

## Our Views: Take politics out of remap

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The idea of the initiative — having people propose new laws through petitions, and then a vote of the people — is not one that we would recommend for Louisiana.

In California, where it is most prevalent, the process is deeply flawed, with well-heeled interests funding petition drives to put attractive-sounding proposals on the ballot. All too often, the initiative results in hamstringing government through conflicting demands or restrictions.

Still, there's an exception for every rule. We like what the people of California have done recently through the initiative process in one area. They've broken the stranglehold of political power over the redistricting of seats in the state's Legislature.

After the 2010 Census results are in, an independent commission will draw the new lines to apportion districts according to population. The Assembly and Senate will have to vote up or down on the lines. The commission must draw the districts in conformity with strict, nonpartisan rules designed to create districts of relatively equal population. The goal is fairer representation.

Instead of today's political process, as in Louisiana and many other states, it won't be a case of lawmakers and political parties using their computers to configure districts that suit their political ends. Today, in Louisiana as elsewhere, legislators choose their constituents instead of constituents choosing their legislators. The same is true of members of Congress, who use their influence in the Legislature to carve up districts they want to see.

If history is any guide, once the census results are tallied, we'll see Louisiana legislative leaders carve up districts to protect incumbent members seeking re-election, or to serve the goals of one political party or the other.

It's a blatant conflict of interest.

The Public Affairs Research Council has proposed that some sort of nonpartisan redistricting system be adopted, but lawmakers — with their political hides at stake — probably won't touch this reform.

In this case, the initiative has made a difference, where the politicians dared not tread.