

COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

Several redistricting criteria — like following county or municipal lines, or drawing districts that are compact — are in some ways proxies for finding communities of common interest. These are groups of individuals who are likely to have similar legislative concerns, and who might therefore benefit from cohesive representation in the legislature. Twenty-four states address these communities of interest directly, asking redistricting bodies to consider various types of communities in drawing district lines. Those provisions — some found in the state constitution, some in state statute, and others simply adopted as guidelines by the bodies conducting redistricting — follow.

Source		Provision	
AK	Constitution	“Each house district shall be formed of contiguous and compact territory containing as nearly as practicable a relatively integrated socio-economic area.”	
AL	Legislative guidelines	“The integrity of communities of interest shall be respected to the extent feasible. For purposes of these Guidelines, a community of interest is defined as an area with recognized similarities of interests, including but not limited to racial, ethnic, geographic, governmental, regional, social, cultural, partisan, or historic interests; county, municipal, or voting precinct boundaries; and commonality of communications. It is inevitable that some interests will be recognized and others will not, however the legislature will attempt to accommodate those felt most strongly by the people in each specific location.”	*
AZ	Constitution	“District boundaries shall respect communities of interest to the extent practicable.”	*
CA	Constitution	“The geographic integrity of any city, county, city and county, neighborhood, or community of interest shall be respected to the extent possible Communities of interest shall not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates.”	*
CO	Constitution	“[C]ommunities of interest, including ethnic, cultural, economic, trade area, geographic, and demographic factors, shall be preserved within a single district wherever possible.”	
HI	Constitution	“Where practicable, submergence of an area in a larger district wherein substantially different socio-economic interests predominate shall be avoided.”	*
ID	Statute	“To the maximum extent possible, districts shall preserve traditional neighborhoods and local communities of interest.”	*
KS	Legislative guidelines	“There should be recognition of similarities of interest. Social, cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic interests common to the population of the area, which are probable subjects of legislation . . . should be considered. While some communities of interest lend themselves more readily than others to being embodied in legislative districts, the Committee will attempt to accommodate interests articulated by residents.”	*
ME	Statute	“The commission shall . . . give weight to the interests of local communities”	
MN	Joint resolution	“The districts should attempt to preserve communities of interest where that can be done in compliance [with other] . . . standards.”	*

* Applies to congressional districts and to state legislative districts.

	Source	Provision	
MO	Commission guidelines	“Preserves long-standing communities of interest based on social, cultural, ethnic, and economic similarities.”	
MT	Commission guidelines	“The commission will consider keeping communities of interest intact. Communities of interest can be based on trade areas, geographic location, communication and transportation networks, media markets, Indian reservations, urban and rural interests, social, cultural and economic interests, or occupations and lifestyles.”	
NC	Court	“[C]ommunities of interest should be considered in the formation of compact and contiguous electoral districts.”	
NM	Legislative guidelines	“To the extent feasible, districts shall be drawn in an attempt to preserve communities of interest . . .”	*
OK	Constitution	“In apportioning the State Senate, consideration shall be given to . . . economic and political interests . . . to the extent feasible.”	
OR	Statute	“Each district, as nearly as practicable, shall . . . [n]ot divide communities of common interest. . .”	*
SC	Legislative guidelines	“Where practical, legislative and congressional districts should attempt to preserve communities of interest.”	*
SD	Statute	“[T]he following principles are of primary significance: . . . Protection of communities of interest by means of compact and contiguous districts.”	
VA	Legislative guidelines	“Districts shall be based on legislative consideration of the varied factors that can create or contribute to communities of interest. These factors may include, among others, economic factors, social factors, cultural factors, geographic features, governmental jurisdictions and service delivery areas, political beliefs, voting trends, and incumbency considerations. . . . Local government jurisdiction and precinct lines may reflect communities of interest to be balanced, but they are entitled to no greater weight as a matter of state policy than other identifiable communities of interest.”	*
VT	Statute	“The . . . districts shall be formed consistent with the following policies insofar as practicable: . . . recognition and maintenance of patterns of geography, social interaction, trade, political ties and common interests.”	
WA	Statute	“District lines should be drawn so as to coincide with . . . areas recognized as communities of interest.”	*
WI	Statute	“[The districts] reflect a good faith effort to apportion the legislature giving due consideration to the need for . . . the maintenance of . . . communities of interest . . .”	
WV	Statute	“[T]he Legislature, in dividing the state into senatorial districts . . . , has: . . . [a]lso taken into account in crossing county lines, to the extent feasible, the community of interests of the people involved.”	
WY	Legislative guidelines	“Election districts should . . . reflect a community of interest.”	

* Applies to congressional districts and to state legislative districts.