

# Covering voting rights

# Consider on whose behalf you are writing

As a reporter, you are writing on behalf of the public.

As a voting rights reporter, you are writing on behalf of the voters.

While a legislative debate can have two sides, voting is not a two-sided argument.

## How Harris County's polling place distribution would change under SB 7

All but two state House districts represented by Democrats in Harris County would see a reduction in Election Day polling places under the GOP's priority voting bill. In most cases, those districts have a far higher share of eligible voters of color than the districts that would gain voting sites.

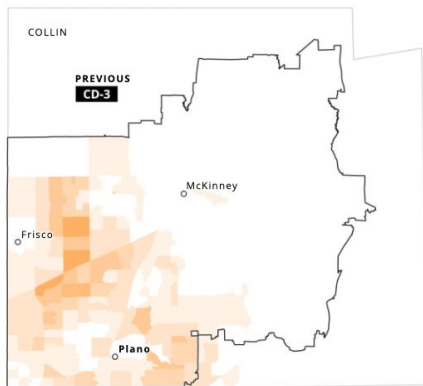
District	Party	Change in polling places	Registered voter population	White voting-age population
141	D	-11	84,010	10.6%
146	D	-8	93,243	23.6%
148	D	-8	93,517	41.6%
142	D	-7	95,301	18.1%
147	D	-7	117,099	29.7%
140	D	-6	66,250	12.0%
143	D	-6	71,313	17.6%
144	D	-6	63,477	26.0%
137	D	-5	57,295	28.2%
145	D	-4	76,258	22.1%
134	D	-3	143,792	70.5%
131	D	-1	91,910	11.7%
139	D	-1	102,879	17.8%
128	R	0	110,286	58.2%
129	R	0	122,179	56.4%
138	R	+2	96,134	45.7%
126	R	+3	109,996	47.6%
149	D	+4	89,561	20.9%
133	R	+6	120,436	65.4%
135	D	+9	110,471	41.7%
127	R	+10	129,383	59.0%
150	R	+10	140,662	56.9%
130	R	+11	143,274	64.1%
132	R	+18	146,732	45.9%

REDISTRICTING TEXAS

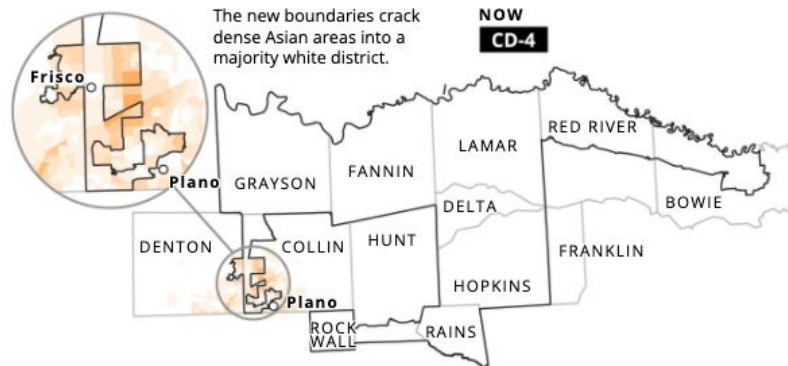
# With surgical precision, Republicans draw two congressional districts that dilute power of Hispanic and Asian voters

The GOP is losing its hold on suburbs of Dallas and Fort Worth as they grow more diverse. Two new districts show how far the party is reaching to entrench rural, white electoral power.

PERCENT OF PEOPLE 18+ WHO ARE ASIAN  
0% 50% 100%



PERCENT OF PEOPLE 18+ WHO ARE ASIAN  
0% 50% 100%



# Tell it like it is

We owe it to our readers to use clear and exact language in our reporting. That's particularly important with voting rights coverage.

- Don't rely on "experts say" to lay out the stakes of a proposal.

- It's our responsibility as journalists to do our homework so we can call a voting rule change a "restriction" if it restricts voting. If a voter roll review is based on flawed data, say that.

- History matters, especially in states with long histories of discrimination in voting.

# Find the worker bees

- Background on technical aspects of voting
- Exclusive comms from the state
- Training or conferences for election workers

(These individuals are part of the broader election ecosystem and should also be among those we hold accountable.)

# Center your voters

**These naturalized citizens belong on the Texas voter rolls. A state review could have kicked them off.**

## Texas runoff elections show stress of coronavirus pandemic on state's voting systems

Disabled and older voters have encountered the most problems navigating mail-in balloting as they try to avoid going to polling places. In-person voting has been generally smooth so far in the low-turnout runoffs.

TEXAS LEGISLATURE 2021

### Behind the partisan drama lies a profoundly serious struggle over who gets shut out under Texas voting laws

Whose voices will be heard in Texas halls of power? That question beats at the heart of the Democratic quorum break that has brought the Legislature to a halt and focused national attention on GOP efforts to make voting in Texas harder.

BY ALEXA URA JULY 14, 2021 3 PM CENTRAL

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Tevin English held signs in front of the Texas Capitol on Tuesday at a Voting Rights Advocacy Day rally. © Sophie Park/The Texas Tribune

# Center your voters

People don't always accept others' realities.

Angela Wolf, who is blind, tried to vote by mail instead of showing up at an Austin polling place to use an accessible machine like she has in the past. Her application came up mislabeled when she ran it through a screen reader meant to help her fill it out. It's likely she won't be able to independently mark up her paper ballot. A single mom with small children, she'll have to break their isolation bubble to get sighted assistance from an adult.

In the small East Texas town of Henderson, Rodney Vallantyne — who has been strictly isolating at home — sought to vote by mail but had no idea how to go about getting a ballot until receiving a link to the application from a reporter. It's not easy for the 60-year-old to get around; he has a rare form of dystonia and deals with chronic pain. He managed to get his application turned in but then had to consider how to get a stamp in a short time frame. He went as far as calling the local post office hoping it would allow him to leave his ballot in his mailbox with a separate envelope containing the exact loose change needed to cover postage. A postal worker agreed to take care of it for him.

# Public voter data (and its limitations)

Voter roll data is almost always public and can be useful for data analysis; in some cases the voter file will be labeled down to individual precincts.

But some caveats to consider:

- The data changes from state to state. For example, some states collect race/ethnicity (Texas does not)
- Registration dates may not be original date of registration
- In some states, the voter file is more of a snapshot in time vs a running log (voter rolls vs voter history file)