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Kansas University School of Business

Sonja Czarnecki, League of Women Voters of Lawrence/Douglas County, Board member

Written and Oral Testimony

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Chair and members of the Redistricting Committee:

My name is Sonja Czarnecki. I am speaking for the League of Women Voters of Lawrence and Douglas County. The League is non-partisan: we do not support or oppose any candidate or party. The League encourages political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to advocate on our numerous studied governmental issues. We advocate for Fair Maps for Kansas.

We are glad to hear that there will be more town halls after the census data is available. We look forward to seeing those new dates on the KLRD website soon. Town halls should be scheduled on evenings and weekends when more people can attend and with at least 2 weeks advance notice. The map drawing process should be transparent, with clear understanding of decision points. There should be as little change from current maps as possible, except to accommodate new population counts and correct areas where representation does not reflect the community.

For decades, the League has advocated for an independent commission to draw our congressional and state legislative maps. We know that no matter how legislators might fight the temptation to draw maps that benefit them or their party, that temptation is averted with an independent commission. We ask for a transparent process that keeps communities of interest intact, and follows political boundaries of cities, counties, school districts, and townships as much as possible. Also, communities of indigenous people and people of color should be left intact, not split to dilute their voting power.

We object to two practices that have been used in the past: protecting incumbent districts by including incumbent home addresses and including voting data or voter registration information. The first benefits incumbents and the second corrupts the basic population counts, both lead to unfair districts.

For 10 years, ending just a decade ago, Lawrence was split between the 2nd and 3rd congressional districts. That should not happen again. Lawrence has grown in the last 10 years, particularly to the west. We understand that with Kansas legislative senators representing over 73,000 and representatives serving over 23,000, that Douglas County will have at least 2 Kansas senators, and at least 4 or 5 representatives. We have found that those legislators who only have a small portion of Douglas County in their district, tend not to come to our candidate forums nor respond to our questions.

The League also asks that the Kansas City metro area or Wyandotte and Johnson Counties, stay intact in the Congressional District 3, as much as possible.

The League will continue to participate in this decennial reapportionment and redistricting process.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today,

Sonja Czarnecki