Voters in Nemaha County, as well as several other Southeast Nebraska counties, have a change in Congressional representation after districts were redrawn by the 2011 Legislature.

Nemaha, Gage, Johnson, Pawnee and Richardson counties are now in the 3rd Congressional District. The district is represented by Rep. Adrian Smith of Gering. Congressional districts are drawn by the Legislature, as a regular statute, subject to gubernatorial veto. The Legislature is required to redraw the districts according to population after each U.S. Census, conducted every 10 years. The Legislature approved LB 704, the Congressional redistricting bill, Thursday, May 26, 2011. It was signed by Gov. Dave Heineman that day.

The 3rd Congressional District covers 75 of Nebraska's 93 counties.

Previously, the five Southeast Nebraska counties were in the 1st Congressional District, represented by Rep. Jeff Fortenberry. Otoe and Cass counties remain in the 1st Congressional District, which covers all of 16 counties and the eastern third of Sarpy County, including Bellevue. The 2nd Congressional District, represented by Rep. Lee Terry, covers all of Douglas County and the western two-thirds of Sarpy County.

State Sen. Lavon Heidemann said in his weekly column in May 2011 the redistricting accommodated the population increases in metropolitan areas of eastern Nebraska.

Census data was delivered to state officials March 1, 2011. State law does not impose a particular deadline for drawing Congressional or state Legislative lines. Nebraska law appeared to permit redrawing state Legislative or Congressional district lines mid-decade, at any point before the next census.

Like all states, Nebraska officials must comply with constitutional equal population requirements. The state constitution also requires that legislative districts be "as nearly equal in

population as may be. Nebraska officials must also abide by Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The Nebraska constitution further requires that state legislative districts be contiguous and compact, and that they keep to county boundaries “whenever practicable.”

Smith is seeking his fourth term in Congress. He serves on the House Ways and Means Committee, the Subcommittee on Trade and the Subcommittee on Social Security. Smith is chair of the Congressional Rural Caucus, Congressional Rural Veterans Caucus and Modern Agriculture Caucus.

He previously was on the Gering City Council and served eight years in the Legislature before his election to Congress.

The Democratic 3rd District Congressional candidate is Mark Sullivan of Doniphan. Sullivan is a fourth generation Nebraska farmer who has a 950-head feedlot and farms about 500 acres.