



Everything New Orleans

Gov. Bobby Jindal does not expect to take lead role in redistricting

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By **Bill Barrow**, The Times-Picayune

Gov. **Bobby Jindal's** administration will not propose its own congressional or legislative **redistricting** plans and wants to play no more than a backseat role when legislators convene to redraw maps, the governor confirmed.



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Ted Jackson, The Times-Picayune

Gov. Bobby Jindal talks to representatives of The Times-Picayune in the executive offices on Wednesday.

"We've asked the congressional delegation to come up with its own plan," Jindal said during a meeting at The Times-Picayune on Wednesday. "We'll let the Legislature handle (the legislative map)."

The session, expected to start March 20 and continue to mid-April, is expected to be contentious as lawmakers mull how to contract seven U.S. House districts into six, while also reapportioning 144 legislative seats to account for population shifts since Hurricane Katrina.

Jindal said he envisions serving in the governor's traditional redistricting role: publicly neutral, privately engaged when invited.

The governor said he agreed with the political calculus that it does him little good to pick favorites among lawmakers and members of Congress.

"I'm sure we'll be consulted," and will be willing to come to the table if asked, Jindal said. But, he added, "I know my boundaries."

Louisiana had eight U.S. House seats through most of the 20th century, but lost one seat after the 1990 census. It maintained seven seats through the 2000 census, but the latest **2010 census** projections show the state, while posting a net gain over the decade, did not keep pace with the population growth in other states.

Ten states will lose federal representation. Eight states, all in the South or West, will gain seats in the House of Representatives, with Texas picking up four and Florida two.

Louisiana's congressional delegation has submitted its own plan in previous post-census sessions. None of the congressional offices has yet identified who will take the lead on a plan, and there is no guarantee of consensus given the certainty that at least two incumbents must be placed in the same district.

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Some south Louisiana lawmakers -- joined by newly elected U.S. Rep. **Jeff Landry**, R-New Iberia -- are clamoring for a single coastal district. The Louisiana coast now includes Landry's 3rd Congressional District and part of U.S. Rep. Charles Boustany's 7th District. Boustany lives in Lafayette.

Other south Louisiana lawmakers have called for consolidating more of north Louisiana into a single district, scrapping the east-west division that now yields Rep. John Fleming's 4th District and Rep. Rodney Alexander's 5th District.

But that is unlikely given that the Legislature's redistricting committees are chaired by two north Louisianians: Rep. Rick Gallot, D-Ruston, and Sen. Robert Kostelka, R-Monroe.

U.S. Reps. **Cedric Richmond**, D-New Orleans, and **Steve Scalise**, R-Jefferson, could see their districts change shape, but they are almost certainly protected against another incumbent. Richmond's 2nd District is Louisiana's lone majority African-American congressional district. The federal Voting Rights Act protects such districts, while Scalise's 1st District is the adjacent counter that is majority white and overwhelmingly conservative.

The other district is the Baton Rouge-anchored 6th District, represented by two-term Rep. Bill Cassidy, R-Baton Rouge.

The Legislature will not be reducing the number of legislative seats, but simply redistributing them, with the most sensitive questions being how many House and Senate district Orleans Parish will lose as a result of population losses.

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