documented and represented in the final maps – with sophisticated legal and technical grounding, we can ensure that communities of color maximize the once-in-a-decade opportunities that are presented by redistricting.

Lawyers for Civil Rights will engage people of color in key urban centers to hold line-drawers accountable to consider the needs and interests of diverse communities. We will support a fair re-districting process by ensuring that our client communities are educated about the laws that protect their voting strength, democratizing access to community mapping tools, and offering residents opportunities to fully understand and consider the impact of redistricting on their families and communities.

We will also engage in advocacy work at the federal, state, and local levels and deploy legal resources through our pro bono network to maximize the number of minority opportunity districts (those with at least 50% minority population) in Congress, the state legislature and in local public offices such as city councils and school committees.

LCR has well-established partnerships with grassroots, community-based organizations in Boston, Worcester, Springfield, and Lowell, which will play an integral role in ensuring effective community outreach and engagement in this process.



LCR team leading a “know-your-rights” training for 48 people in Fall River (2019).

Redistricting represents a critical empowerment and engagement opportunity for people of color and historically marginalized communities.

Planned Activities

We are planning to:

Educate and empower communities of color on redistricting:

Redistricting is a critical area where the law provides specific protections to guard against vote dilution. We will educate diverse communities about this legal landscape and how it affects them and the line-drawing process. Through community forums and webinars, we will engage communities of color to understand the critical issues at play in redistricting. We will reach communities of color through multilingual educational materials about redistricting, the line-drawing process, and the impact of equitable representation. We will also host educational events and activities in partnership with grassroots community partners to provide legal updates.

Technical support with map making:

We will provide training to community groups and their memberships in key cities on the impact of redistricting, how maps are created, and how to prepare and submit their own maps to advocate for themselves based on their community's unique needs and demographics.

Involve communities of color directly in the line-drawing process:

We will also engage communities of color in interactive line-drawing processes. With the advent of new publicly accessible technologies, including www.districtr.org (which we were involved in launching), residents will be able to experience what it is like to draw district maps and create their own maps. We will host workshops and educational events to support community member understanding of and input in the line drawing process.

Communities of color will provide input on many issues throughout the redistricting process:

Where exactly should the lines be drawn?

How will communities of interest be kept together?

Where do neighborhood dividing lines naturally occur?

We will hold focus groups and community meetings to solicit broad community feedback on these important issues for proposed maps.

Deploy legal strategies to protect and advocate for and with voters:

Together with community partners, advocate to ensure that the Voting Rights Act and other legal protections are fully considered in the line-drawing process. We will engage our extensive pro bono legal network to provide the legal perspective and advocate from that frame of reference in support of communities of color and immigrants.

Checklist for Voting Rights Act compliance:

LCR will create a user-friendly reference tool to guide mapmaking and ensure compliance with the Voting Rights Act, identifying lawful redistricting strategies including coalition districts such as those created by LCR with our partners in Lowell.

Deploy a strategic communications plan:

Incorporate traditional, digital, and social media, and ensure broad linguistic engagement in redistricting. All materials will be translated to effectively reach those who speak English, Spanish, Khmer, Portuguese, and languages relevant to Asian and African immigrant communities.

Non-partisan approach and strategy:

LCR is unequivocally committed to being non-partisan. The proposed redistricting activities will be based on available Census and demographic data. We will not draw “democratic” or “republican” districts – and we will not draw lines based on any political candidate. The lines we draw will be exclusively based on where people of color live.



Democratizing Redistricting in 2021

Resources Needed

LCR and our partners are proactively working to ensure that the redistricting process across Massachusetts is fair, equitable, transparent, and community driven. This is a once-in-a-decade opportunity for communities of color to solidify voter power and maximize the number of opportunity districts in the state legislature, in Congress, and in key urban centers. Resources to support this work are needed to ensure we can achieve our goals.

We are seeking key supporters at the following levels:

\$10,000

Mobilize communities through outreach and engagement focused on redistricting

\$20,000

Ensure voices from communities of color are included in line-drawing processes

\$50,000

Lead the way: \$50,000 will cover a significant portion of LCR's budget for 2020 redistricting work.



**Democratizing
Redistricting in
2021**

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