

INFORMATIONAL BRIEF

Power Asymmetries in Structure of Commissions

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Core Question

The purpose of this brief is to address potential asymmetries in power dynamics in the structure of independent redistricting commissions.

Summary of Topline Findings

Potential asymmetries in power dynamics can be identified in the independent redistricting commission given specific configurations of the institutions and recruitment methods. This pertains to multiple separate dimensions of our project: Commission organization, Commissioner Qualifications, Responsibilities, and Restrictions, and Commissioner Qualifications, Commission Process, and Administrative and Operational Considerations.

Background & Information

1. Commissioner to be selected through an application process or a lottery?

Implications of an application process: It mitigates issues of inclusivity by introducing systems of inclusion or a similar system at the root of the system. It also introduces the question of expertise and how that will affect decision-making in the commission.

Implications of a lottery system: Leaves the question of expertise and inclusivity (not statistically random) to be dealt with post-hoc. Similar questions of power dynamics may or may not arise.

First thought: Should we deal with an evil we know will arise sooner or later earlier in the process or post-hoc as it rears its head?

We are thinking about recruitment as a first step in building an institution that will have some form of power structure, so it matters how the recruitment is done.

2. How expertise affects group-level decision-making?

From various sources (references below), it can be gathered that expertise can reduce the chaos that is group-level decision-making by streamlining thoughts and ideas. Expertise also poses the problem of power asymmetry. We can recommend at least two solutions:

- a. Minority inclusion in the recruitment process should be able to undercut some of the power asymmetries.
- b. A more horizontal form of governance within the commission. Similar levels of expertise but with specific roles that can provide checks and balances and no/limited veto power. Dominance of expertise can be offset with a system of tangible accountability in place.

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