

How To Make A Google Map For A Political District

U.S. Congressional District

State Legislature Senate District

State Legislature House District

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Last update January 22, 2020

This PDF file is online at

<https://mappingsupport.com/p2/political/google-map-political-district.pdf>

Before showing you how to make a Google political district map I am going to briefly mention another political mapping project of mine that you might find useful. The following link opens a web page I made that can display one map for each state. Each map can display the current boundaries for the legislative and congressional districts for that state. The maps for over a dozen states can display **semi-transparent colors** based on the party affiliation of the person holding the seat.

<https://mappingsupport.com/p2/gissurfer-political-district-maps.html>

If you have a **KMZ file** with the boundary data for any political district, from the federal to the very local level, then you can make a Google map that displays that political district boundary. The following link is an **example** of a Google map created with this process. When you click on the district you see information about the campaign including a picture and a link.

Open Google map:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=12ijt7tpphB2jgeLBdudsbzdhGPeV1FWG&ll=35.142413387327316%2C-80.7569335&z=11>

This report shows how to:

- Download a KMZ file with the district boundary for any U.S. Congressional district or state legislature district.
- Import a KMZ file into Google maps

Please note that while this report is **non-partisan** and these steps can be followed by anyone from any party, I am only offering to provide support to **democratic** candidates.

In part, I hope people will use this resource to make Google maps showing state legislature districts with particularly contorted shapes. A bizarrely shaped district is often a good indicator that **gerrymandering** was used to draw the district boundaries. Gerrymandering allows politicians to pick their voters and prevents voters from picking their politicians.

Special notice for **North Carolina legislature districts**. In 2019 a court held that the North Carolina legislative districts were drawn based on partisan gerrymandering that was unlawful under several provisions of the state constitution. The legislature then adopted new district boundaries. In order to make a Google map for any of these new districts, you need to follow the steps in this PDF file:

https://mappingsupport.com/p2/political/north_carolina/north-carolina-district-map.pdf

Step 1. Download a KMZ file with the boundary data for one district

The U.S. Census Bureau operates a GIS (Geographic Information System) server that has district boundary data for the state legislature districts and congressional districts. Metadata on this GIS server states that these are the district boundaries as of **January 1, 2018**. Each district is uniquely identified with a GEOID code. The following link opens a web map I produced that you can use to get the GEOID code.

Open GISsurfer map:

https://mappingsupport.com/p2/gissurfer.php?center=38.753907,-99.386043&zoom=5&basemap=USA_basemap

You can either zoom/pan to your area of interest or click Menu ==> Search. Then click the basemap button (next to the “Menu” button) and look under the “Overlay” heading. Mobile users need to scroll down. You will see several overlay names including:

- State legislature lower districts
- State legislature upper districts
- Congressional districts

Click one of the overlay names to turn that overlay on and click the name again to turn it off. It may take a few seconds for the overlay data to appear on the map and you might need to zoom in a bit.

If you would like to see just the district lines with no basemap at all, then click the basemap button and select “All white basemap”.

After the overlay has appeared on the map, you can click any district to see a popup with some data for that district. For a **state legislature district**, look for the attribute named “GEOID” and note the value. For a **congressional district**, look for the attribute named “tl 2019 us cd116 GEOID” and note the value.

After you get the GEOID value for a district you are ready to download a KMZ file with the boundary data. Substitute the GEOID value into the correct download link below, then paste that link (including the single quotes) into a browser address bar and download/save the KMZ file.

When you are saving the KMZ file, give it a descriptive name and use the underline character instead of any space.

State house district download link

https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/arcgis/rest/services/TIGERweb/Legislative/MapServer/2/query?f=kmz&returnGeometry=true&outFields=*&outSR=3857&where=GEOID='_____'

State senate district download link

https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/arcgis/rest/services/TIGERweb/Legislative/MapServer/1/query?f=kmz&returnGeometry=true&outFields=*&outSR=3857&where=GEOID='_____'

U.S. House of Representatives district download link

https://tigerweb.geo.census.gov/arcgis/rest/services/TIGERweb/Legislative/MapServer/0/query?f=kmz&returnGeometry=true&outFields=*&outSR=3857&where=GEOID='_____'

Step 2. Import the KMZ file into Google maps.

1. Start Google maps: <https://maps.google.com>
2. Click the 3-bar symbol (menu) in the upper left corner of your screen. A new sidebar appears.
3. Click “Your places”. A new sidebar appears.
4. Click “Maps” near the top of the sidebar.
5. Click “Create map”. Find this in the sidebar - **maybe at the bottom**.
6. Click “Import”.
7. Drag or browse to the KMZ file you saved. Browsing to the KMZ file and double clicking it works fine. The district boundary will appear on the map.

Step 3. Edit your Google map to add campaign information

Caution! Do not click-hold **inside the district** and drag your mouse. Doing so will move the district boundary.

At this point the dialog box on the left side of a desktop screen gives you some options to rename, change styles and change the basemap that displays when your map opens. **Consider changing the basemap to the aerial view.** Be sure enter a title here description here.

Important! Click inside the district. This is the information people will see in a popup when they look at your Google map and click on the district. Currently this is the attribute data that was on the GIS server for this district. However, that information is likely not very useful for a

political campaign. **Click the pencil at the bottom of the screen.** You can now edit this information. You should see two areas where you can enter text.

In the upper area enter the name of the district. For example: NC Senate District 37

In the lower area enter a description. You can enter plain text and **links**. Google will make any link clickable. There is not any way to change the font or make text bold or include HTML when making a Google map with this method. Type ctrl-enter to go to the next line. Do it twice to insert a blank line.

Notice the camera symbol which will let you include a link to a picture.

If you click the 'paint can' symbol then you can change the **border color and width**. Use a bright color so it is easy to see and consider increasing the border width a bit.

There is a help forum for Google maps at

https://support.google.com/maps/threads?hl=en&max_results=20

Step 4. Get a link from Google that will display your map.

8. Look at the insert in the upper left part of your screen and click "preview".
9. Click inside the district and see if the content that is displayed looks OK.
10. To go back to the edit screen, click "Dismiss" or "Edit". Otherwise, click "Share".
11. If you have not done so already, add a title and description, then click OK.
12. If the popup on the screen says "Private - Only you can access", then click "Change".
13. Set the access to "Public - on the web". Save.
14. Look near the top of the popup where it says "**Link to share**". Copy and save that link. This is the link that will open Google maps and display your map.

Tip: When anyone opens your map, Google will automatically adjust the map center and zoom so that all of the district is on the user's screen.

There are three ways to include a Google map on a campaign website.

First, you could simply include the link you got from Google.

Second, you could include a screenshot that is linked to your Google map. When someone clicks the screenshot then your Google map would open.

Third, you could embed a ‘live’ Google map on your website using <iframe> tags. The advantage of this approach is that people can see and interact with your map without leaving your campaign website. If your web designer needs help embedding your Google map, then a quick internet search (iframe embed google map) will yield lots of examples.

Tip: If you embed a map on a website then a ‘best practice’ is to include a link above or below the embedded map titled something like “Open map full screen”. Obviously clicking that link would do exactly what it says.

Here is one final idea. Consider making a standalone webpage as follows.

- A memorable html <title>
- 1 or 2 lines about your campaign
- All the rest of the user’s screen will be your embedded Google map

Now if someone saves the link to that webpage (which is mostly your Google district map) and they are looking through their browser’s bookmarks, they will easily be able to find your map because of the memorable <title> you used in the html for this webpage.

Got questions? **I am volunteering to help any democratic campaign.** My contact link is at the top of this report.