

Gordon Way, Ed.D.

816-462-3541

7421 Westgate

Shawnee, Kansas 66216

beagordonway@sbcglobal.net

I respectfully request this testimony be presented at the Overland Park, Kansas Redistricting Town Hall, August 12, 2021.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my opinion with the committee.

In our system of government, the people choose the representatives who they feel best represent their values and the ideas that they believe will take the state or country in a positive direction. You could say that we are voting for the ideas and values, and not so much for the people who will argue them. It is a strength of our democracy that opposing views are presented and debated. When two opposing sides present their best arguments, the ideas that have the most merit are most likely to prevail.

Furthermore, opposing views can have a balancing effect that prevents extremist views from either side from having too much influence. Or at least, this is how it should be.

I say all of this because we live in an era of hyper polarization; when gaining and maintaining power by any means necessary takes precedent over the ideas and values that are represented. Too often, redistricting is more an exercise in gamesmanship designed to give one political party an electoral advantage that has nothing to do with the quality of their ideas and values, or even their popular support. District lines are drawn to marginalize the opposing party, while maximizing representation of the party that is doing the drawing. A recent story on Kansas Public Radio described a proposal of some lawmakers that would redraw the district that currently includes Johnson County to connect it with a county on the other side of the state for the sole purpose of preventing the reelection of Sharice Davids.

While this is an extreme example, it does make my point: gerrymandering district lines takes away local control, minimizes the power of voters to select their representatives, and renders the values and ideas of candidates for elected office less important than the ability of their party to manipulate the system in a way that provides them with an unfair advantage in elections.

Finally, the constitution provides for redrawing of district lines to reflect population shifts. It was never intended to be manipulated in a way that would allow a political party to entrench their power.

I urge members of the redistricting committee to have enough confidence in the rightness of the values and ideas that they claim to represent to let these values and ideas stand on their own merit. I urge you to draw lines that maintain local control, honor the voters, and are politically neutral.

Sincerely yours,

Gordon Way, Ed.D.

7421 Westgate Street

Shawnee, KS 66216

