

The 2026 Redistricting 'Rithmetic

di Geoffrey Skelley

Republicans are better positioned to add more seats in redistricting than Democrats

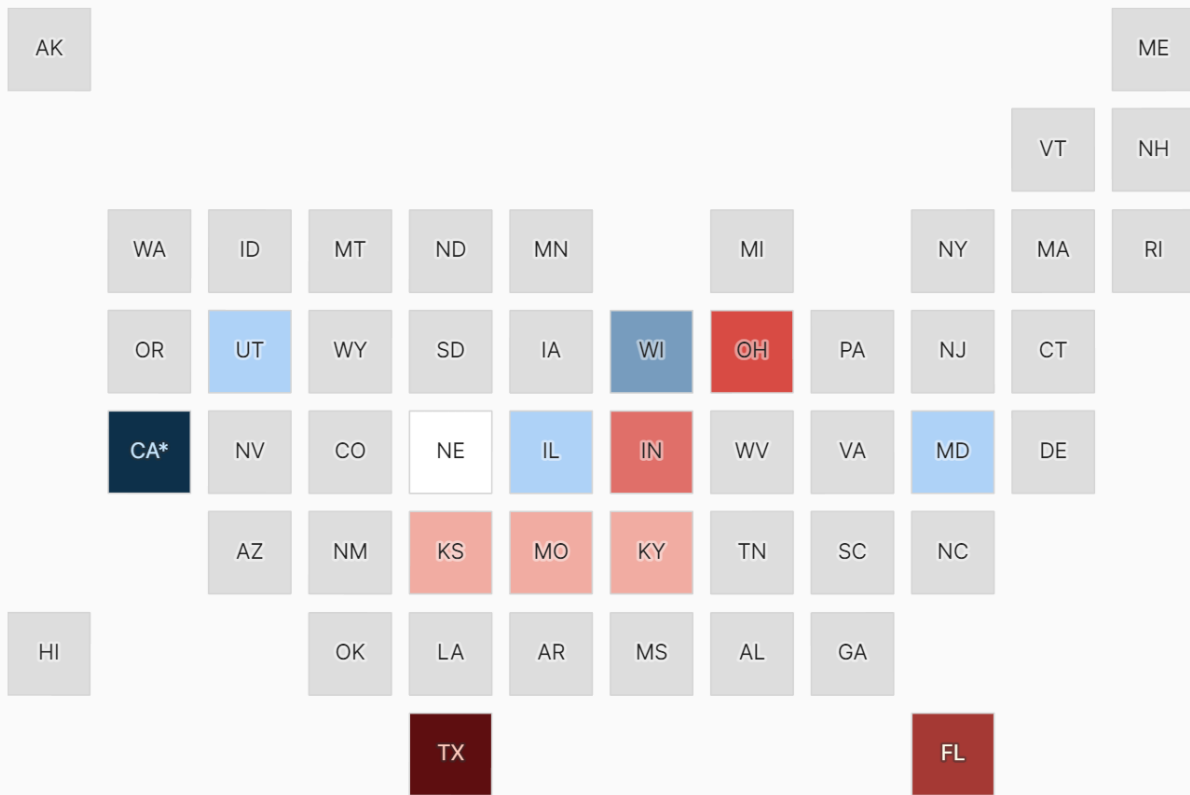
Addition and subtraction are fundamental to arithmetic. This is true whether you are an elementary school student trying to calculate how many more apples Jane has than John, or a political strategist who wishes to manipulate a state's district lines to add seats to their party's total while subtracting them from the other party.

Such redistricting arithmetic looms as an increasingly important feature [in the 2026 midterm electoral landscape](#). At present, Republicans hold a razor-thin majority of 220 seats to the Democrats' 215 in the U.S. House of Representatives.¹ This means that Democrats need a net gain of just three seats to win a majority of 218 seats. However, President Donald Trump has encouraged Republican-run states to draw more favorable congressional maps ahead of the midterms. While [atypical in modern times](#), mid-decade redistricting looks set to improve the GOP's chances of retaining a House majority.

Fact is, Republicans [control more states](#) in which the legislature has redistricting power, which gives them many paths to adding seats. Via legislative action, Republicans might add somewhere between 11 and 17 seats. Democrats, meanwhile, might add somewhere between four and 10 seats, although a figure close to the lower end of that range is far more likely. All told, this amounts to a GOP gain of somewhere between 2 and 13 seats from redistricting, with a high-single digit figure probably the most likely outcome at this point. Naturally, much depends on whether some states actually redraw their lines. Additionally, a potential redistricting boost for the GOP may still prove insufficient to stop Democrats from winning the House.²

GOP has more states to gain from in redistricting

States that could redistrict ahead of the 2026 election and their potential maximum change in seats for **Democrats** or **Republicans**, based on news reports and map analysis



*Democrats in California's state legislature passed a constitutional amendment giving the legislature temporary redistricting power. Californians will vote on the measure in November.

Estimates of opposition seats for each party to target are based on news reports and author's review of mapping options. Nebraska could redistrict, but not to specifically target any Democratic-held seats. Estimates do not include the possibility of the Supreme Court further weakening of Voting Rights Act, which would change this map considerably.

Source: News Reports



Here then is a look at how the redistricting arithmetic could play out in 13 states where redraws are happening or appear possible. I lay out the potential gains for each party and the rough likelihood that each state will redistrict, based on my reading of the situation and the current probability according to [Kalshi's prediction market](#) for whether certain states will redistrict before the 2026 election (for states with available figures as of the 8 p.m. Eastern on Monday, Sept. 1).

Where the GOP could gain seats

Texas: R+3 to R+5

Likelihood: Completed redistricting

Texas Republicans have [implemented new congressional lines](#) targeting five Democratic-held seats. [The finalized map](#) turns three solidly blue districts into seats that Trump carried by at least 10 percentage points in 2024, and further reddens two Democratic-held seats that Trump already carried by narrower margins. Those latter two seats, both in South Texas, are both Trump +10 seats that could remain in Democrats' hands in a pro-Democratic midterm environment. As a result, the new map isn't guaranteed to produce a five-seat gain for the GOP. ([See my earlier Texas](#) article for a more in-depth look at the situation in the Lone Star State.)

Ohio: R+2 to R+3

Likelihood: Very high (94%)

We've known for a while that Ohio would likely redistrict. The state constitution requires the legislature or a backup redistricting commission ([dominated by the GOP](#)) to pass a new map after two elections if the initial plan lacked bipartisan support. As [Republicans implemented](#) the current map after the 2020 census, the state legislature [is getting ready to draft new lines](#).

Although mapmakers [must follow certain rules when drawing boundaries](#), Ohio Republicans [are eyeing](#) a two-to-three seat gain in the state's House delegation, which they control 10-to-5. Two seats in northern Ohio — held by Democratic Reps. Marcy Kaptur and Emilia Sykes — are clearly on the chopping block, while Republicans could get even more aggressive by targeting Democratic Rep. Greg Landsman's Cincinnati-based seat.

Democrats' only recourse may be [Ohio's referendum process](#), through which they could ask voters to block the new map. However, they would have to mount a costly and challenging campaign to [gather about 250,000 signatures](#) to put such a measure on the ballot.

Missouri: R+1

Likelihood: High (87%)

The other Republican-run state most likely to redistrict is Missouri, where Republican Gov. Mike Kehoe [has called a special session](#) of the state legislature to consider new lines. Kehoe [released a map proposal](#) over the weekend that dissolves the solidly blue Kansas City-based 5th District that Rep. Emanuel Cleaver holds. The proposal makes the new 5th District into a seat that Trump [would have carried by about 18 points](#),³ making it a near-certain GOP pickup in the midterms.

Democrats' only other target in Missouri under such lines would be Missouri's 2nd District outside St. Louis, currently held by Republican Rep. Ann Wagner. However, the new map also makes it a hair redder by making it a seat that Trump carried by about 11 points. As a result, redistricting would likely move from a 6-2 to 7-1 Republican-led House delegation.

Indiana: R+1 to R+2

Likelihood: More likely than not (70%)

Indiana's Republican governor and GOP-led legislature have faced pressure to redraw their map [from Trump, Vice President JD Vance](#), and [the state's Republican members of Congress](#). The GOP currently has a 7-2 edge in Indiana's House seats, but it's clear they could add more seats if they do redistrict.

The most obvious target would be the light-blue 1st District in northwest Indiana held by Democratic Rep. Frank Mrvan. But Indiana Republicans [could go for](#) a 9-0 map by obliterating the solidly blue, Indianapolis-based 7th District held by Democratic Rep. André Carson. To do so, Republicans would have to "[crack](#)" — that is, split — the heavily Democratic turf across multiple red-leaning districts. That could risk creating more competitive GOP-held seats. Yet as Decision Desk HQ's Zachary Donnini has pointed out, [it is quite possible](#) to draw a 9-0 map with nine districts that all went for Trump by at least 17 points in 2024.

Florida: R+2 to R+4

Likelihood: More likely than not (no Kalshi market)

The other big state that could redistrict is Florida, where the GOP could reasonably target [around four Democratic-held seats](#). Although a 2010 amendment to the state constitution [bars partisan gerrymandering](#), Florida's conservative-dominated state Supreme Court [might not impede](#) Republican efforts. [Kalshi has not yet included](#)

[Florida](#) as an option for its prediction market, but the redistricting effort in Florida has begun. Beyond [the encouragement of Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis](#), state House Speaker Daniel Perez [announced the creation](#) in early August of a select redistricting committee to look at a congressional remap.

Any Republican map [would likely aim to eliminate](#) one Democratic-held seat in Central Florida, [potentially two in South Florida](#), and possibly one in [the Tampa Bay area](#). The South Florida targets [could include](#) the majority-minority 20th District held by Democratic Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick, which DeSantis has argued illegally puts race ahead of other redistricting criteria to pull Black voters into one district. This argument has worked for Florida Republicans before: In the post-2020 redistricting process, they axed a majority-minority seat in North Florida, [a move later upheld by](#) the state's high court.

Still, if the GOP seeks to maximize its Florida seats, it may be strongly betting the house (pun intended) on recent voting trends. As Nate Cohn of the New York Times [recently pointed out](#), it is difficult to draw two out-and-out safe Republican seats in South Florida that don't potentially endanger a sitting Republican incumbent. In a better Democratic year than 2022 or 2024 — say, a 2026 midterm with a GOP president in office — a maximal Republican map might put some seats at risk.

Kansas: R+1

Likelihood: Maybe (no Kalshi market)

[Kansas Republicans](#) are [increasingly talking](#) about altering the light-blue seat held by Democratic Rep. Sharice Davids. If the process gets going in Kansas, Republican state legislators can make it happen. After all, they [have veto-proof majorities](#) to override Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly's veto of a new congressional map. Kansas also has one of the later candidate filing deadlines and primaries in the 2026 election cycle ([June 1](#) and [Aug. 4](#), respectively), which could make this a slower-developing situation.

Kentucky: R+1

Likelihood: Unlikely (no Kalshi market)

In Kentucky, the GOP also [has veto-proof majorities](#) to override any attempt by Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear to block redistricting. This [could allow them](#) to crack the Louisville-based 3rd District and oust Democratic Rep. Morgan McGarvey.

However, in early August, [the Lexington Herald-Leader reported](#) that Republican leaders in the state legislature had not actively examined the possibility. Kentucky's candidate filing deadline is in early January, so progress would likely need to be faster here than in, say, Kansas.

Nebraska: No change

Likelihood: Unlikely (no Kalshi market)

Lastly, Republicans [could also pursue redistricting in Nebraska](#), although to better defend a seat rather than add a new target. Republican Rep. Don Bacon is retiring from the highly-competitive 2nd District around Omaha, so the GOP could redraw the seat to better ensure that the party preserves its 3-0 edge in the state's House delegation. Still, Democrats in the technically nonpartisan legislature could employ [the state's powerful filibuster rule](#) to stall such an attempt.

Now, these estimates rest partly on the assumption that one fundamental underpinning of redistricting law does not change before the 2026 midterms. [Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act](#) protects voters from discrimination based on race, color, or membership of a language minority group in the application of electoral rules and processes. In redistricting, the VRA [has been used](#) to prevent the dilution of voting power for minority groups, in part by necessitating the creation of [majority-minority districts](#) that better enable the relevant minority group to elect a candidate of its choice.

However, the conservative-dominated Supreme Court [could call into question](#) the constitutionality of Section 2. But [that is a larger story](#) we won't yet consider here. To put it bluntly, such a ruling would have a seismic impact on redistricting. For instance, Republican-run states in the South — Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas — could eliminate some majority-minority seats (especially majority-Black districts that are heavily Democratic) that are currently protected by Section 2.

Where Democrats could gain seats

California: D+3 to D+5

Likelihood: High (84%)

California Democrats pushed through [a new map](#) that aims to flip five GOP-held seats. The map converts four red-leaning seats into ones that former Vice President Kamala Harris carried in 2024, while one other Republican-held district becomes a seat that Trump only narrowly carried. California voters [will decide the measure's fate](#) in November, but [early polling](#) suggests it could get majority support. [Prediction markets](#) give it [close to a 9 in 10 shot](#) of passing.⁴

The gains in California could equal or outweigh those in Texas. Yet California is the only state where Democrats are likely to make gains that involve a friendly legislature passing a measure. (You can read my previous in-depth analysis of the California map [here](#).)

Utah: D+0 to D+1

Likelihood: High (no Kalshi market)

A state court in Utah [recently ruled](#) that the Republican-dominated state legislature impermissibly ignored voter-backed redistricting rules for the state and ordered the legislature to redraw. The legislature has said it [intends to draw new lines](#), so a fresh map seems quite likely.

However, it remains to be seen if the eventual map will be more in keeping with [the proposals made by](#) the state's Independent Redistricting Commission in 2021, or one that better ensures Republicans retain their 4-0 edge in Utah. If Utah does end up with a map somewhat akin to one of the IRC's proposals, Democrats [will likely gain a seat](#) in the Salt Lake City area, cutting the GOP's state advantage to 3-1. If the state courts shoot down the legislature's new map, a court-drawn plan could also result, which would likely be a win for Democrats, too.

Maryland: D+1

Likelihood: Unlikely (25%)

Beyond California, Democrats control almost no other states in which they hold the redistricting cards. About the only available option is in Maryland, where Democrats have a 7-1 edge in the state's House delegation. Maryland Democrats could attempt to create an 8-0 map by adding substantial Democratic turf to the solidly red 1st District. One initial proposal in the state legislature [does just that](#). Still, [state courts pushed](#)

[back](#) on Democratic gerrymandering efforts after the 2020 census and could rule against such a move again.

Illinois: D+0 to D+1

Likelihood: Very unlikely (no Kalshi market)

Democrats in [Illinois](#) have essentially maxed out the party's potential seats under the current lines. They already hold a 14-3 advantage, and while [a 15-2 map is theoretically possible, such a proposal](#) would likely falter because it would leave too many Democratic-held seats in play during a strong Republican cycle.

Still, Democrats could use the departures of three Chicagoland Democratic representatives as an opportunity to substantially adjust the current lines. Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi is running for Senate, while Reps. Danny Davis and Jan Schakowsky are retiring. And Democrats have already shown no compunction about gerrymandering the state, so we shouldn't entirely rule out further finagling — even if it's aimed more at shoring up other Democratic-held seats than flipping another GOP-held seat.

Wisconsin: D+0 to D+2

Likelihood: Very unlikely (no Kalshi market)

The longest shot worth mentioning here is probably Wisconsin, where Democrats have hoped for the liberal-leaning state Supreme Court to throw out the state's congressional map — but so far in vain. The high court has [refused to hear Democratic-backed redistricting lawsuits](#) up to this point. Still, a new lawsuit asks [the court to appoint](#) a three-judge panel to decide the future of the congressional map — an untested process that the Republican-led legislature put in place via a new law in 2011.

Wisconsin Republicans hold six of the state's eight districts, but some tweaks to the red-leaning 1st or 3rd districts as presently constituted would give Democrats a better shot at capturing them. Time could be on Democrats' side here, as Wisconsin is similar to Kansas in that it holds a relatively late primary election ([June 1 candidate filing deadline, August 11 primary](#)). While Wisconsin Republicans hold six of the state's eight districts, some tweaks to the red-leaning 1st or 3rd districts as presently constituted would give Democrats a better shot at capturing them.

This is not necessarily a full list of the states that *could* redistrict ahead of the 2026 election. Other states, such as [Colorado](#) and [New York](#), are talking about constitutional amendments to give them a chance to redistrict in time for the 2028 election, but that's irrelevant for the upcoming midterms. Still, future court rulings, legislative maneuvering, or ballot initiatives like the one in California might bring another state onto the 2026 board. Most especially, the pending legal action regarding the Voting Rights Act looms as the biggest "known unknown."