

# Redistricting – ‘a chance to do it right’

Comet staff report

Indiana's Secretary of State Todd Rokita believes legislative districts should represent people, not politics, and he is out stirring discussion on that very issue.

Last Thursday he spoke at the noon luncheon meeting of the Flora Rotary Club.

Rokita explained that "by 'rethinking redistricting,' we can come up with a better way to establish a fair and easily understood system for redrawing district lines."

Redistricting, the process of distributing the population for federal and state legislative districts, is a process that is done every ten years following the new census data. The next census is in 2010.

"Once every ten years we have a chance to do it right," he said.

Indiana's constitution calls for the legislators themselves to re-draw the maps. But according to Rokita, they often use voter history data to skew the lines, keeping their districts non-competitive or "safe" for themselves and fellow elected lawmakers.

"For decades, this process has benefited the legislators — not the voters. This all limits competition. And just like anything else, when you don't have good competition, and

you don't get strong — or any — candidates with good alternative ideas, then the voters and taxpayers lose out."

Rokita says that redistricting "is the threshold issue that determines how much your elected officials listen to you on all other issues, from health care to daylight saving time."

An effective redistricting plan, Rokita said, should utilize the following criteria:

- **Prohibit the use of political data**

Maps created without using your voting history and that are not allowed to protect incumbents by considering where they live will be inherently more fair and less likely to contribute to gerrymandering and other voter manipulation.

- **Keep communities of interest together**

This seeks to avoid unnecessary division of voters who share the same communities, such as counties, townships and cities, or other geographic and socio-economic data. Such communities often have the same priorities, views and motivations.

- **Create more compact and geographically uniform districts**

The only criteria required of the General Assembly is that legislative districts be contiguous. Respecting existing



## Discusses Indiana's election process

Dick Bradshaw, president of the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce, speaks to Secretary of State Todd Rokita, left, after last Thursday's Flora Rotary Club meeting. Rokita spoke to the group on why he believes it is time for Indiana to rethink redistricting. Comet photo

political and geographic boundaries like counties and townships would create more logical districts. This would reduce voter confusion because existing boundaries would be associated with legislative boundaries.

Rokita suggests that nesting two house districts into every one senate district will also result in more accountability and further decrease confu-

sion. He said this can easily be done because in Indiana, there are exactly two representatives for every one senator.

To learn more about and comment on this issue, visit [www.rethinkingredistricting.com](http://www.rethinkingredistricting.com).

"If they knew you cared, there would be real, meaningful change," concluded Rokita.

## Canal interpretive exhibit



Progress is shown on construction of the lime kiln exhibit along the canal between the Red Bridge and the warehouse/boat storage building. The site will include the lower section of a canal era lime kiln (foreground), along with its operational gin pole (right), and a functional dock (shown being assembled, above the kiln). The gin pole was used in stoking fuel and stone into the kiln chamber and moving barrels to the dock for loading. The stones for the kiln were removed from the historic kiln's site a mile north, on land belonging to the stone quarry. Primary products of this kiln had been plaster, mortar and whitewash. These products were shipped on the canal. The reconstructed dock comes from its previous location near the Interpretive Center. Workers pictured are all volunteers. Photo provided

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