

OUR DISTRICTS, OUR ALABAMA



Get Involved

Info@VoteProtection.org
VoteProtection.org



**ALABAMA ELECTION
PROTECTION NETWORK**

2021 Fair District Initiative Toolkit

A small American flag on a white stand sits on a white desk. In the background, there are some books and a blurred view of a window with light coming through. The right side of the page has a blue gradient overlay containing text.

OUR DISTRICTS, *OUR ALABAMA*



Introducing Redistricting	p. 3
Why Does Redistricting Matter?	p. 4
What is Gerrymandering?	p. 5
What is Prison Gerrymandering?	p. 6–7
Community Impact	p. 8
Who Can Participate?	p. 9
Increasing Engagement	p. 10–11
Partnership Networks	p. 12–13
How You Can Take Action	p. 14–15

Introducing Redistricting

Every ten years, the federal government conducts the U.S. Census to take into account the country's population. The federal government then uses the Census results to determine the number of Congressional representatives allocated to each state and state governments use the results to draw their federal, state, and local legislative districts.

Redistricting is the process by which state governments accomplish this redrawing. Redrawing district lines is required with every Census to ensure equal representation for all state residents.

The U.S. Census measures how population shifts throughout the country. When this data is collected, states are required to redraw their voting district maps (redistricting) to ensure equal population.

The quality of an area's representation, including the government's policies, is affected by district boundaries. Which political party is likely to win a district and which party is likely to win control of the state legislature can be manipulated by cleverly drawing districts.

If you live in the United States, you live in a district. All representatives to the U.S. House of Representatives, state legislatures, and many local offices are elected based on districts.



The line-drawing process is fundamental in influencing how our government works for us.

Why does Redistricting Matter?

The lines of your district determine who appears on your ballot, when and how you can vote, and can influence whether your elected officials respond to your needs.

How district lines are drawn is critical because...

- district lines define a community.
- communities contained within one district have a better opportunity to elect representatives who are dedicated to their community's interests.
- if a single community is split across multiple districts, the divisions formed within that community often become too small to matter to their representative.
- communities contained within one district have a better opportunity to demand results from their representative.

Alabama Law Says Districts Should Be...

1. In compliance with the 14th and 15th Amendments and the Voting Rights Act of 1965*
2. Close to or equal in population.
3. Have reasonably compact geography, be geographically contiguous, and composed in as few counties as practicable OR avoid county-splitting.
4. Protect against unwarranted dilution of racial or ethnic minority voting strength.
5. Reflect the democratic will of the people and consult the entire citizenry.
6. Avoid competition among incumbents and respect communities of interest.

Source:

<https://www.VoteProtection.org/RedistrictingGuidelines>

Which District Lines Could be Affected?

US House	State Board of Education
State House	County Commissioners
State Senate	City Councils

*The Equal Protection Clause of 14th Amendment protects against discrimination based on race or language and upon the principle of One Person, One Vote. Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), Section 2 (may not discriminate based on race) and Section 5 (require federal pre-clearance before implementing changes - neutered by Shelby County Lawsuit)

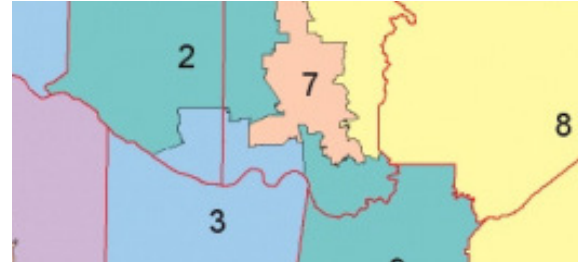
What is Gerrymandering?

In America, elections are meant to reflect the will of the people, not elected officials. Gerrymandering is one of elected officials' most effective tools in silencing our voice.

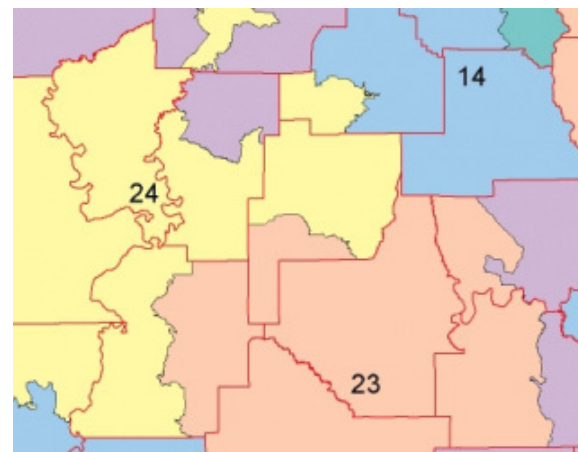
Gerrymandering is the intentional manipulation of the line-drawing process by elected officials to keep or change the direction of political power. This can happen in several ways, such as consolidating multiple communities into one district giving those communities only one representative in the legislature. It can also divide a single community across various districts, creating a community that has many representatives, weakening the opportunity to create 'communities of interest' with fair representation.

Gerrymandering typically protects incumbents and reduces a district's competitiveness, which often leads to depressed voter turnout and voters losing faith in their ability to effect change. The two most common forms of manipulation of districts are racial gerrymandering and partisan gerrymandering.

The line-drawing process can be used to either support or undermine the ability of communities to elect a candidate who will best represent their interests. In the South, there is a history of gerrymandering being used to undermine the ability of Black and Brown communities to be fairly represented.



In opposition to state requirements, Senate District 7 (featured above) splits a single community of interest into 5 separate districts, with 5 different representatives.



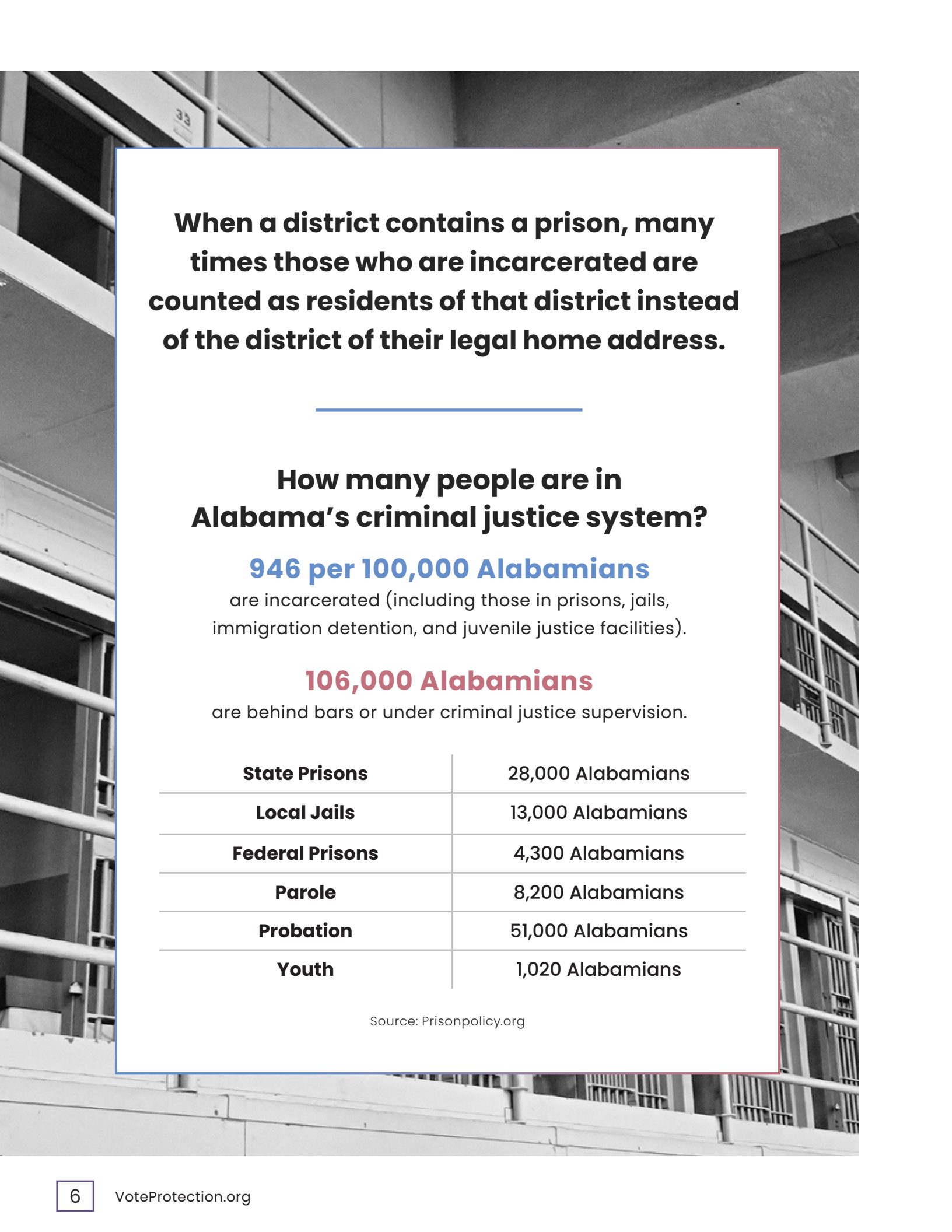
In opposition to state requirements, Senate District 24 (featured above) crosses 7 different county lines.

What is Partisan Gerrymandering?

Partisan gerrymandering is when districts are drawn in a way to give an unfair advantage to one political party, group, or incumbent.

What is Racial Gerrymandering?

Racial gerrymandering is the intentional manipulation of the line-drawing process to reduce the political power of a certain racial and ethnic minority groups.



When a district contains a prison, many times those who are incarcerated are counted as residents of that district instead of the district of their legal home address.

How many people are in Alabama's criminal justice system?

946 per 100,000 Alabamians

are incarcerated (including those in prisons, jails, immigration detention, and juvenile justice facilities).

106,000 Alabamians

are behind bars or under criminal justice supervision.

State Prisons	28,000 Alabamians
Local Jails	13,000 Alabamians
Federal Prisons	4,300 Alabamians
Parole	8,200 Alabamians
Probation	51,000 Alabamians
Youth	1,020 Alabamians

Source: Prisonpolicy.org

What is Prison Gerrymandering?

Census counts and districts are skewed when prison populations are included in local districts where the prisons are located, instead of the communities incarcerated individuals list as their legal address.

Most incarcerated individuals in Alabama prisons are legally allowed to vote, however many are not informed of this right. When they are registered to vote, they are registered based on where they lived before being incarcerated but counted within the prison's district. Prison gerrymandering skews fair representation. **Alabama Election Protection Network** is working to ensure all Alabamians, including incarcerated individuals, are fairly represented, in the line-drawing process.

The Unjust Process Behind Prison Gerrymandering

When prisons are disproportionately built in rural areas, and most incarcerated people call an urban area home, census data becomes skewed, allowing areas with prisons to receive enhanced representation.

Counting incarcerated individuals in the incorrect district results in a systematic transfer of population and political influence from urban to rural areas. This affects communities directly by removing the opportunity for fair representation and gives much-needed funds to other communities where prisons reside.

Prison gerrymandering disproportionately affects Black and Brown Alabamians who have historically been concentrated in urban communities. This practice takes away the voices of those who most need to be heard and removes one of the basic values of democracy: equal representation.

When district lines are drawn to represent communities accurately, residents can elect officials who will best represent them and their interests while providing increased funding to aid in problems that oftentimes lead to incarceration.





The Impact On Our Communities

How district lines are drawn affects many areas of your community and the state, including...



Access to Quality
Healthcare



Quality Education
and Safer Schools



Local Economy
and Access to Jobs



Public Safety and
Emergency Response



Budgeting for
Support Services
and Public Programs



Legislation,
Law-making,
and Policy Reform

Who Can Participate In Redistricting and Why?

Alabama Election Protection Network's 2021 fair district initiative, 'Our Districts, Our Alabama', aims to give every Alabamian a voice by providing them access to resources to participate in the district line-drawing process and decide the destiny of their communities.

Additionally, advocacy is critical to ensuring elected officials engage in transparent processes and adequate public engagement.

Who can participate in the line-drawing process?

Anyone can participate in the redistricting process, including drawing lines! Interested parties can include non-profit organizations, community leaders, and individuals.

Maps and population counts produced by Census data can be used by all parties to advocate for where they believe district boundaries should be drawn. Alternative maps provided by the community and presented to their elected officials can be considered in the decision-making process.

Why should I participate in the line-drawing process?

According to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the U.S. and Alabama Constitutions, and the Alabama Legislature, you have the right to participate in district line-drawing. Participating in this process will give you a voice and the ability to speak to issues that impact you and your community at large.

The engagement of every community, particularly those frequently diminished in the line-drawing process, is meaningful and provides opportunities to ensure elected officials represent the community interests that impact our everyday lives.



How To Increase Public Engagement



Get resources

Visit: VoteProtection.org

Email us: info@voteprotection.org



Public Education & Engagement

You or your organization can help engage the public through social media and traditional media spaces, including radio, TV, editorials, articles for publication, and partner organizations utilizing text messaging, phone banking, and email with information about why the district line-drawing is important and the ways they can get involved.



Public Meeting Attendance

Organizations and individuals can attend all relevant Redistricting Committee meetings and monitor public announcements, notices, and reports by the committee. They can also engage directly with legislative representatives, and staff to ensure equitable maps are produced. In addition, you can attend grassroots sponsored public forums to educate themselves about the process, learn how to effectively engage, access resources to submit alternate maps, and obtain tips for public testimony.

‘Our Districts, Our Alabama’ is Creating Networks to Advocate for Fair Representation

With focused organizational planning, we can achieve success with the 2021 line-drawing process. This will result in a new more inclusive approach to developing public policy, and inform the laws passed in Montgomery and Washington D.C.



Our principal goal is to educate and mobilize as many Alabama residents as possible to engage in the district line-drawing process. These are the first steps to developing a more durable network to advocate for fair representation.



Community Drawn Maps

Alabama allows for the submission of community-drawn maps for the Reapportionment Committee to consider. By developing partnerships and teams of core leaders, we can work with national, regional, and in-state advocates in legislative districts of interest to draft district map plans that focus on fair representation.

Trainings & Partnerships

Through coordinated in-state partnerships, **Alabama Election Protection Network** and partner organizations will train grassroots and faith-based leaders to equip them to educate others about the importance of the line-drawing process, to recruit and train new leaders and volunteers on how, when, and where to be involved, and why their involvement matters.

*The Reapportionment Committee schedules and conducts public hearings to gain public input and receive alternate maps for consideration on how new district lines should be drawn.

Partnership Networks



Grassroots Organizations

Grassroots organizations are the foundation of civic engagement efforts, particularly in hard-to-reach communities. These organizations have spent years building trust within communities, making them ideal for engaging residents in line-drawing efforts.

Our partners work with numerous leading constituencies across the entire state, many who specialize in harder to reach communities such as low-income, rural, students and youth, elderly, Black and Brown, and currently and formerly incarcerated people.



Faith-based Communities

For centuries, faith-based organizations have been the cornerstone of trust among many communities. The principles of inclusion and forgiveness are critical to ensuring the quality of life for their constituents and surrounding communities.

Faith-based leaders also work directly with low-income, elderly, disabled, and individuals of all cultural backgrounds to improve their economic, physical, and emotional well-being. By operating with trusted institutions of faith, we can educate and impact a broad segment of Alabamians to achieve fair representation.



Individuals

Civic engagement contributes to improving one's community, such as voting, volunteering, or participating in activities like community gardens

or food banks. Anyone can participate in the effort to create fair district lines whether you are involved in a community organization or not.

Partner with us

Visit: VoteProtection.org

Email us: info@voteprotection.org



/ Initiative Objectives

To successfully make an impact during the 2021 district line-drawing process in Alabama, we plan to educate and engage the following communities:



Grassroots organizations and faith-based communities.



Individuals throughout Alabama by expanding access to resources.



Communities that include prisons and jails, helping to eliminate prison gerrymandering.

How You Can Take Action

Anyone can take action for fairer districts. **Alabama Election Protection Network** is engaging local communities and elected officials to ensure a fair line-drawing process. There are many ways to get involved!

By Participating



Sign up to attend and spread the word about redistricting education meetings.



Host a meeting in your local community with the intent of engaging your local elected officials in drawing district lines.



Identify organizations in select communities* to draw alternative maps.



Partner and get involved with organizations in your community working closely with the district line-drawing process.

By Engaging



Sign up to either speak at or monitor Reapportionment Committee meetings.



Advocate for your community by writing a letter to your local or state elected official about maintaining communities of interest.



Ask the legislature to approve a ballot initiative to amend the State Constitution to use a bipartisan redistricting commission.



Take action now

Visit: VoteProtection.org
Email us: info@voteprotection.org

*Select communities refers to communities where district boundaries are not in compliance with the Voting Rights Act, the 14th and 15th Amendments, and/or Alabama's Reapportionment Committee guidelines.



Alabama Election Protection Network

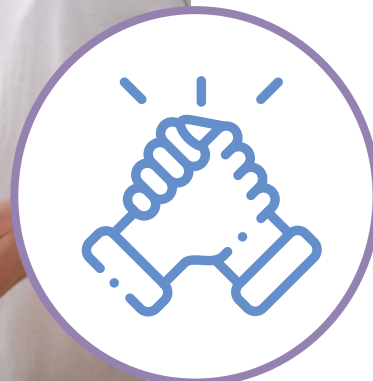
is partnering with other civic engagement organizations to train individuals and community leaders on how, where, and when individuals and organizations can engage.

For more resources visit:

VoteProtection.org/redistricting-initiative

We have created a resource page with...

- A calendar with Alabama's Reapportionment Committee meetings.
- Information and updates on scheduled trainings.
- Map-drawing software anyone can use.
- Professional assistance in helping you and your organization draw and submit alternate maps.
- Sample advocacy letters and more.





Alabama Election Protection Network

Info@VoteProtection.org | VoteProtection.org



WeAreTops.org



HometownOrganizing.org



GillilandMarks.com



Ncbcp.org