

Congress By Numbers



When the United States Constitution established the three branches of government, it set the rules for how many voting members each state would have in the House of Representatives. That number has changed over time as the number of states and population has grown. In 1913 the limit was set at 435 members in the House of Representatives. Each state is granted a number of representatives based on the population of the state. The state legislatures are given the responsibility for dividing their states into districts with equal populations. Each district has one representative. The districts can change every ten years based on population numbers from the U.S census.

When Carl Stokes was a representative in the Ohio General Assembly, it was during the time when districts were redrawn. He realized in Cleveland that African Americans were split between two districts. He fought for change by suing the state of Ohio. His brother Louis argued the case before the U.S. Supreme Court. When the United States Supreme Court agreed with Carl and Louis, new districts were redrawn. In Cleveland a new district was created, the Ohio 21st Congressional district. Louis was elected as the representative for this district in 1968 and would serve in congress for thirty years.

Look at the numbers below. Use critical thinking to figure out what they represent. Match the phrases below to the numbers.

___ 646,952

___ 435

___ 18

___ 1,393,978

___ 281,424,177

___ 11,374,540

From 2000 Census

- A. Population of the State of Ohio
- B. Total number of members of the U.S. House of Representatives
- C. Population of Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Louis Stokes' home
- D. Average number of residents in one U.S. congressional district
- E. Population of the United States of America
- F. Number of Congressional districts in Ohio

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1. If you divide the U.S. population by the number of members of the House of Representatives, what do you get? _____
 2. If Ohio has _____ Congressional Districts, how did Louis Stokes represent the 21st District?

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