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### **1.1 Increasing the number of commissioners**

**For reference, Multnomah County population is 824,204; with 5 Commissioners, this is 1 rep per 164,800 residents**

Below are examples of places where jurisdictions have explored and/or increased/decreased size of a city or county commission/council. While the number of councilors/commissioners are important, it is also important to consider the ratio of representation; i.e. how many people does each commissioner represent?

- 1) City of Raleigh (NC) charter review recommendations increasing number of Commissioners (among other changes)

<https://raleighnc.gov/SupportPages/recommendations-modernizing-city-council>

- 2) National League of Cities: <https://www.nlc.org/city-councils/>

- 3) Albany, NY- 15 Councilors (97,000 ppl) 1 rep per 6,466 ppl

<https://www.albanyny.gov/189/Albany-Common-Council>

- 4) New York City- 51 councilors (8.4 M ppl) 1 rep per 164,700 ppl

<https://council.nyc.gov/districts/>

- 5) San Jose California - Recommendations: maintain “council manager” form of govt; adopt ranked choice voting; expand from 10 to 14 council districts/ reps; move all city elections to presidential year voting. **See pg 9 for summary of changes**

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/83662/637838020447400000>

Population is 1.02 M; 10 districts = 1 rep per 102,000 14 districts = 1 rep per 72,800

- 6) Columbus, OH- Overview of 2016 charter review committee shows top 25 U.S. cities by population size and council size.

[https://www.columbus.gov/uploadedFiles/Columbus/Elected\\_Officials/City\\_Council/Charter\\_Review\\_Commission/2016\\_Committee/2016-1027%20Council%20sizes.pdf](https://www.columbus.gov/uploadedFiles/Columbus/Elected_Officials/City_Council/Charter_Review_Commission/2016_Committee/2016-1027%20Council%20sizes.pdf)

“San Antonio, Dallas, San Jose, Austin, Fort Worth, Charlotte, and El Paso had a 2015 median population of 979,369, 11 total council members, 10% change in population, and 89,632 residents per council member.”

7) Advocacy group pushes to increase size of Baltimore city council from 7 to 11

<https://www.marylandmatters.org/2022/03/07/petition-would-expand-baltimore-county-council-seats-to-11/>

“That means that council districts, which once contained just 50,000 residents, now contain more than 120,000 residents,” Dorsey-Walker said.

8) Chapter 3: City and County governing boards of textbook titled County and Municipal Government in North Carolina. Chapter by: Vaughn Mamlin Upshaw

See pgs 21-23 for number of county commissioners and terms for counties in NC

[https://www.sog.unc.edu/sites/www.sog.unc.edu/files/course\\_materials/CMG%2003\\_GoverningBoards.pdf](https://www.sog.unc.edu/sites/www.sog.unc.edu/files/course_materials/CMG%2003_GoverningBoards.pdf) 2 most populated counties:

Mecklenburg (Charlotte): 9 reps / 1.1 M pop / 122,000 per rep

Wake (Raleigh): 7 reps / 1.1 M pop / 157,000 per rep

9) 2015 article about advocacy push to reduce Nashville, TN city council from 41 to 27 seats. Advocacy effort was unsuccessful in changing the number of seats.

<https://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/columnists/frank-daniels/2015/03/21/nashville-shrink-city-council/25151073/>

10) Final report of 2020 charter review of City of Jacksonville, FL exploring whether to change the number of seats on city council; Report recommends not changing the council size, thereby keeping it at 19 members. (pg 14)

[http://apps2.coj.net/City\\_Council\\_Public\\_Notices\\_Repository/20200529%202019-20%20Charter%20Revision%20Commission%20Final%20Report.pdf](http://apps2.coj.net/City_Council_Public_Notices_Repository/20200529%202019-20%20Charter%20Revision%20Commission%20Final%20Report.pdf)

## **1.2 Why increase the number of commissioners?**

1) White Supremacy Culture in Organizations

Pg 17- concentration of power

<https://coco-net.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Coco-WhiteSupCulture-ENG4.pdf>

2) Easier to access state rep and senator than county elected official

State pop: 4,237,256

60 House of Rep seats = 1 rep per 70,620

State Senate 30 senators = 1 rep per 141,241

U.S. Congressional rep is 1 per 700,000

3) Comparable jurisdictions with similar size/population have a minimum of 7 commissioners

4) Paper: Minority Representation in Local Government

[https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w25192/visions/w25192.revo.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25192/visions/w25192.revo.pdf)

We find that the election of a nonwhite candidate is associated with higher housing prices in majority nonwhite neighborhoods and lower housing prices in majority white neighborhoods; this result is relative to the election of a white candidate. (pg 5 of 73)

In response to the decision in *Mobile v. Bolden*, in 1982 Congress amended the Voting Rights Act, shifting the standard so that a discriminatory electoral outcome – rather than actual intent – constituted a violation of the Act. This amendment led a number of local governments to switch from at-large elections for city council to district-based elections. These changes resulted in increased minority representation at the local level (Sass & Mehay, 1995; Shah et al., 2013) (pg 7 of 73) (Same source as above)

5) Paper: Race, Representation and Local Governments in the US South: the Effect of the Voting Rights Act (Oct 2019)

[https://pelg.ucsd.edu/Testa\\_2019.pdf](https://pelg.ucsd.edu/Testa_2019.pdf)

“In no other country perhaps more than in the United States, the issue of minority discrimination in the political sphere has been so central. Yet, the United States has pursued a much less prescriptive approach than mandated representation, relying instead on courts to enforce the anti-discriminatory provisions embedded in the Voting Rights Act of 1965.”

6) Local governments favor the white and wealthy (article)

<https://now.tufts.edu/2020/10/16/local-governments-favor-white-and-wealthy>

What is the impact of local inequality on a national level? Does it scale up?

“Local politics is basically a way to get started in politics. If African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, or poor Americans don’t feel like they can run for local office successfully, or don’t get involved in local politics, then they’re never going to get involved in running for state level office, or for Congress and so on.”

## **2.1 District map**

Current county voting district maps:

<https://www.multco.us/commissioner-vega-pederson/district-maps>

1) The Real Limits of Census Tracts, and Other Boundaries by Ryan Petteway

<https://shelterforce.org/2018/05/07/the-real-limits-of-imaginary-lines/>

<https://www.rjpetteway.com/research>

2) Timur's notes: With inner Portland's representation stretching from Cesar E. Chavez Blvd to SE 148th Ave., this can have the effect of diluting East Portland's voting power/representation. Historical disinvestment begins at SE 82nd Ave. Most of district 3 is situated in East Portland but most of the historical wealth/power concentration is west of 82nd Ave.

3) All about redistricting

<https://redistricting.lls.edu/redistricting-101/where-are-the-lines-drawn/>

### **3.1 Changing from Chair-Council to Council- Manager form of govt**

1) <https://www.nlc.org/resource/forms-of-municipal-government/>

#### **Current Trends**

Recent examinations of government structure indicate that these forms of government are less distinct than they once were. This is due, in part, to the common practice of incorporating structural features from other forms into one's current form. This mixing is also attributed to local responses to socioeconomic, demographic, and political changes. The most common mixing occurs across the two most prevalent forms, mayor-council and the council-manager. Among all cities proposing a change to their structure of government, the most common proposal was to add the position of [chief administration officer/city manager](#). This professionalization of government administration also had the highest percentage of voter approval. Among other proposed changes, 50% or more respondents of ICMA's 2006 survey reported voter approval to [increase or decrease the number of council members, to modify the method of electing the mayor and to decrease the power or authority of the mayor.](#)

2) County form of govt 2014 full data set.

<https://bookstore.icma.org/county-form-of-government-2014-full-dataset-p27.aspx> (fee required)

3) Polling research in Portland showing voters support a package of reforms, not just changing form of government

<https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2022/gbao-slide-deck.pdf>

### **4.1 Ability to self-declare political party in county elections**

1) Most city councils of top 25 most populated cities are non-partisan

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/cities-101-partisan-and-non-partisan-elections/>

Proponents of nonpartisan ballots suggest that:

- Political parties are irrelevant to providing services; and
- Cooperation between elected officials belonging to different parties is more likely.

Proponents for partisan elections argue that:

- The absence of party labels confuses voters; a voter who must choose from among a group of candidates whom he or she knows nothing about will have no meaningful basis in casting a ballot;
- In the absence of a party ballot, voters will turn to whatever cue is available, which often turns out to be the ethnicity of a candidate's name, incumbent status, or single-issue identification; and
- Non-partisanship tends to produce elected officials more representative of the upper socioeconomic strata than of the general populace and aggravates the class bias in voting turnout, because in true non-partisan systems there are no organizations of local party workers to bring working-class citizens to the polls on Election Day.

## 2) Opinion: Keeping Political Partisanship Out of Local Government

<https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/keeping-political-partisanship-out-local-government>

## 3) Ballotopedia: [https://ballotpedia.org/Partisanship\\_in\\_local\\_elections\\_\(2016\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Partisanship_in_local_elections_(2016))

Only 16 of [America's 100 largest cities](#) hold partisan elections, but 94 of the mayors in those cities were [affiliated](#) with either the [Democratic](#) or [Republican](#) parties at the beginning of 2016.

## 4) Will Nonpartisan Elections Make for Dumber Voters?

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-METROB-3644>

Claims that nonpartisan elections made "voters less informed, less likely to vote and would create a less competitive atmosphere in down-ballot races."

## 5) Jacksonville, FL charter review (2020)

[http://apps2.coj.net/City\\_Council\\_Public\\_Notices\\_Repository/20200529%202019-20%20Charter%20Revision%20Commission%20Final%20Report.pdf](http://apps2.coj.net/City_Council_Public_Notices_Repository/20200529%202019-20%20Charter%20Revision%20Commission%20Final%20Report.pdf) (pg 17)

- The unitary election system is unique in that it allows for all registered voters to participate in local elections, regardless of party affiliation.
- The committee discussed whether an indication of the candidate's party affiliation should continue to be allowed on the ballot.
- It was decided that allowing for party affiliation on a ballot could be a useful piece of information for voters for whom that is an important consideration.
- Recommendation: No change to partisan election system. Candidates may continue declaring political parties and voters have access to this info on the ballot.