



# Assigning Seats

As difficult as it is to do the census, the ensuing process of determining the number of congressional seats for each state can be even harder. The basic premise, that the proportion of each state's delegation in the House should match its proportion of the U.S. population, is simple enough. The difficulty arises when deciding what to do with the fractions that inevitably arise (e.g., New York can't have 28.7 seats). Over the past 200 years, several methods of apportioning seats have been used. Many sound good but can lead to paradoxes, such as an increase in the total number of House seats actually resulting in a *reduction* of a state's delegation. The method used since the 1940s, whose leading proponent was a mathematician, is one that avoids such paradoxes.



Image courtesy of the Office of the House Historian.



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