



Assessing California's Redistricting Commission

Effects on Partisan Fairness and Competitiveness

March 2018

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INSTITUTE OF CALIFORNIA

Outline

- Background and context
- Commission plans: fairness
- Commission plans: competitiveness
- Conclusions and recommendations

Citizen Redistricting Commission (CRC) was a big change

- Elected state legislature → independent appointed commission
- Some constraints → specific criteria
- A few public hearings → dozens of public hearings, internet streaming, explanatory report
- Any partisan coalition → partisan membership and coalition dictated by law

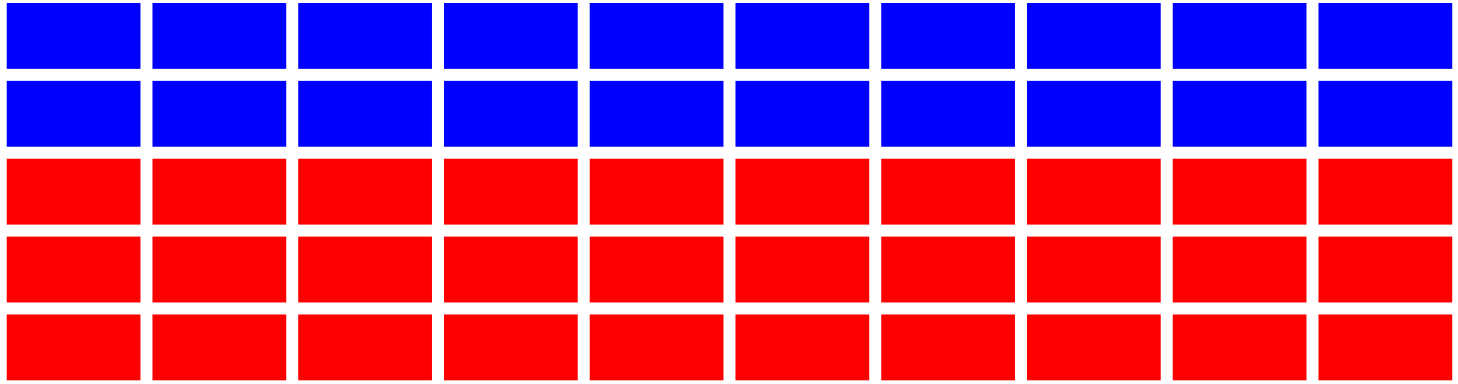
Fair and competitive plans hoped for but not required

- Fairness: neither party gets too many seats given its vote
- Competitiveness: many seats change hands as vote changes
- But law only required:
 - No party favorites
 - No incumbent favorites

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How do gerrymanders work?

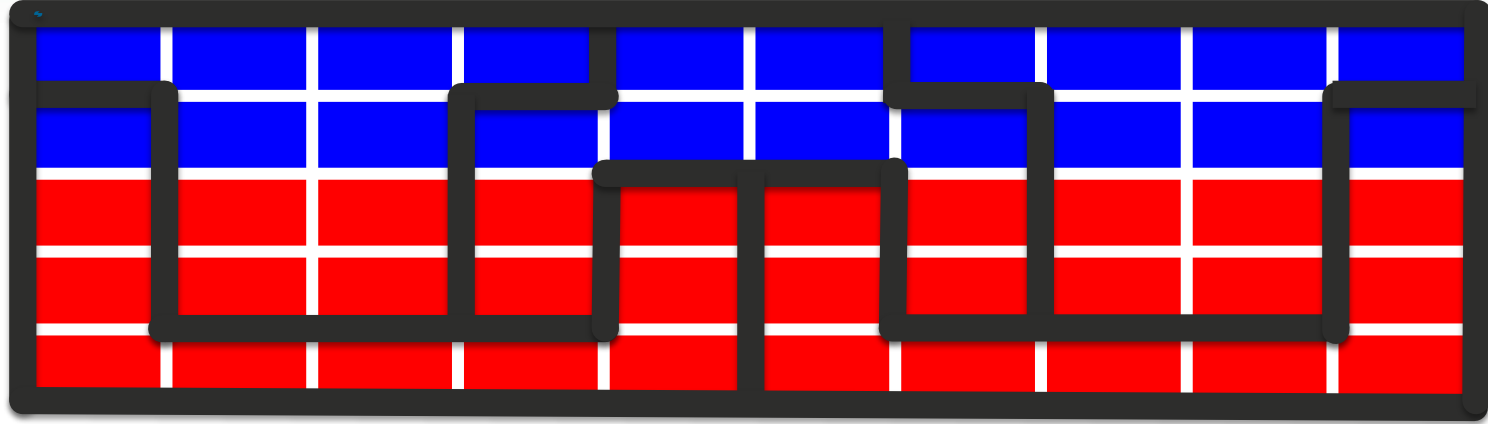


50 VOTERS

20 BLUE

30 RED

How do gerrymanders work?

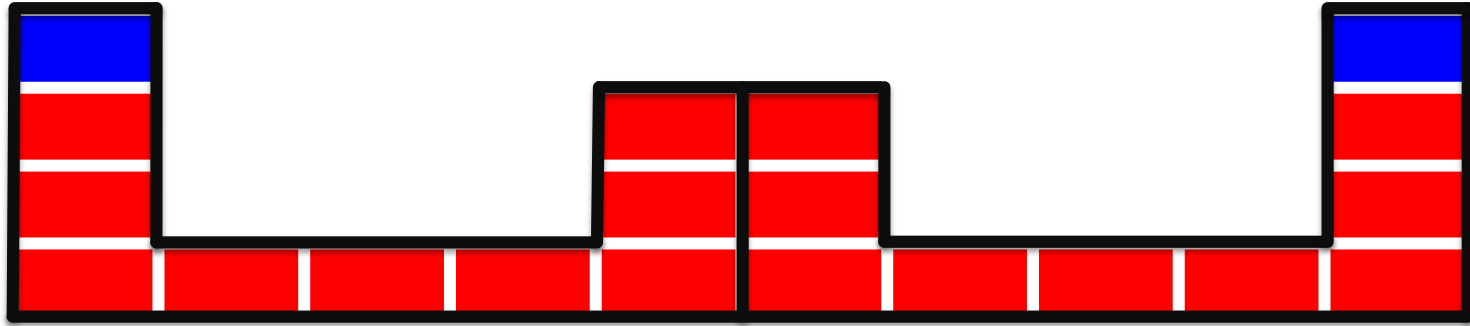


5 DISTRICTS

3 BLUE

2 RED

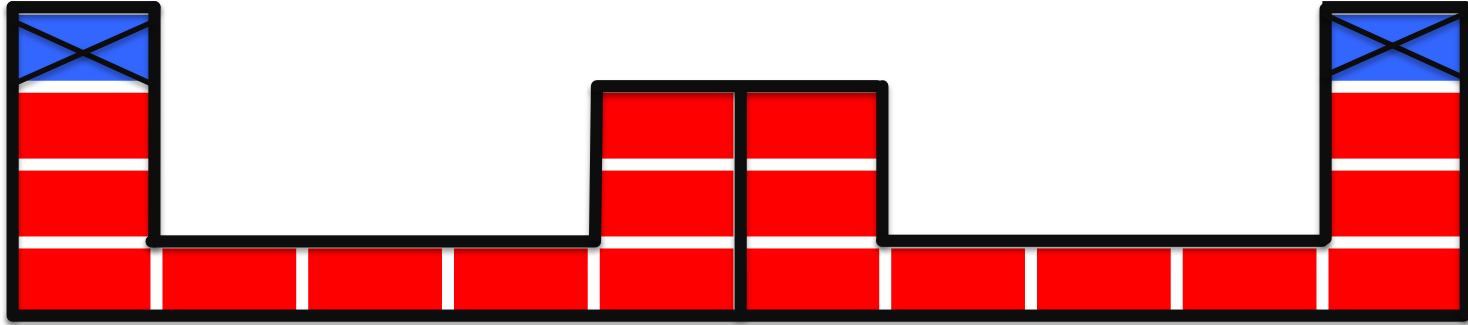
The packed districts



9 RED - 1 BLUE

The packed districts

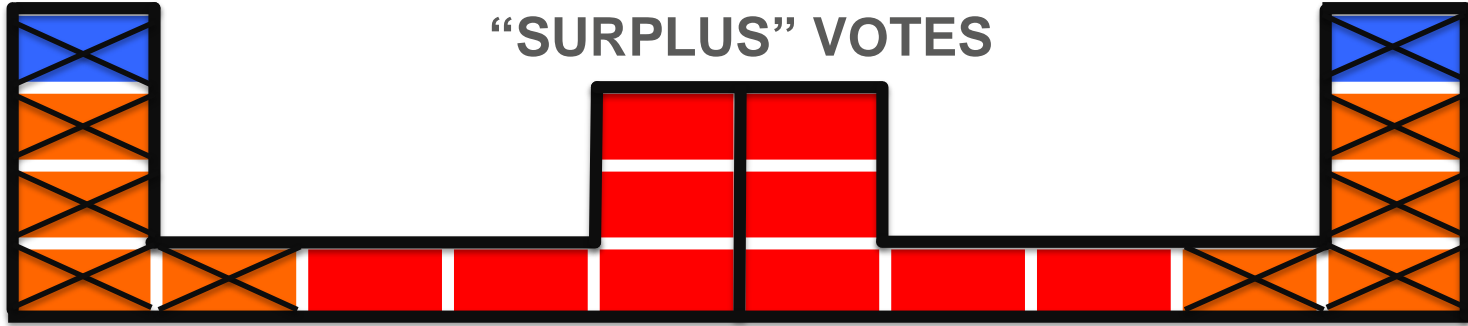
“LOST” VOTES



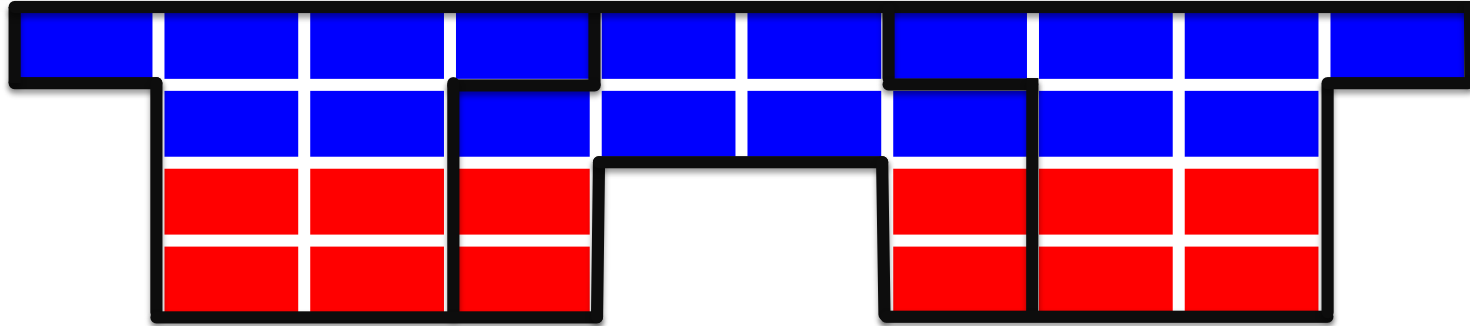
9 RED - 1 BLUE

The packed districts

“LOST” VOTES
+
“SURPLUS” VOTES

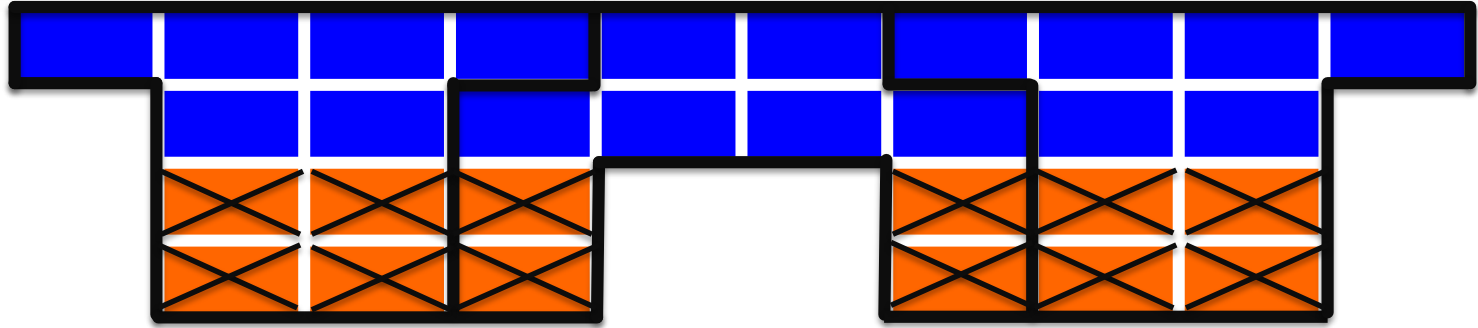


The cracked districts



4 RED – 6 BLUE

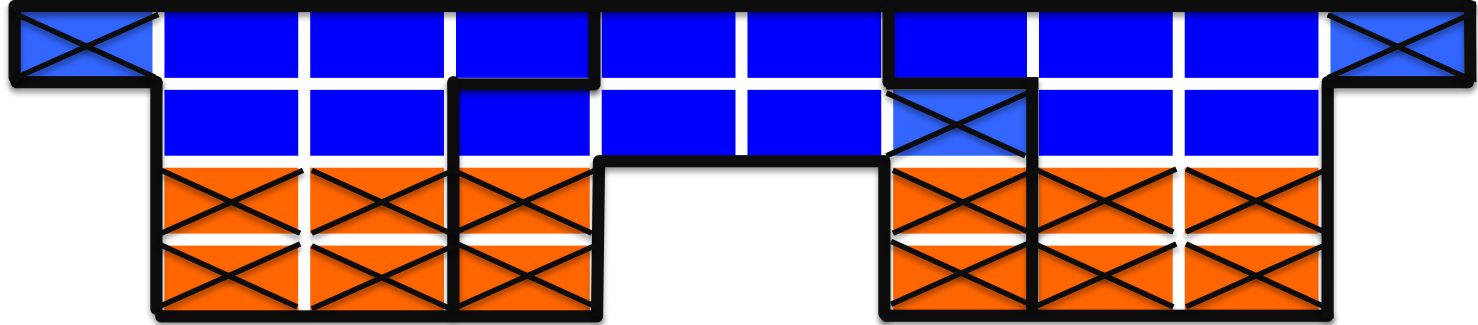
The cracked districts



4 RED – 6 BLUE

“LOST” VOTES

The cracked districts



4 RED – **6 BLUE**

“LOST” VOTES

+

“SURPLUS” VOTES

The efficiency gap compares wasted votes

SURPLUS VOTES

+

LOST VOTES

—

SURPLUS VOTES

+

LOST VOTES

X 100

TOTAL VOTES

The efficiency gap compares wasted votes

$$\frac{\begin{array}{c} 8 \\ + \\ \text{LOST VOTES} \end{array} - \begin{array}{c} \text{SURPLUS VOTES} \\ + \\ \text{LOST VOTES} \end{array}}{\text{TOTAL VOTES}} \times 100$$

The efficiency gap compares wasted votes

$$\begin{array}{r} 8 \\ + \\ 12 \end{array} \quad \text{---} \quad \begin{array}{r} \text{SURPLUS VOTES} \\ + \\ \text{LOST VOTES} \end{array}$$

X 100

TOTAL VOTES

The efficiency gap compares wasted votes

20

—

3

+

LOST VOTES

X 100

TOTAL VOTES

The efficiency gap compares wasted votes

20

—

3

+

2

X 100

TOTAL VOTES

The efficiency gap compares wasted votes

20

—

5

X 100

50

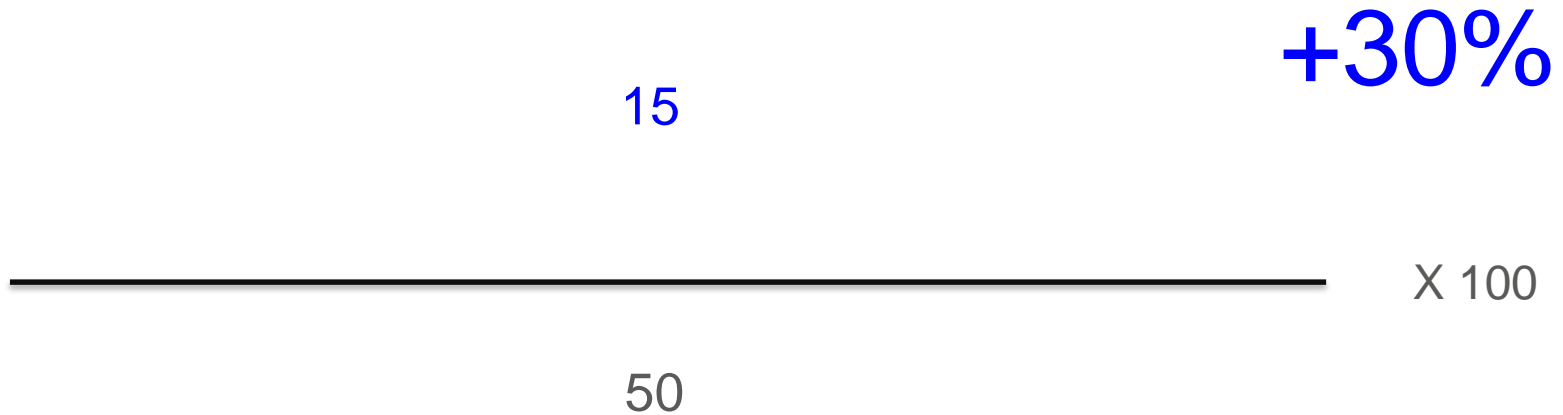
The efficiency gap compares wasted votes

15

X 100

50

The efficiency gap compares wasted votes



The efficiency gap can be either seats or seat share

- Seat share = seat advantage relative to potential advantage
 - 30%
- Seats = total seat advantage
 - 30% of 5 = 1.5

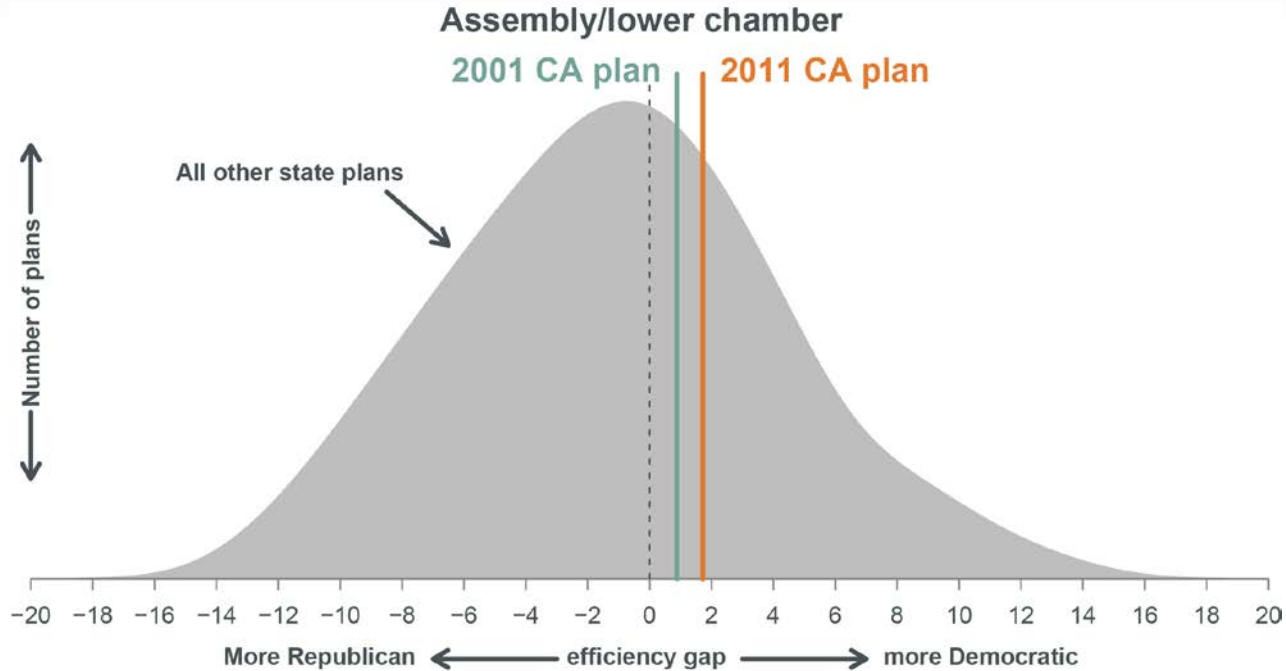
The efficiency gap can be either seats or seat share

- State legislatures → seat share
 - Power = seat advantage relative to potential advantage
- Congress → sometimes seat share, sometimes seats
 - One seat always means the same thing for congressional majority
BUT
 - Large states can have bigger seat gaps by accident

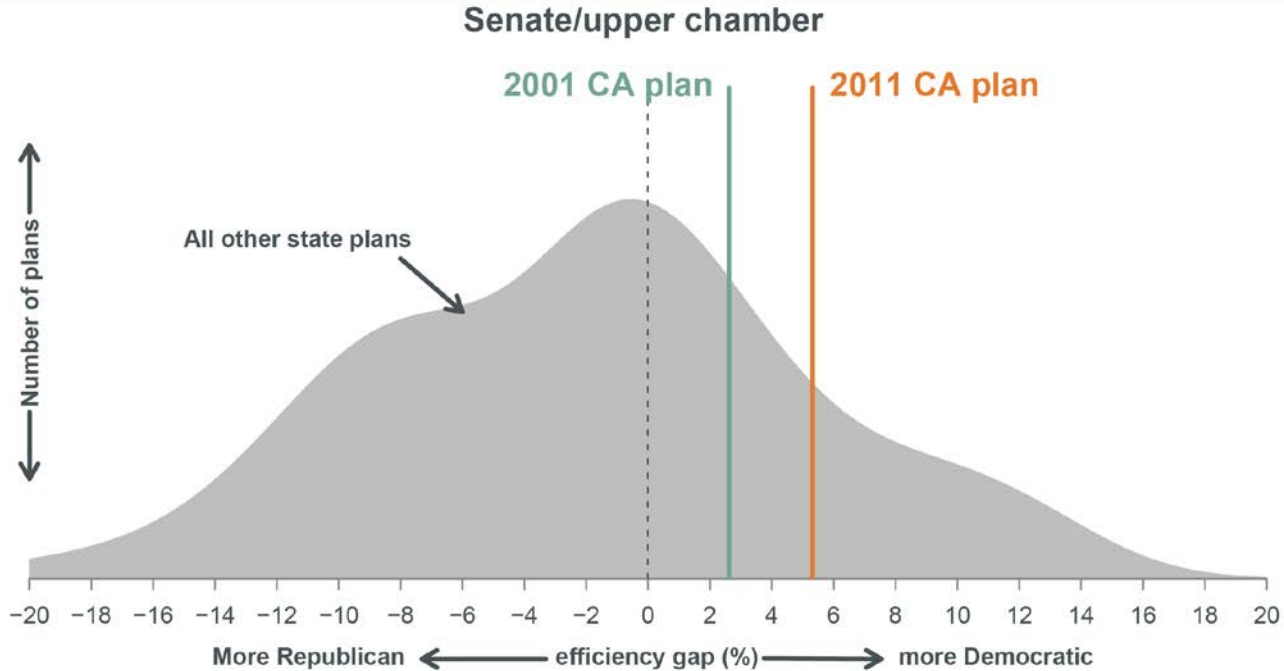
How does the CRC's efficiency gap look?

- CRC vs. state legislature
- California vs. other states

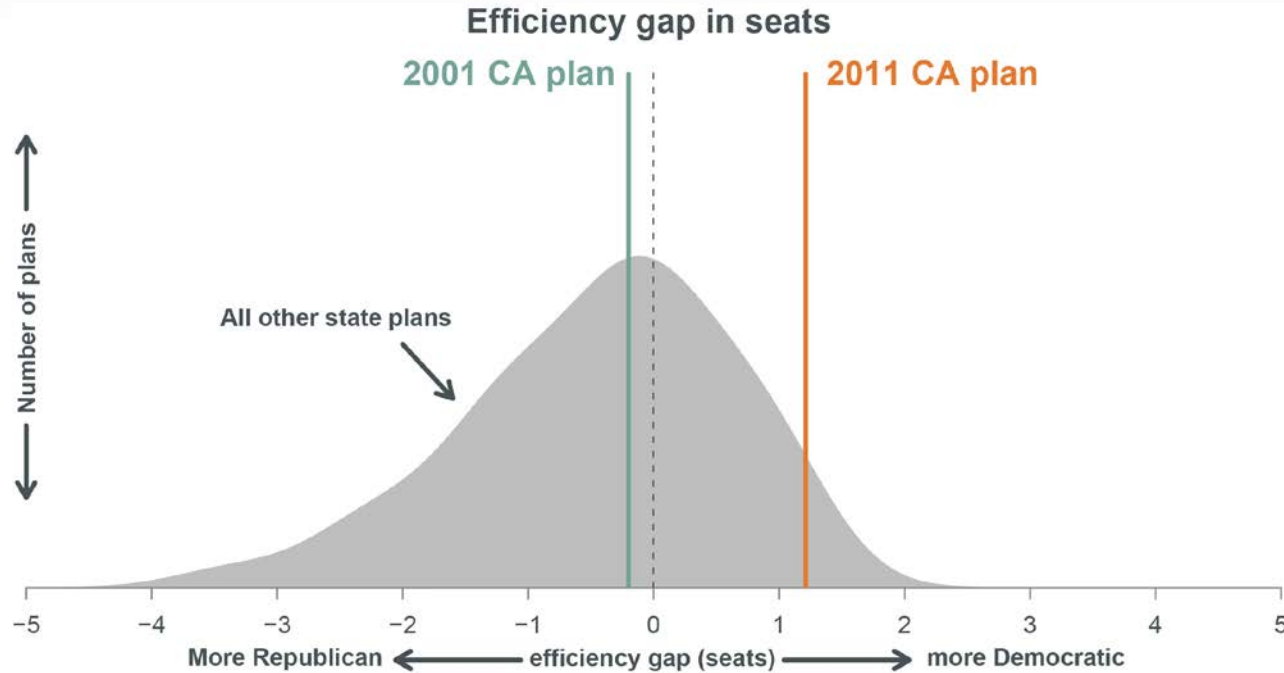
Assembly CRC plan is fair, with little change



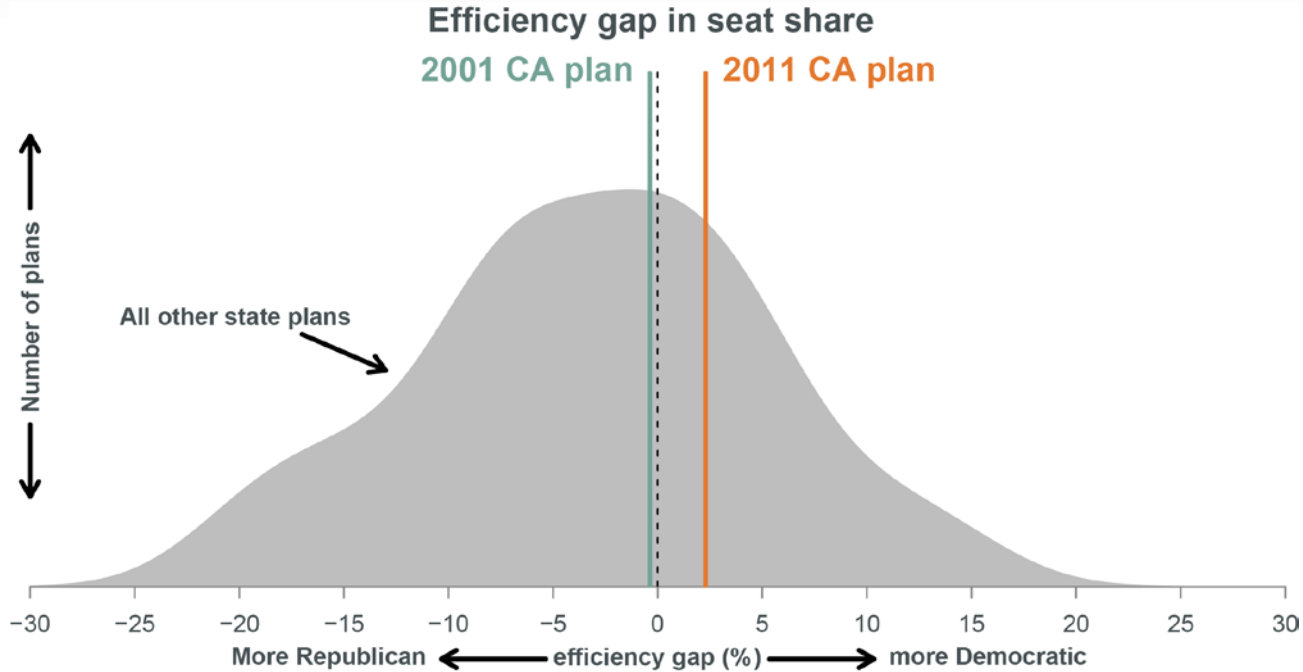
Senate CRC plan is fair, with slightly more change



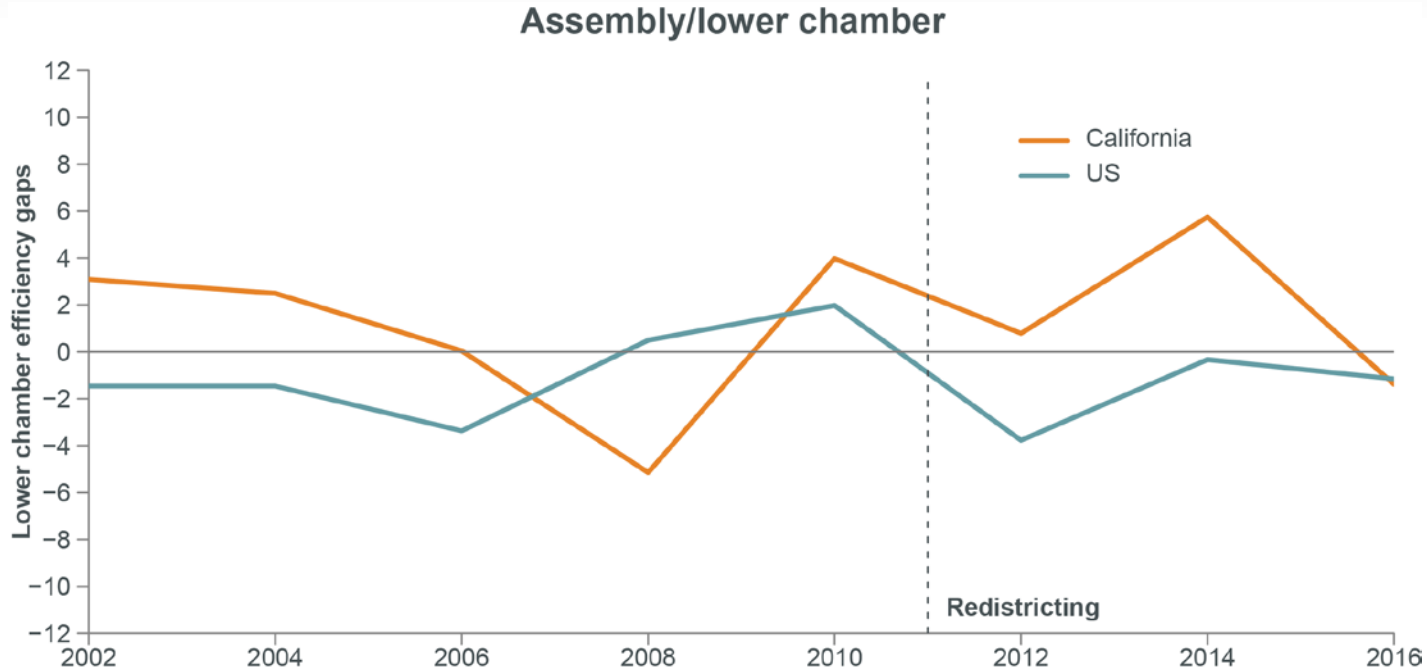
Congressional CRC plan has big raw seats change...



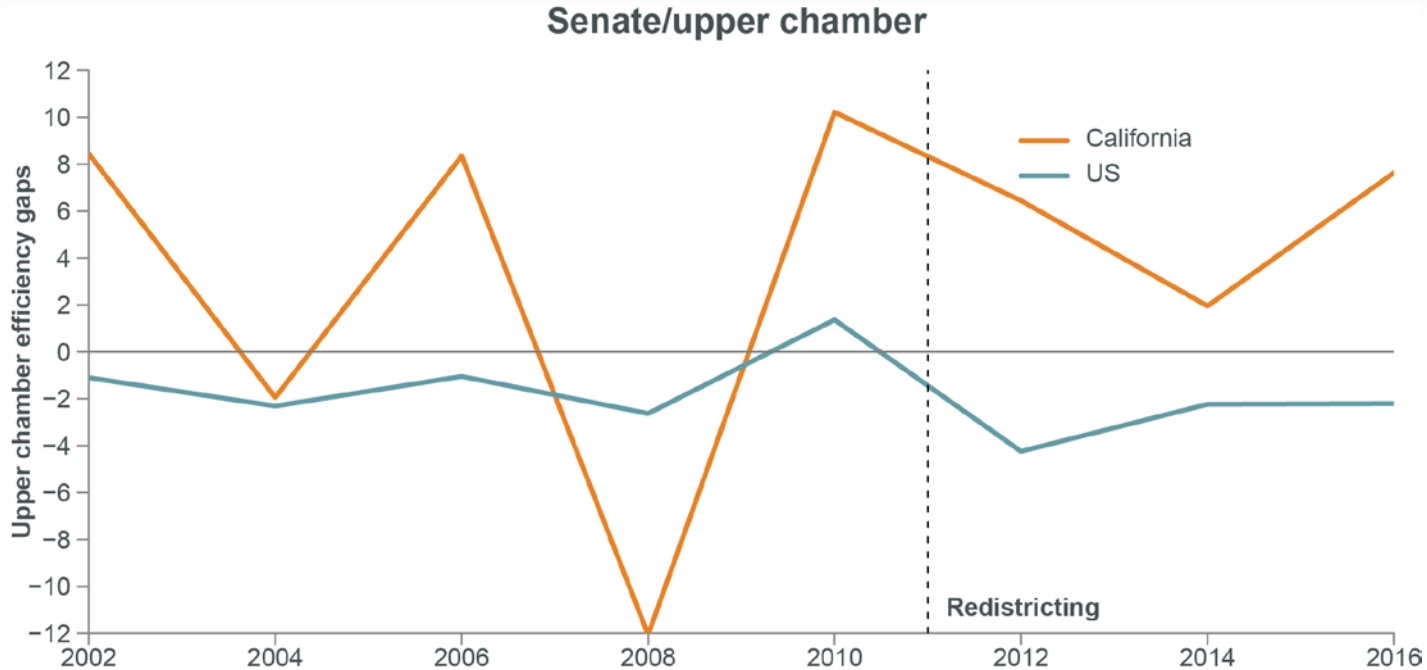
...but seat share change is small



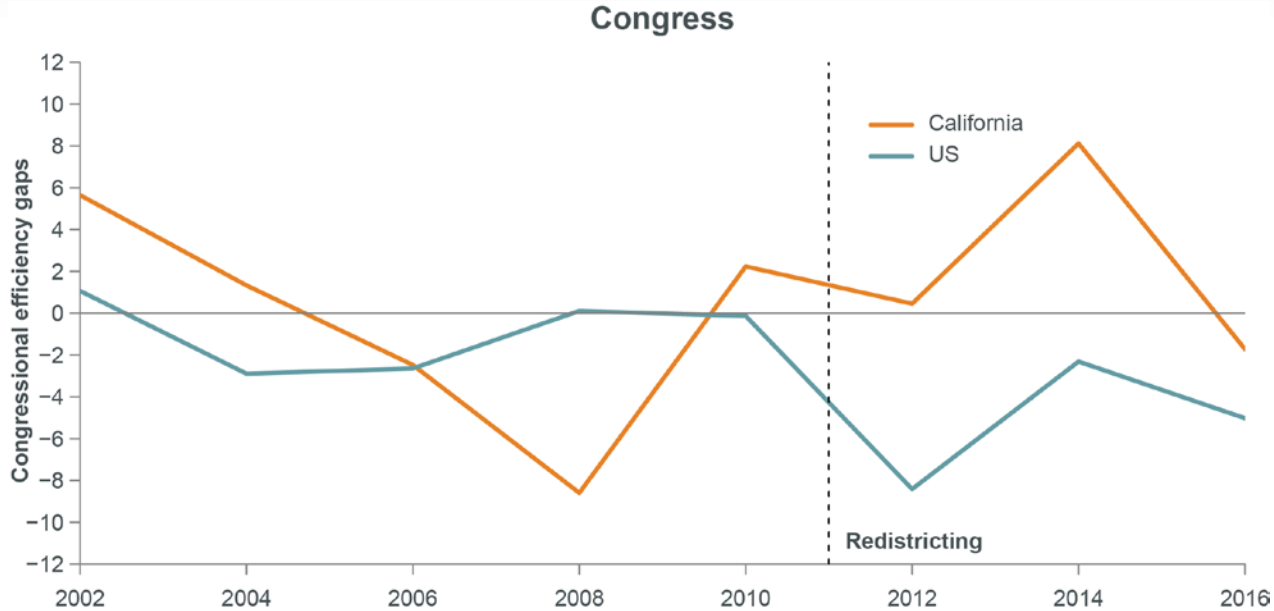
Efficiency gap trends vary over time



Efficiency gap trends vary over time



Efficiency gap trends vary over time



This slide was corrected after the event.

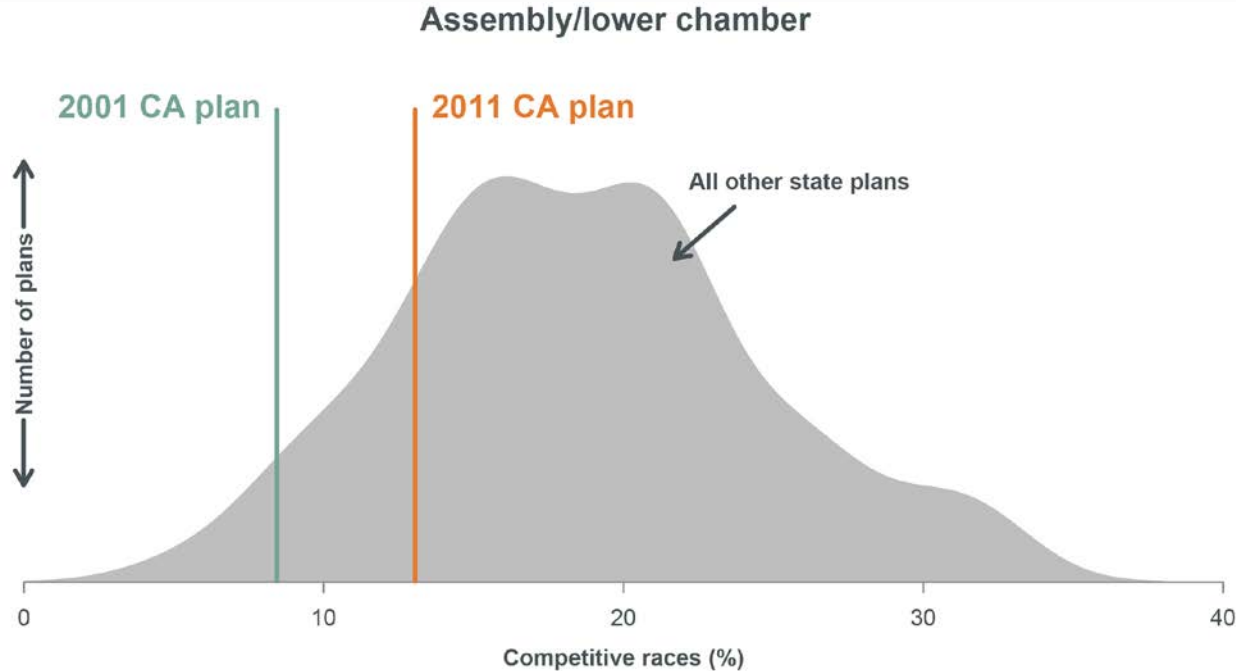
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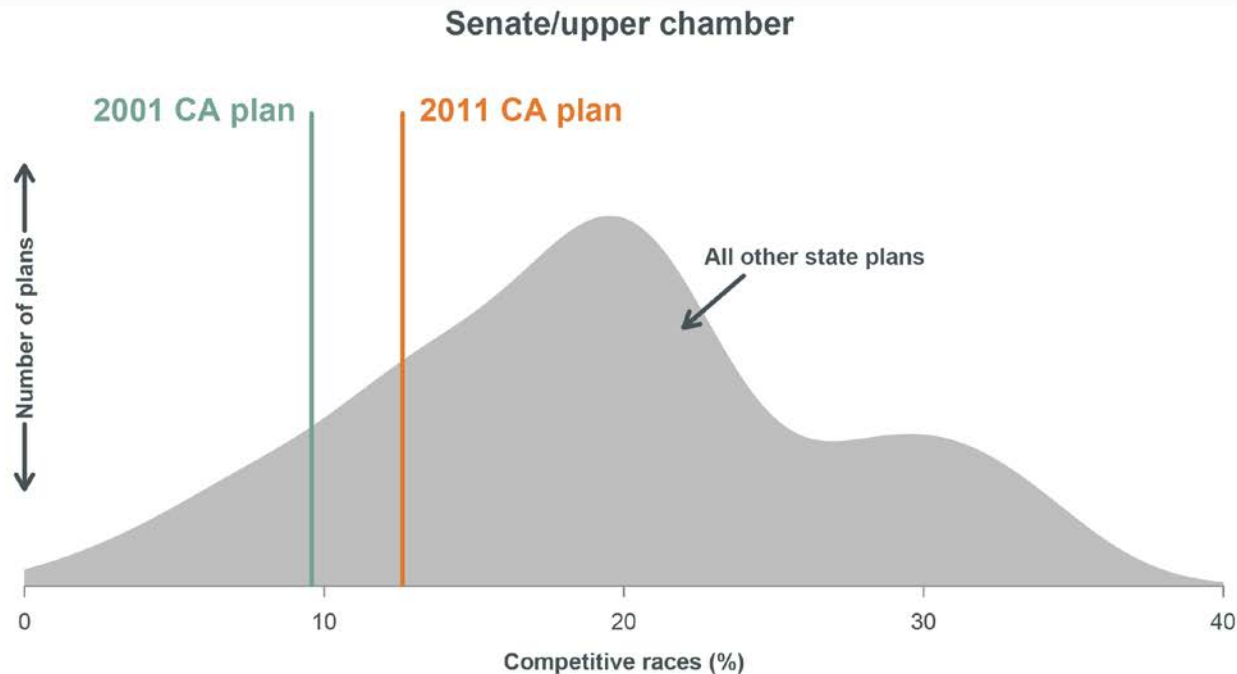
What does “competitive” mean?

- Districts with vote share outcomes between 45% and 55%
- CRC vs. state legislature
- California vs. other states

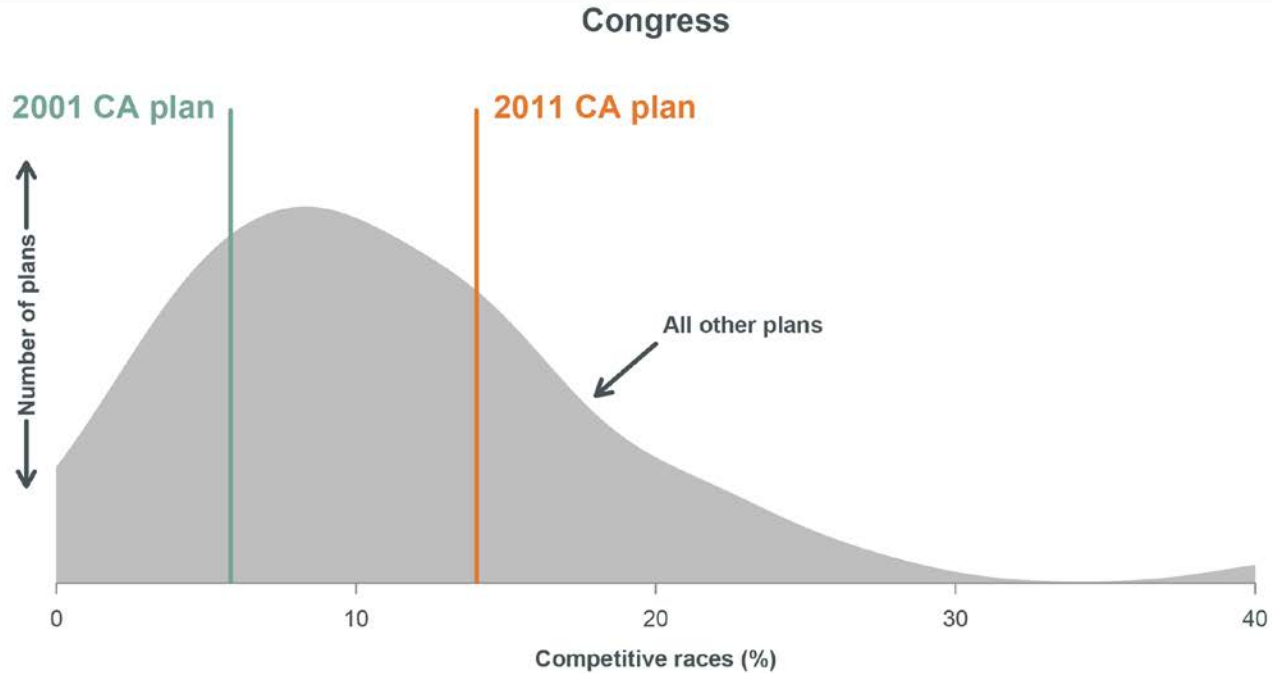
Assembly CRC plan is much more competitive, but still on low end nationally



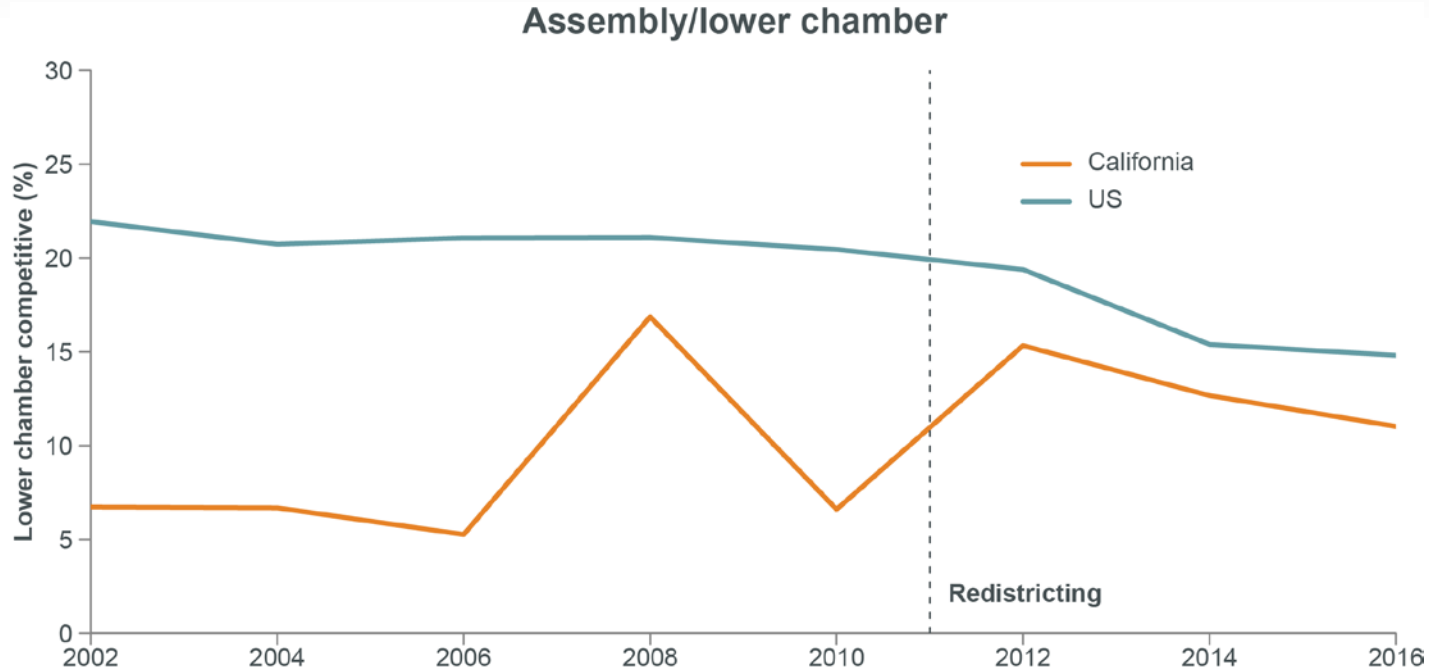
Senate CRC plan is somewhat more competitive, but still on low end



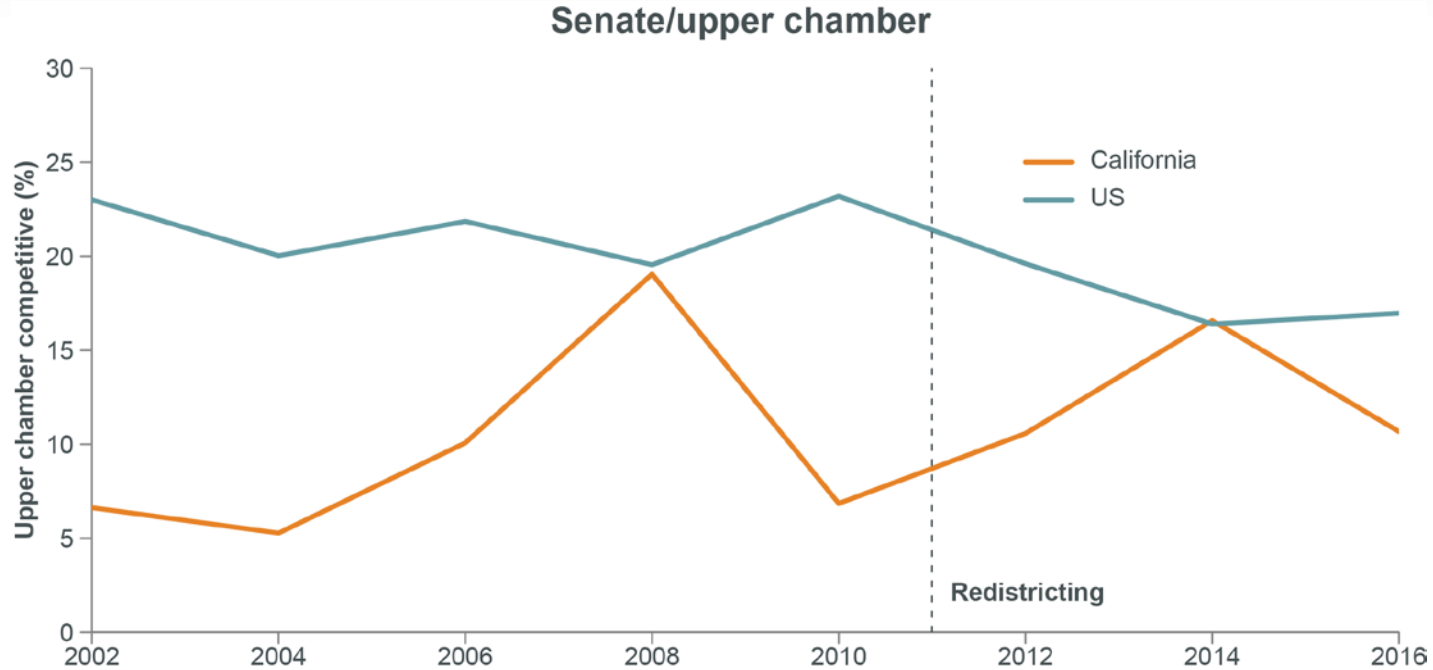
Congressional CRC plan is much more competitive, and on high end



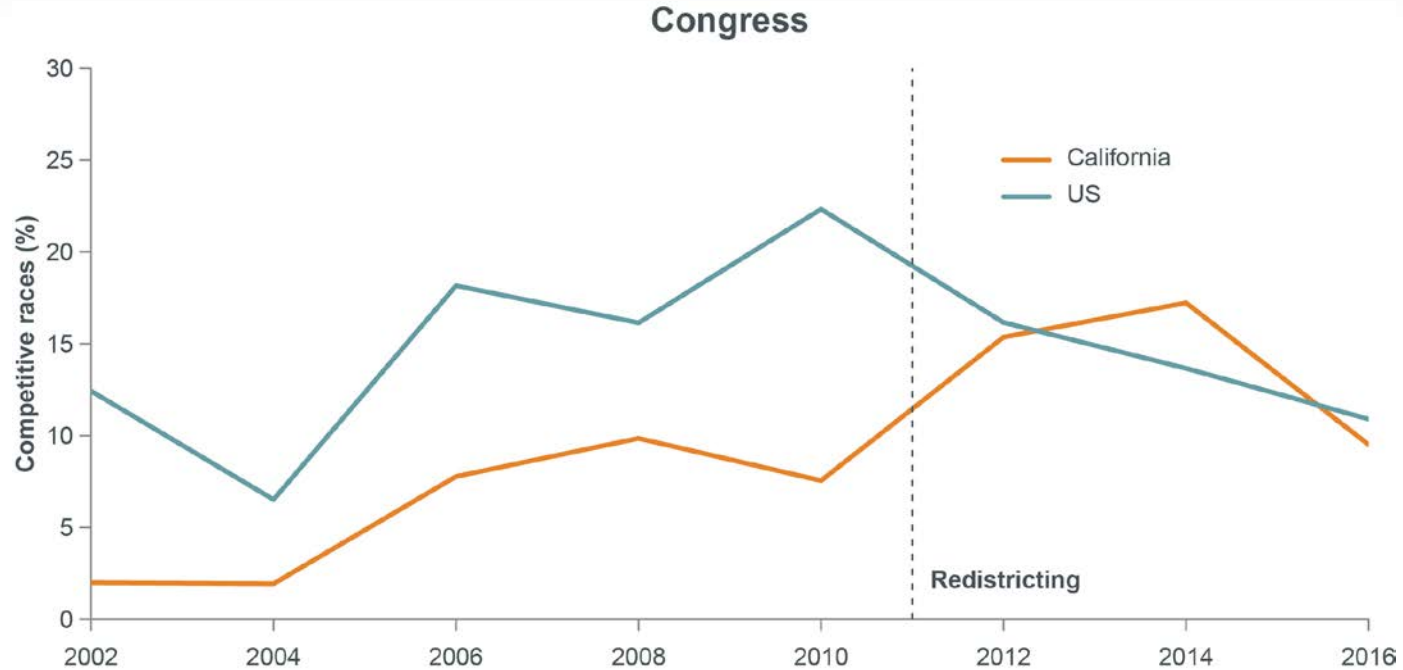
CRC plans are consistently more competitive



CRC plans are consistently more competitive



CRC plans are consistently more competitive



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Conclusions

- CRC plans are as fair as previous plans
 - But with greater tilt toward Democrats
- CRC plans are more competitive than previous plans
 - But still tend to be uncompetitive

Recommendations

- Use all information
- Pick goals in advance
- Use computer-simulated maps

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Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.