

## **Montana: Preserving Voting Districts and American Indian Reservations**

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This map creates two perfect population districts in Montana without splitting voting districts or American Indian Reservations. It is also intended to form reasonably compact districts and minimize the number of counties split between them, although each of those secondary goals could be better achieved by splitting voting districts. The general divide of the two congressional districts is east-west along county lines, with only Gallatin and Cascade counties split between the districts. Gallatin and Cascade are divided primarily because their greater number of voting districts— created by their relatively larger populations— provide the numerical flexibility to maintain perfect population districts along voting district lines.

While the district line splitting Cascade County respects city-town political subdivisions, the district line through Gallatin County splits two census-designated areas, namely Four Corners just outside of Bozeman, and Big Sky, which is split along the line between Madison and Gallatin counties. A map that is more attuned to cities/towns as political subdivisions could comfortably eliminate these divides, although it may come at the expense of compactness or preserving voting districts. Likewise, the divide in Gallatin County creates a contrived and non-compact section of the map, as District 1 has to capture part of the population to the north, south, and west of Big Sky, with District 2 jutting into its eastern half.

This map did not consider political data, but the map likely benefits Republicans because the most competitive district, District 1, is only semi-competitive with a 43.4% Democrat and 57.6% Republican vote share in the 2020 presidential election. The prioritization of preserving voting districts caused District 1 to narrowly exclude Democrat-leaning areas that could make it more competitive—namely Bozeman and the areas near the eastern section of Big Sky.

As a whole, this voting district-preserving map does not fully minimize divisions of census-designated areas or counties, nor does it maximize competitiveness. However, it serves as a demonstration that Montana's new districts can be drawn without splitting voting districts and Indian Reservations, while only splitting only two counties.