

Written-only Testimony for Thursday, August 12, 2021 in Overland Park

From: Louis Bornman

To: The Joint House and Senate Committees on Redistricting
Re: Fair & Equitable Representation in Kansas

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to supply testimony in support of transparent and fair redistricting.

I request the Kansas Legislative Redistricting Committee draw fair voting district maps. These voting districts should be developed with reasonably equal populations for each type of elected official and comply with federal Voting Rights Act requirements. As much as possible entire cities, counties, neighborhoods and communities of interest should be grouped into single districts that maintain their geographical compactness. These voting districts should be developed without consideration of political parties, incumbents, or political candidates. I and the rest of the citizens of Kansas deserve and demand fair voting district maps that enable us to fairly choose our representation in the state and U.S. legislature.

A decade ago, multiple redistricting hearings were scheduled over four months to allow time for development of issues and concerns by the citizenry about the process and the impacts of the changes implied by the Census Data. The same should be occurring now. The current number and schedule for hearings on the redistricting process are insufficient for the task at hand. All meetings by the committee, all records, computers, and technology must be open and accessible to the public. This process must also include a non-judicial appeal process.

A key consideration in this process should be the preservation of the core of existing congressional districts. Because Kansas will retain its four congressional districts, the congressional maps should remain close to their current configuration. With the continued population growth in the Kansas City metropolitan region, the Kansas Third Congressional District can be contained wholly within Johnson and Wyandotte County. These counties represent the most racially diverse communities in the state, have been in the same district for the past 50 years, and should be kept together for fair representation. Splitting them apart would be a blatant attempt to manipulate the maps and gerrymander the Third District.

Both Johnson and Wyandotte counties represent contiguous urban and suburban areas with common shared interests and like-minded voters whose concerns and interests differ from those of more rural communities across the state. Retaining the four Kansas congressional districts close to their current configuration is a fair way to ensure that the varying needs and interests of these differing communities of interest receive honest and fair representation in Congress. To

break apart the urban and suburban areas of Johnson and Wyandotte counties and combine them with more rural areas that do not share a similar cultural and historical identity does not respect their different priorities and needs and does not provide either with fair or honest representation.

I am familiar with the map making process as I commanded a Cartographic Company in a Topographic Battalion in the U.S. Army when map making was all manual. I have worked on modernizing mapping in the digital age in the Army since that time. I know that this is a data driven digital process and establishing the appropriate criteria for data selection, sorting, and aggregation is critical to the outcome. Your job is to see that it is done correctly. To ensure that the process is open and fair, I recommend that the legislature consider redistricting reform that includes an independent citizen redistricting commission supported by a nonpartisan body of civil servants with the criteria set by statute.

Without detailed 2020 Census data, I cannot make suggestions about the composition of fair districts at this time. No one, including yourselves, has had an opportunity to see detailed Census results and identify what changes are required to maintain equality of population in our districts. I urge the committee to hold additional town halls after census data is available and Kansans can review that data and offer input. I would encourage that those meetings be accessible, available online, and announced with enough time to foster engagement.

Current Congressional and Legislative maps were created by the courts and should, as possible, be altered as little as necessary to fulfill reapportionment shifts. The Kansas City Metro is currently whole within Kansas' Third congressional district and should remain in a single district as residents have shared interests in representation.

I request the Kansas Legislative Redistricting Committee draw fair voting district maps. Thank you for letting me submit this testimony and participate in this redistricting process.

Respectfully,

Louis Bornman

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