



Polk County, Texas

ORDER

OF THE POLK COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

ESTABLISHING CRITERIA FOR REDISTRICTING OF POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

The Commissioners Court is the governing body of Polk County, Texas, meeting in a duly scheduled and posted meeting, does hereby adopt the following criteria for use in the redistricting of all county political boundaries. Any plan for the redistricting of representative members of the Commissioners Court of the Polk County should, to the maximum extent possible, conform to the following criteria:

1. The plan should ensure that all applicable provisions of the U.S. and Texas Constitutions, the Voting Rights Act, the Texas Election Code are honored.
2. The plan should be drawn in such a manner that the maximum deviation from an ideal size, as determined by dividing the total population of the county divided by four (the number of single member districts that compose the Commissioners Court of Polk County), by not more than five (5%) percent for any single precinct, or a total top to bottom deviation (percentage of deviation below and above the ideal size) of not more than ten (10%) percent.
3. The plan should address minority representation, and if at all possible, in conformity with constitutional standards, avoid retrogression in the percentage of population and voting age demographics consistent with existing minority representation.
4. The plan should avoid fragmentation and preserve minority communities of interest to the maximum extent possible. These communities of interest should be recognized and retained intact where possible. Only when the overall minority population of the county is sufficiently large to require more than one minority district should minority populations be divided, and only then to the least degree possible.

5. The plan should not, however, attempt to unreasonably join geographically remote minority populations into a single precinct unless there are strong and genuine connections between these communities as reflected by common schools, churches, or cultural ties. For example, minority populations in two separate towns, located miles apart, may not have sufficient links or common political cohesion to justify joining these two minority population centers into a single electoral group. Particularly when dealing with distinct minority groups, such as Black and Hispanic populations, a general assumption that separate minority populations will vote in a “block” may be unsupportable in fact.

6. The plan should seek compact and contiguous political boundaries. Physical boundaries of cultural or economic significance, such as rivers, multi-laned control access highways or turnpikes, which tend to divide populations in fundamental ways, should be recognized and where possible, should only serve as necessary to achieve recognized objectives. To the maximum extent possible, clearly recognized boundaries, such as streets and highways, should be used to facilitate ease of voter identification of boundaries, as well as election administration.

7. Where possible, well-recognized and long used election precinct boundaries should be retained intact (within the limitations imposed by state and federal law) or with as little alteration as possible.

8. Election precincts in the plan should be sized in conformity with state law. For example, in counties that use traditional, hand counted paper ballots, no election precinct may contain more than 2,000 voters. In counties with voting systems that allow for automated ballot counting, this number may be increased to as many as 5,000 registered voters.

9. The plan should afford incumbent officeholders with the assurance that they will continue to represent the majority of individuals who elected these incumbents, and all incumbents’ residential locations should be retained in their reformed precincts to ensure continuity in leadership during the remaining term of incumbents to the extent possible.

10. The plan should address fundamental and necessary governmental functions, and to the extent possible, ensure that these functions are enhanced rather than impaired. For example, county road mileage should be balanced to the extent possible between the resulting commissioner’s precincts. Election administration should not be unduly complex as a result of election boundaries.

11. The plan should ensure that election voting precincts under that plan do not contain territory from more than one commissioner's precinct, justice precinct, congressional district, state representative district, state senatorial district and state Board of Education. Although no longer required, city election wards should be honored in virtually all circumstances, with city and rural county voters being kept in separate voting precincts to the extent possible. Where they exist, other special election districts, such as water, hospital, or navigation districts, should be structured in a manner to provide to the greatest extent possible the harmonious administration of various election jurisdictions.

12. The plan should attempt to locate polling places in convenient, well-known locations that are accessible to disabled voters to the maximum extent possible. Public buildings should be utilized to the maximum extent possible as polling places. Where necessary, buildings routinely open to the public, such as churches, retail businesses, or private buildings dedicated to public activities, can be used as polling places.

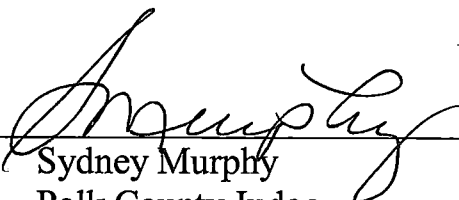
13. If the reduction of polling places can be accomplished, without impinging upon voter convenience and minority voting rights, such reductions can be considered.

14. Citizen input should be encouraged, but in order to minimize cost and to have sufficient information to evaluate such proposals fairly, the County will only consider proposed plans submitted to the County for evaluation by individual citizens or groups if the proposed plan is submitted to the County in a commonly used GIS format, such as .SHP, .MAP, .KLM, .GPX, .MDB, along with maps and demographic data sufficient to address voting rights concerns.

The foregoing criteria are deemed to be illustrative, but not exclusive, examples of fundamentally important issues, which should be considered in any redistricting, plan. Therefore, the Commissioners Court expresses its intention to measure any plan submitted for consideration by this set of criteria, and to base any eventual exercise of discretion upon the foregoing criteria.

The criteria approved this date were considered in open Court, following posting not less than 72 hours before any action taken on the same. Upon motion by Commissioner Purvis, second by Commissioner Vincent, the Commissioners Court of Polk County hereby adopts the criteria set forth herein by a vote of 4 Ayes and 0 Nays.

Signed this 27th day of July, 2021.



Sydney Murphy
Polk County Judge

Attest:



Schelana Hock
Polk County Clerk

(Seal)