

Legislature design assignment
Political Science 517
November 20, 2008

Imagine you are rewriting the sections of your state's constitution that deal with the state legislature. First, based on class discussion and the Elazar handout, decide which facets of your state's political culture you find more and less desirable. You want your legislature to function in a way that reflects your group's preferences, but you cannot eliminate or ignore state political culture. You have to figure out a way to channel it through your constitutional choices to produce the kind of outcomes you want.

The decisions regarding the legislature you may change are:

- The number of districts in each chamber of the legislature, and hence, the average size of the legislative districts, as well as the ratio of seats between the chambers.
- The presence or absence of term limits
- The institutions for drawing district lines, and hence, the types of districts that predominate (consider both political competition and homogeneity/heterogeneity)
- The three factors which play into professionalism: member salary, staff budgets, and session lengths

You may not, however, write anything into your constitution regarding legislative organization. This must be left up to the legislators elected under your system.

Prepare a brief 3-5 minutes presentation that answers the following questions: based on the Squire reading and class discussion, what type of legislative organization do you think will result under your system? What level of competition will your system produce, at both the state and district level? Will your decisions act in unison to produce one outcome, or will they exert pressure in different directions? Are there any trade-offs you have to make in your choices? Are there any outcomes you would like to achieve but feel you cannot achieve in your state's political culture?

You should begin sketching your constitutional design in class today, and if necessary, consult additional information about the demographics of your state between now and next Tuesday's class.