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## Springfield unlikely to be split again among members of Congress

**By CHRIS WETTERICH****THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER**

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Since the 2000 Census, the city of Springfield has been represented by three different members of the U.S. House, but that could change now that the first results of the 2010 Census are in.

Illinois has 19 House members, but the state will lose one representative in Congress starting with the 2012 election cycle because its population has not grown as fast as those of other states.

Kent Redfield, professor emeritus of political studies at the University of Illinois Springfield, believes it's unlikely that Springfield will again be divided into three districts after redistricting is complete.

One of those districts is the oddly shaped 17th Congressional District, now represented by Democratic U.S. Rep. Phil Hare, although Republican Bobby Schilling takes over in January.

The 17th District snakes around the western edge of the state from the Quad Cities area, picks up Galesburg, Macomb and Quincy and then cuts across Central Illinois to pick up parts of Decatur and Springfield.

"What happened a decade ago basically was an incumbent protection map," Redfield said. "The only way to get enough Democrats into (former U.S. Rep.) Lane Evans' district was to do this crazy map picking up the east side of Springfield and the more African American areas in Decatur. This time, you don't have to protect an incumbent Democrat."

The city of Springfield currently is represented by Hare; U.S. Rep. John Shimkus, R-Collinsville, of the 19th District; and U.S. Rep. Aaron Schock, R-Peoria, of the 18th District.

Whether Springfield gets split up will depend upon whether the Democratic legislature, which will have the power to draw the map, wants to try to create two Democratic-leaning districts in downstate Illinois.

Redfield thinks legislators will protect Rep. Jerry Costello, a Metro East Democrat, and leave the rest of downstate to Republicans in order to focus on drawing suburban Chicago seats Democrats can win.

Downstate probably will lose a district because its population is shrinking while the suburbs are growing, Redfield said.

"I think it is much more likely that you're going to get Springfield or Sangamon County completely within a district," Redfield said. "It seems to make more sense that they would eliminate a district downstate. That would give them more flexibility in the suburbs."

There is some disagreement as to whether having one congressman or multiple congressmen is a good thing. Sangamon County Board Chairman Andy Van Meter prefers that Springfield and Sangamon County become the largest population center of a district represented by a single lawmaker.

"It's hard to set priorities when every congressman's got other major communities that they have to respond to," Van Meter said. "While the people we've had over the past decade have tried really hard to represent us, it's never quite clear who's really focused on our issues."

Van Meter said his second choice would be for Springfield and Sangamon County to be together in one district with another metropolitan area.

Gary Plummer, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, said he sees merit in having multiple congressmen, particularly when they are of different parties.

"It's like at the state level," Plummer said. "Sometimes you have to get a Democrat sponsor (of a bill) and a Republican sponsor."

Having multiple congressmen was helpful in a recent project to upgrade the security at the entrance of Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport and the 183rd Fighter Wing, he said.

"They were able to present a united front to the Department of Defense, which we think strengthened our hand dramatically," Plummer said. "It was only successful because we had a variety of federal legislators involved."

If Springfield and Sangamon County were contained in one district, they would comprise more than 25 percent of the population of a roughly 700,000-person district, Redfield said.

"If you've got three congressmen, you've got no congressmen," Redfield said. "No one cared about Springfield as an entity. It's a huge disadvantage to be cut up like we are."

Chris Wetterich can be reached at 788-1523.

### Past maps

Kent Redfield, professor emeritus of political studies at the University of Illinois Springfield, said the 2000s were the first time in decades that the city of Springfield was subdivided among three U.S. House members.

\*After the 1980 Census, the 20th Congressional District contained all of the city of Springfield and the southeast part of Sangamon

County. The district was represented by Democratic U.S. Rep. Dick Durbin, D-Springfield.

\*After the 1990 Census, the 20th Congressional District took in most of the city. Springfield was represented by Durbin and later U.S. Rep. John Shimkus. The 18th Congressional District, which contained Rochester, Chatham and Auburn, was based in Peoria; it was represented by U.S. Rep. Bob Michel and later U.S. Rep. Ray LaHood,

\*After the 2000 Census, Springfield and Sangamon County were split among three different districts.

-- The 18th Congressional District, represented by LaHood and now U.S. Rep. Aaron Schock, R-Peoria, includes northern and southwestern Sangamon County, including Sherman and Williamsville. It goes through the west side of Springfield along Veterans Parkway and into downtown.

-- The 17th Congressional District, originally represented by Quad-Cities Democrats Lane Evans and Phil Hare, will be represented by Republican Bobby Schilling starting in January. It includes Chatham and Springfield's east side and picks up Riverton as it heads east to Decatur.

-- The 19th Congressional District, represented by U.S. Rep. John Shimkus, R-Collinsville, encompasses the city's south side, Rochester, Divernon and Pawnee.

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