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The Apportionment Process Explained

The U.S. Constitution requires that the population of each state nationwide be counted every 10 years by the U.S. census to make sure that the number of U.S. representatives serving each jurisdiction accurately represents the state's population size. Each state must receive at least one of the 435 House seats and no more than one representative per 30,000 people is allowed. After the new distribution of House representative seats is determined, it is applied to the next Congress. Here's how the apportionment process of House representatives works.

1 The U.S. Census Bureau calculates how many House seats each state is entitled to

The Constitution requires that each state is provided one of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives. The remaining 385 seats are distributed among the states based on a calculation used by the Census Bureau called the **method of equal proportions equation**, initiated by the Apportionment Act of 1941.

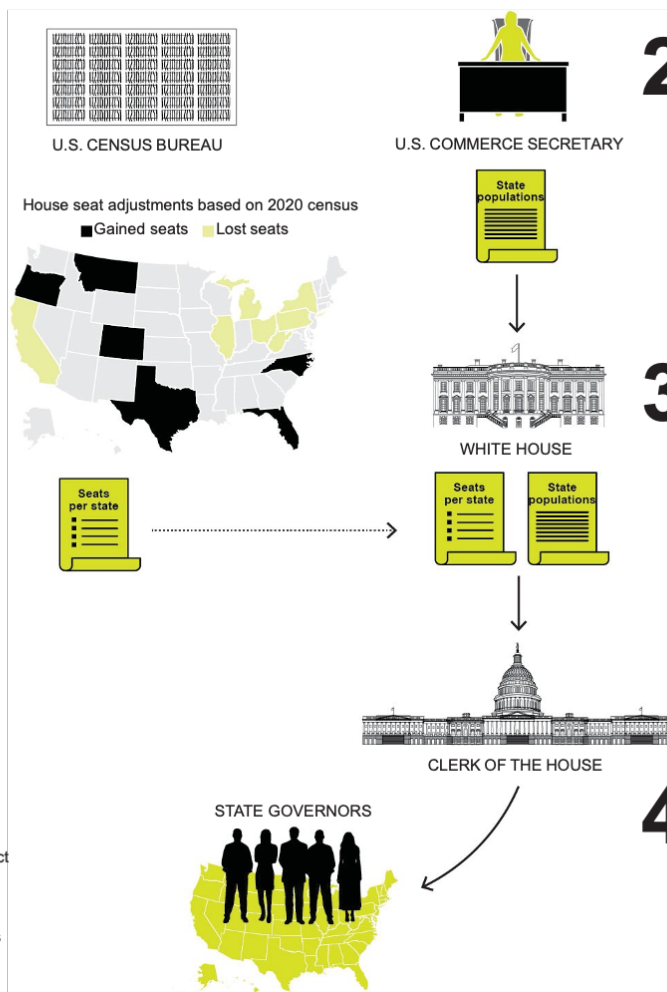
METHOD OF EQUAL PROPORTIONS

Each state is assigned a value, calculated by dividing each state's apportionment population from the previous census by the geometric mean of its current number of seats and seats to be apportioned.

The states are then prioritized in a list based on the resulting values, largest to smallest.

States at the top of the priority list receive available seats.

NOTE: Apportionment populations reflect all residents in each state, including minors, noncitizens, Armed Forces personnel and their dependents living overseas and federal civilian employees and their dependents living overseas.



2 The secretary of Commerce reports to the president each state's population count taken in the U.S. census

By Dec. 31 of a census year — in this case, 2020 — the Commerce secretary must report to the president each state's population counted by the U.S. census.

3 The president gives the state population numbers to the clerk of the House along with the number of representatives each state is allowed to have

Within the first week of Congress, President Joe Biden informs the House of Representatives how many people are living in each state, according to the census data, and how many House seats the Census Bureau calculated states are entitled to based on those populations.

4 The clerk of the House provides state governors with House seat numbers

Within 15 days of receiving the population and seat numbers from the president, the clerk of the House provides the information to the governors of each state.

Source: Congressional Research Service report R45951 "Apportionment and Redistricting Process for the U.S. House of Representatives," U.S. Census Bureau