



# Press Release

For Immediate Release

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## **Avencia Launches *Redistricting the Nation.com*, a Ground-Breaking Public Engagement Web Application To Measure Compactness and Gerrymandering of U.S. Election Districts**

### **Launch Coincides with Release of Avencia's White Paper on Gerrymandering and Redistricting**

**Philadelphia, PA - October 21, 2009** – Following the upcoming 2010 census reports, states and municipalities will engage in a nationwide legislative redistricting process. But in some parts of the country, the redrawing of district boundaries for partisan advantage has been rampant, which ultimately reduces the impact of individual voters on the election, resulting in lower voter turnout, and less competitive races. The expanded use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has created both new potential for sophisticated gerrymandering and a possible means of implementing unbiased redistricting.

With Redistricting 2011 around the corner, [Avencia Incorporated](#), a Philadelphia-based geographic analysis and software development firm, is releasing the "[Redistricting The Nation](#)" ([www.redistrictingthenation.com](http://www.redistrictingthenation.com)) website to provide the public with better information about the legislative redistricting process and tools that support and encourage fair representation and competitive elections.

**The site allows citizens and advocacy groups to:**

- Enter their address (nation-wide) and view the "shape" of their federal, state, and local election districts.
- Learn who is in charge of drawing the boundaries of their election districts (e.g., independent commissions or elected representatives).
- Compare the "compactness" scores of their election district to other, similar districts (less compact and unusually shaped districts are more likely to be gerrymandered).
- Draw new district boundaries on a map and generate compactness scores for the new district.

**Avencia is also concurrently releasing a revised version of its 2006 study of gerrymandering ("[Redraw the Map on Redistricting 2010](#)").** The new study expands the scope and methodology of Avencia's original "Gerrymandering Index" to include state-level districts, council districts, and political wards for several new cities, and introduces three additional techniques for measuring districts' compactness. While poor compactness scores do not prove gerrymandering, they are a measurable indication of the practice.

The whitepaper ranks the ten most gerrymandered local, state, and federal districts in the country based on four different measures of compactness. The study reveals some interesting findings. For instance, at the Congressional level, both FL-22 and NC-12 rank high in the study's Top Ten for all four measures of



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compactness, while some of the worst offenders at the local level are: Philadelphia, PA-District 7; Miami, FL-District 2; Jacksonville, FL-District 11; Houston, TX-District E; New York, NY-District 4; Philadelphia, PA-District 5; and Los Angeles, CA-District 15.

Avencia is no stranger to political and election-focused projects. Earlier this month, Avencia and [Committee of Seventy](#), the Philadelphia region's premier non-partisan government watchdog group, launched a sister website to the "Redistricting The Nation" site, dedicated to raising public awareness in the Greater Philadelphia area about the potential impact of the 2010 census on federal, state, and local election districts, available at [www.redistrictingthenation.com/philadelphia](http://www.redistrictingthenation.com/philadelphia). During the November 2008 presidential election, the firm built a [Voting Incident Tracking and Mapping web-based application](#) that tracked voting problems in real-time to enable Committee of Seventy's record-setting 1,000 person volunteer force to respond faster and more efficiently. Avencia also worked for multiple candidates in races to generate campaign walking and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) maps, and most recently generated over 400 campaign financing analysis maps for MapLight.org for their ["Remote Control"](#) report.

*"It is exciting to be able to leverage our global database of legislative districts and GIS analysis tools to promote good government and nonpartisan redistricting," said **Robert Cheetham, Avencia's CEO**. "It is a process that can be easily manipulated to protect incumbents and discourage competitive races. Our goal with this new site is to both educate the public early in the Census 2010 cycle, and to create software tools that will promote a more open, citizen-driven and transparent redistricting process in 2011."*

Political geography is at the center of several ongoing projects at Avencia. The white paper analysis of compactness of election districts was made possible by Avencia's [Cicero product](#), a legislative district matching and elected official lookup web API, developed for local governments, unions, businesses, and non-profit political and advocacy organizations to matches citizens with their local, state, and national. Cicero taps a global database of legislative district maps and information about politicians, legislative bodies, and election events. Initially beginning with only a few cities, Avencia has grown the database to include national, state and local legislatures for the United States and several other countries and made an [interactive version](#) available to the public.

## **About Avencia**

[Avencia](#) is an award-winning, Philadelphia-based geographic analysis and software development firm specializing in the creation of innovative location-based software tools to enhance decision-making processes. Avencia believes these location-based technologies can help promote the emergence of more [dynamic, vibrant communities](#). For more information, visit [www.avencia.com](http://www.avencia.com)

If you would like more information about Avencia or to schedule an interview with Robert Cheetham, Avencia CEO and President, please contact Abby Fretz at (215) 701 – 7503 or e-mail [afretz@avencia.com](mailto:afretz@avencia.com).

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