

# Two things for Indiana General Assembly to accomplish...or can they?

There are only two things that the Indiana Constitution requires the General Assembly to do this year. First is to adopt a two-year budget. Second is to remap, reapportion, redistrict the state's nine Congressional voting districts based on the new federal census numbers.

The first will happen. The second is more dicey. And if it does happen you may not like it. You may recall back in 2019, then into the early months of the Year Of Covid, we read ads and heard announcements telling us that the 2020 federal census was being taken and that we were to cooperate. It's the law -- a federal law enshrined in the U.S. Constitution -- that every decade we take a head count of all of us and that number gets used for lots of things, including how we vote and where we vote, and where federal tax dollars get sent to be spent. Right now, there are

Ed Breen's column is sponsored by: First Farmer's Bank & Trust—see their ad., below.



A MOMENT  
Ed Breen



about 6,754,294 of us Hoosiers. But that's an estimate. The real number -- or as close to it as we can get -- was supposed to be provided by the Census Bureau a couple of months ago. That didn't happen, mainly because of Covid complications, but also because ex-President Trump was monkeying with the way the counting is done and the questions are asked. Bottom line is that we aren't going to get the numbers until late Sep-

tember . . . or later. That means, right up front, that the Indiana General Assembly -- the 150 elected lawmakers we send to Indianapolis -- aren't going to be able to do anything with redistricting and reapportioning during the allotted time of the General Assembly. Thus there shall be a special session, which the governor will summon once the Census Bureau gives us our numbers. That costs \$27,600 a day just in pay for the legislators, which doesn't include all the other non-elected folks who are around there. And please don't be so naïve as to think this is a one-day task. This is when the skullduggery will begin. This is when, in the crudest of terms, the elected officials get to choose their voters. This is when they look at maps, figure out where the people are that are their friends, draw a bunch of squiggly lines

on the maps and declare that this is their district. Truth is, it's not that simple and probably not quite that bad. But close. If you take a look at the map of Indiana carved up a decade ago for this purpose, you might want to file drunk-driving charges. No sober person would do that, you might say. My personal favorite in the helter-skelter map world is the boundary of Indiana House District 32, the one that includes parts of southern Grant County, but then wanders around and ends up looking like a police crime scene outline of a dead rat. The tail goes all the way down to Cicero in Hamilton County. It was made that way because then-legislator P. Eric Turner had moved his home from Gas City down to the shore of Morse Lake at Cicero. Of course, this has been going on as long as we've had elections and, bad as it may be, it's bet-

ter than the alternative. Every 10 years we talk about the need to change the way we make the maps. We've put the fox in charge of the hen house and no one is watching. Time to give the hens a voice in this, we tell each other. Time to create a politically neutral, independent group that will carve up the state into nine Congressional districts, 50 state senate districts and 100 state house of representative districts that fairly represent we six million Hoosiers. Let the voters pick their lawmakers, we tell each other. But it never happens that way. The lawmakers will continue to pick their voters, to draw maps that wander up and down streets and alleys to cluster as many Republicans or Democrats as possible to protect the franchise, to assure that Senator Gasbag get elected to his 25th consecutive term to serve the homefolks, who obviously are happy with

him because they keep re-electing him. This time when the legislators get out their crayons and start drawing squiggly lines they will be costing us \$27,600 a day because of the census delays and they will pretty much be working the will of the Republican Party because the Democrat Party is in a shambles. The statewide score right now: Republicans 107. Democrats 43. It really is time to fix this. Time to bring thoughtful, well-intentioned people to the table. Some of them may even be politicians. That's fine. If they have done their job we ought to have shoved the ancient art of gerrymandering to the curb and created a way in which the voters of Indiana can pick their lawmakers, rather than letting the lawmakers continue to choose their voters. And we only have 10 years to fix it.



FIRST FARMERS  
BANK & TRUST

Member FDIC

LEARN MORE  
FFBT.COM

the financial partner in your corner when it's time to  
**GET DOWN TO BUSINESS**

Business Lines of Credit | Commercial Real Estate Lending | Equipment Financing | Business Term Loans  
Cash Management | Positive Pay | ACH Alert | Merchant Services | Online & Mobile Banking | And Much More...  
First Farmers Bank & Trust is proud to be an eligible lender for the Main Street Lending Program and the Payroll Protection Program.