

**CITY OF MILWAUKEE  
COMMON COUNCIL-CITY CLERK'S OFFICE**

**REDISTRICTING OF WARDS AND ALDERMANIC DISTRICTS**

(Prepared by City Clerk Ronald D. Leonhardt – Updated March 11, 2011)

This document summarizes the process that will be followed to determine the number and adjust the boundaries of voting wards and aldermanic districts in the City of Milwaukee, based on the 2010 federal decennial census.

- I. **Provision of Census Data to Municipalities.** Public Law 94-171 requires the Census Bureau to send each state the data it will need to redraw districts for the state legislature by April 1, 2011. This data will contain detailed population counts for counties, municipalities, census tracts and blocks, and wards. In addition, population by voting age, race, and Hispanic origin will be reported. Once the information is processed and condensed, the State of Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau will deliver census numbers and map products to counties in April.
- II. **Adoption of Tentative County Supervisory District Plan** (Section 59.10(2)(a), Wis. Stats.). Within 60 days after the population count by block becomes available in printed form from the federal government or is published for distribution by the state, the county board shall adopt and transmit to the governing body of each city and village in the county a tentative county supervisory district plan to be considered by the cities and villages when dividing into wards.
- III. **Adoption of Ward Plan** (Section 5.15, Wis. Stats.).
  - A. The municipal ward is the building block used to form election districts at all levels of government. Wards are established following the decennial census by municipalities based on statutorily prescribed population ranges and requirements including compactness, contiguity and community of interest. Wards must consist of whole census blocks. Since wards are not election districts from which officers are elected, they are not subject to the "one person, one vote" requirement which governs the formation of election districts.
  - B. Within 60 days after receipt of a tentative supervisory district plan and written statement, if any, from the county board, the governing body of each municipality shall adjust its wards, taking into account the tentative county plan.
  - C. For Milwaukee, with a few narrow exceptions, each ward shall contain not less than 1,000 nor more than 4,000 inhabitants.
  - D. The ward plan must identify ward boundaries, number the wards consecutively and identify polling places. A majority vote of the Common Council is required for its adoption.
  - E. The boundaries of the wards and the number assigned to each ward are

intended to be as permanent as possible. Once established, the boundaries of each ward shall remain unchanged until a further decennial federal census indicates that the population of a ward is then above or below the applicable population range.

- F. If the city fails to comply with the statutory requirements, the county or any elector of the city may submit to the circuit court within 14 days from the expiration of the 60-day period a proposed plan for the division of the municipality into wards in compliance with the statutes. If the court finds that the existing division of the city into wards fails to comply with the statutes, it shall review the plan submitted by the petitioner and after reasonable notice to the city may promulgate the plan, or any other plan in compliance with the statutes, as a temporary ward plan until superseded by a ward plan adopted by the Common Council in compliance with the statutes.

**IV. Adoption of Aldermanic District Plan** (Section 62.08, Wis. Stats.).

- A. Within 60 days after the wards have been adjusted, the Common Council shall redistrict the boundaries of its aldermanic districts, by an ordinance introduced at a regular meeting, published as a class 2 notice, and adopted by a majority vote of all the members of the Council.
- C. All aldermanic districts are to be as compact in area as possible and contain, as nearly as practicable by combining contiguous whole wards, an equal number of inhabitants according to the most recent decennial federal census.
- D. If the city fails to comply with the statutory requirements, any elector of the city may submit to the circuit court within 14 days from the expiration of the 60-day period a proposed plan for creation of aldermanic districts in compliance with the statutes. If the court finds that the existing division of the city into aldermanic districts fails to comply with the statutes, it shall review the plan submitted by the petitioner and after reasonable notice to the city may promulgate the plan, or any other plan in compliance with the statutes, as a temporary aldermanic district plan until superseded by a districting plan adopted by the Common Council in compliance with the statutes.
- D. To increase or decrease the number of aldermanic districts requires a two-thirds vote of all Council members (Section 62.08(4), Wis. Stats).

**V. State Legislative Districts** (Art. IV, Secs. 3-5, Wisconsin Constitution).

- A. Following the establishment of wards, municipalities over 10,000 will be asked to provide the State Legislative Reference Bureau with a listing of the census blocks that comprise each ward as well as a map showing ward boundaries. This will facilitate the development of a database to be used for legislative redistricting.
- B. In order for the 2012 legislative elections to be based on new districts, the legislature must complete redistricting by the end of April 2012.

**VI. School District Redistricting.** Section 119.08(1)(b), Wis. Stats., requires the Milwaukee Board of School Directors to adopt an election district apportionment plan within 60 days after the Common Council enacts an ordinance determining the boundaries of the aldermanic districts. This plan is not subject to approval by the Common Council.