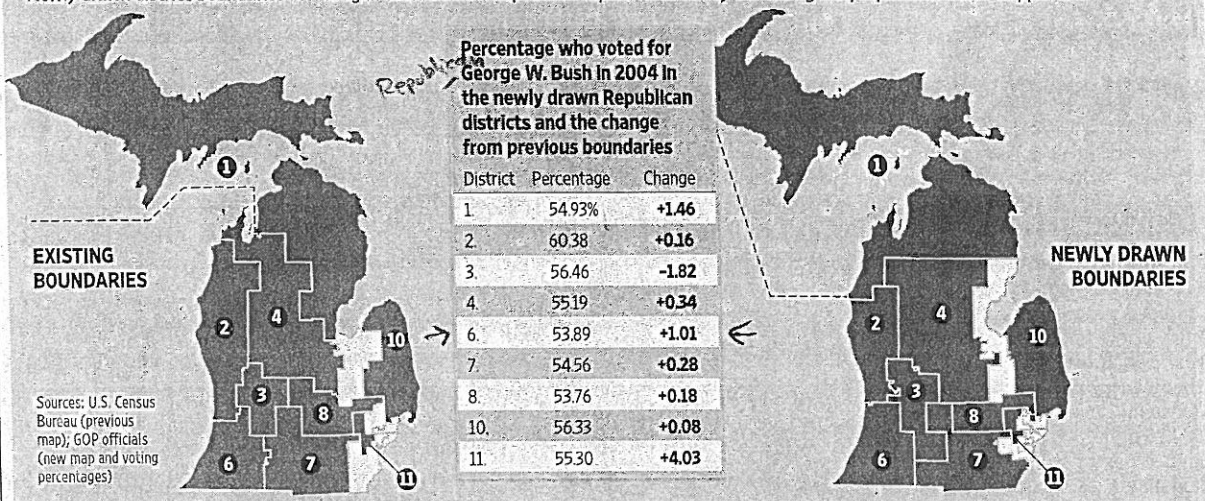


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Fencing In Supporters

Newly drawn district boundaries in Michigan could benefit Republican representatives by increasing the proportion of GOP supporters.



GOP Looks to Cement Gains

By NAFTALI BENDAVID

After early expectations that Republicans would dominate the 2012 redistricting sweepstakes, neither party looks likely to claim a big gain in congressional seats when the states finish redrawing their electoral maps.

Republicans are using their advantage in state legislatures to try to strengthen their hold on seats they already have, rather than attempting to create new districts where they would hold a slight majority of voters.

GOP mapmakers are seeking to add Republican voters to the districts of the party's vulnerable lawmakers, especially those who swept into office last November, to ensure they aren't washed away in 2012. The success or failure of that effort could determine whether Republicans keep control of the House.

Republicans acknowledge that neither party will gain more than a seat or two from redistricting. "Based on what we see now, there isn't much shift," said Rep. Greg Walden (R., Ore.), deputy chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, which coordinates GOP House campaigns.

Michigan is one of several states where the GOP is newly empowered. Republican Rick Snyder seized the governor's mansion in last fall's election, and the GOP took full control of the legislature. Now, Michigan Republicans are crafting a map that seeks to bol-

ster the weakest of the party's current House members by assigning them more GOP voters, rather than trying to squeeze a 10th Republican into a 14-member delegation.

"Why have 10 competitive seats when you can have nine dominant seats?" said L. Brooks Patterson, the GOP executive of Michigan's Oakland County.

Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (R., Mich.), a lanky guitar-playing conservative, is perhaps the biggest beneficiary. George W. Bush won 51% in Mr. McCotter's district in 2004, but his new district will be approximately 55% Bush voters.

Democrats counter that there aren't enough Republican voters to significantly bolster all the new GOP lawmakers who captured swing districts last fall.

"Every day, Republicans engage in more bravado. Every day the truth proves them wrong," said Rep. Steve Israel (D., N.Y.), chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

In Wisconsin, the Republican-controlled legislature is working to shore up Reps. Sean Duffy and Paul Ryan; in Texas, it is strengthening Reps. Francisco Canseco and Blake Farenthold.

The redistricting process is still under way in many states and the maps remain fluid. But Republicans' overall strategy is clear.

When they seized control of many statehouses and governor's mansions in 2010, just in time for once-a-decade redistricting, even many Democrats believed the GOP would expand its 240-193 House majority by 10 or more seats sim-

ply by drawing favorable districts. Republicans hold both chambers of the state legislature in 26 states, compared with 15 states for the Democrats.

Twelve seats shifted from one state to another as a result of the 2010 census, many of them migrating from states favoring Democrats, such as New York, to Republican-leaning places such as Texas. Those changes were thought to add to the GOP's advantage.

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After 2010, Republicans concluded they already controlled so many House seats there was little room to carve out more in redistricting.

GOP-leaning states that are adding House seats, the party's gains may prove to be limited by the fact that much of the population growth was due to minority voters, who generally lean Democratic. Illinois and California, meanwhile, drew up maps that could give Democrats a half-dozen or more new seats between them, and Florida could add a few more.

Democrats say there simply aren't that many Republican voters to go around. Swing districts will remain closely divided, they

insist, leaving them in position to retake the House.

"I think the Democrats will score a net gain from redistricting and will be in play to win the House back," said Democratic consultant Mark Gersh.

But David Wasserman, who follows House races for the Cook Political Report, predicts GOP leaders will significantly boost the chances of about 20 Republicans in districts won by President Barack Obama in 2008 by adding more GOP voters.

Michigan, which is losing a House seat, exemplifies the battle. Republicans drew a map pitting Rep. Sander Levin against fellow Democratic Rep. Gary Peters. Then they worked to strengthen vulnerable incumbents in the remaining 14 seats. They put enough Republicans in Mr. McCotter's district to make him "bulletproof," Mr. Gersh conceded.

Republicans also sought to boost Michigan Rep. Tim Walberg, who represents a classic swing district. And freshman Rep. Dan Benishek is poised to increase his percentage of Bush voters from 53% to about 55%.

"We took 63 seats [in 2010]," said Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R., Ga.), who heads GOP redistricting efforts. "This gives us an opportunity, especially with the success we had with state legislative and governors' races, to go back in and strengthen some of those districts."

Democrats say the Walberg and Benishek changes are marginal.

—Katie Glueck
contributed to this article.

① Look carefully at this + understand what's going on!

② Read

③ Do what I ask on Back

- ① Find the 6th district. Has it changed shape?
- ② In 2004, what % of 6th district voters voted for Republican George W Bush for president?
- ③ By what % has the new 6th district become more Republican?

④ How is 1-3 above related to what we talked about in class today?

⑤ Circle

two chunks of text from the article and explain how they relate to what we talked about in class today (here) →

① This is related to what we talked about because

② This is related to what we talked about because