

## Governor Quinn Signs Major Redistricting Reforms

Written by Laurel White  
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### *New Law Protects Minority Community Voting Rights; Increases Openness and Transparency in Redistricting Process*

CHICAGO – March 7, 2011. Governor Pat Quinn today signed a bill into law that protects the voting rights of racial and language minority communities throughout Illinois and encourages public participation in the redistricting process.

“Ensuring that everyone’s voice is heard in government is crucial to our democracy,” said Governor Quinn. “This new law will help ensure that racial and language minority groups throughout our state are able to elect leaders accountable to their interests and concerns.”

Senate Bill 3976 protects the voting rights of racial and language minority groups in Illinois by helping prevent a community’s electoral identity from being weakened by being divided into multiple legislative districts. The new law creates the Illinois Voting Rights Act of 2011, which allows legislative districts to be drawn to create crossover districts, coalition districts or influence districts.

A crossover district is one in which a racial or language minority group makes up less than a majority of the voting age population, but is large enough to elect the candidate of its choice with some support from larger groups. A coalition district is one where several racial or language minority groups may join together to elect a candidate of their choice. An influence district is one where a racial or language minority can influence the outcome of an election,

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even if its preferred candidate cannot be elected.

The new law also ensures that the legislature will hold a minimum of four public hearings before passing future redistricting plans. The new law was sponsored by Sen. Kwame Raoul (D-Chicago) and Rep. Barbara Flynn Currie (D-Chicago) and takes effect immediately.

“As we move forward with the redistricting process, this important new law gives us the tools and public input needed to create a map that is fair and representative of the people of Illinois,” said Currie.

The ceremony was held at the Chinese American Service League, in Chicago’s Chinatown neighborhood. The neighborhood is currently divided into four city wards, three state senate districts, four state representative districts and two county board districts. Community leaders say the neighborhood’s division into so many districts has significantly reduced its influence in government, and that as a result, the area’s interests are underrepresented.

This bill was supported by numerous community organizations, including: the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community, the Chinese American Service League, the Asian American Institute, the Korean American Resource and Cultural Center, the United African Organization, the Resurrection Project, and the United Congress of Religious and Community Organizations.

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