The recent decision of the U.S. Supreme Court regarding reapportionment of state legislatures will serve to focus the attention of Louisiana legislators upon that ticklish subject.

It will also serve to bring to the fore another measure which has been long overdue—reapportionment of the state's congressional districts.

Inequities in the state's congressional districts are not, on the whole, as flagrant as those in the state legislature, but they are still in need of remedy.

The Eighth District, represented by Gillis Long, for example, had a 1960 census population of 261,859. The Sixth District, centered around Baton Rouge, had a population of 536,029.

If all eight of the districts were set up on an equal population basis, under 1960 census figures each would contain 407,126 persons. In view of the Supreme Court's decision regarding "one man, one vote," any redistricting must make the districts roughly equal in population or face the risk of being declared unconstitutional.

At present there is a taxpayer suit in federal court, seeking to force the state legislature to redistrict the congressional district boundaries.

Sen. J. D. DeBlieux of Baton Rouge introduced a redistricting bill in the present session of the legislature, but it was killed. Instead, the Senate voted to set up a committee to study the whole matter of redistricting.

Since this is a problem which has faced the state legislature since the results of the 1960 census became known, it is a puzzle as to why the senators feel that "further study" is necessary.

Perhaps it is a move to enable the legislature to avoid taking up the problem, in the hopes that the taxpayer suit in federal court will reach a decision, and the members of the legislature may then blame the entire matter on the federal government.

Sen. DeBlieux's measure, which was voted down in the Senate, had a number of interesting factors—one of which would have been the switching of Calcasieu Parish from the Seventh to the Eighth District.

Under DeBlieux's measure, five parishes now in the Seventh District would have been moved into the Eighth District—Calcasieu, Allen, Jeff Davis, Cameron and Beauregard. They would be joined with four others—Rapides, Aveyellis, Vernon and Sabine.

Four parishes now in the Eighth—Winn, Grant, LaSalle and Natchitoches—would have been moved into the Fifth District, now centered around Monroe.

According to the 1960 census figures, here is how the eight districts would have been ranked in population under the DeBlieux measure:

No. 1 (New Orleans), 414,000; No. 2 (New Orleans), 403,491; No. 3 (Houma-Thibodaux), 403,304; No. 4 (Shreveport), 407,369; No. 5 (Monroe), 407,203; No. 6 (Baton Rouge), 403,207; No. 7 (Lafayette), 404,381; No. 8 (Lake Charles-Alexandria), 407,089.

There can be no quarrel with Sen. DeBlieux's bill with regard to population. It is doubtful if any measure could be drafted, using conventional parish boundaries, that would be nearer to the absolute average.

There might be considerable objection to the draft on the premise that too many adverse geographic or economic interests are included within a single district.

There may be some point to these objections, and if political boundaries could always be drawn to make them coincide with geographic, economic or ethnic boundaries, a great many problems could be solved throughout the world.

Today, however, the emphasis is upon population. As the Supreme Court pointed out in its recent decision, trees and cattle and pastured lands don't vote. People vote, and in any acceptable redistricting in the future, population will be the determining if not the sole factor.

Any redistricting, of course, will mean more people for the Seventh District—or whichever district that might include Lake Charles and Calcasieu Parish in the future.

It will also mean that each vote in the district will count just a bit less than it does now, since the Seventh District at present is under the 407,000 average.

Even so, a more equitable division of the state is much to be desired, and it is a problem that the state legislature cannot long ignore.