

# Apportioning Senators by % of US Population

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This is a note in response to the following article by John Dingell about abolishing the Senate in order to establish a more equitable democratic representation in America's legislature. The current apportionment is skewed towards an exaggerated representation of low-population, rural states. Dingle would also abolish the Electoral College for the same reason.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/12/john-dingell-how-restore-faith-government/577222/>, retrieved 12/8/2018)

## I Served in Congress Longer Than Anyone. Here's How to Fix It.

Abolish the Senate and publicly fund elections.

John D. Dingell, December 4, 2018

I felt that abolishing the Senate was too Draconian and offered an alternative: apportion senators by % US population of their state. I think there is value in having the senators elected by the whole state and having them serve 6 years. This aligns a segment of the Federal government with the subordinate governments distributed by states. Also a senator has to appeal to the mix of views represented by the state rather than the more local and homogeneous views of a district. States have geographic issues that deserve to be represented in the Federal government.

### Apportioning of Senators by % of US Population

(% rounded to nearest integer)

| State          | # Senators | State          | # Senators | State                | # Senators |
|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------------|------------|
| California     | 12         | Maryland       | 2          | Nebraska             | 1          |
| Texas          | 9          | Wisconsin      | 2          | West Virginia        | 1          |
| Florida        | 6          | Colorado       | 2          | Idaho                | 1          |
| New York       | 6          | Minnesota      | 2          | Hawaii               | 1          |
| Pennsylvania   | 4          | South Carolina | 2          | New Hampshire        | 1          |
| Illinois       | 4          | Alabama        | 1          | Maine                | 1          |
| Ohio           | 4          | Louisiana      | 1          | Montana              | 1          |
| Georgia        | 3          | Kentucky       | 1          | Rhode Island         | 1          |
| North Carolina | 3          | Oregon         | 1          | Delaware             | 1          |
| Michigan       | 3          | Oklahoma       | 1          | South Dakota         | 1          |
| New Jersey     | 3          | Connecticut    | 1          | North Dakota         | 1          |
| Virginia       | 3          | Iowa           | 1          | Alaska               | 1          |
| Washington     | 2          | Utah           | 1          | District of Columbia | 1          |
| Arizona        | 2          | Nevada         | 1          | Vermont              | 1          |
| Massachusetts  | 2          | Arkansas       | 1          | Wyoming              | 1          |
| Tennessee      | 2          | Mississippi    | 1          | <b>Total</b>         | <b>110</b> |
| Indiana        | 2          | Kansas         | 1          |                      |            |
| Missouri       | 2          | New Mexico     | 1          |                      |            |

**Any state whose population was below 1% of total would still get 1 senator.** Note that the District of Columbia also gets a senator, since its population is greater than that of Vermont and Wyoming and close to that of Alaska.

As of 2018 80% of the population would be in the 23 states with more than one senator. These

23 states would have 82 senators (75% of total) instead of the 46 today (46% of total, not including DC). The remaining 27 states (including DC) holding 20% of the population would have 27 senators (25% of total) instead of the 54 today (54% of total, not including DC).

Dingell also wanted to abolish the Electoral College, which I am not opposed to basically. But perhaps my population-oriented Senate would mitigate the situation enough, since the electors are apportioned according to the number of Senators and Congressmen. It would still give disproportionate weight to the under 1% population states (as shown by the extra 10 Senators beyond 100), but we have always tried to balance the rights of the minority against those of the majority. It is only recently that things have become so skewed in favor of the minority. We are still supposed to be majority ruled.

The idea of modifying the Senate does have precedent, as recounted in the following description from *Wikipedia*:

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_Senate#Elections\\_and\\_term](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Senate#Elections_and_term), retrieved 12/17/2018, footnotes and hyperlinks removed)

### **Elections and term**

Originally, senators were selected by the state legislatures, not by popular elections. By the early years of the 20th century, the legislatures of as many as 29 states had provided for popular election of senators by referendums. Popular election to the Senate was standardized nationally in 1913 by the ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment.

### **Term**

Senators serve terms of six years each; the terms are staggered so that approximately one-third of the seats are up for election every two years. This was achieved by dividing the senators of the 1st Congress into thirds (called classes), where the terms of one-third expired after two years, the terms of another third expired after four, and the terms of the last third expired after six years. This arrangement was also followed after the admission of new states into the union. The staggering of terms has been arranged such that both seats from a given state are not contested in the same general election, except when a mid-term vacancy is being filled. Current senators whose six-year terms are set to expire on January 3, 2019, belong to Class I. There is no constitutional limit to the number of terms a senator may serve.

A (more complicated) scheme could be devised to maintain the basic idea of spreading the election of Senators over a succession of 2-year intervals that would maintain the policy of having approximately a third of the Senate up for election at a time and not having all the Senators of a state up for election the same year.

**(Update 1/15/2018)** I just saw a reference to the following article in the *Atlantic* that concurs with my idea about reapportionment of the Senate, discusses the legal ramifications in more detail, and echoes the benefits I mentioned as well as others (though with a garbled explanation of the math):

(<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/01/heres-how-fix-senate/579172/>, retrieved 1/15/18)

### **The Path to Give California 12 Senators, and Vermont Just One**

Maybe the two-senators-per-state rule isn't as permanent as it seems.

Eric W. Orts, 2 January 2018

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