

Written Testimony Regarding Redistricting in Kansas (Page 1 of 2)

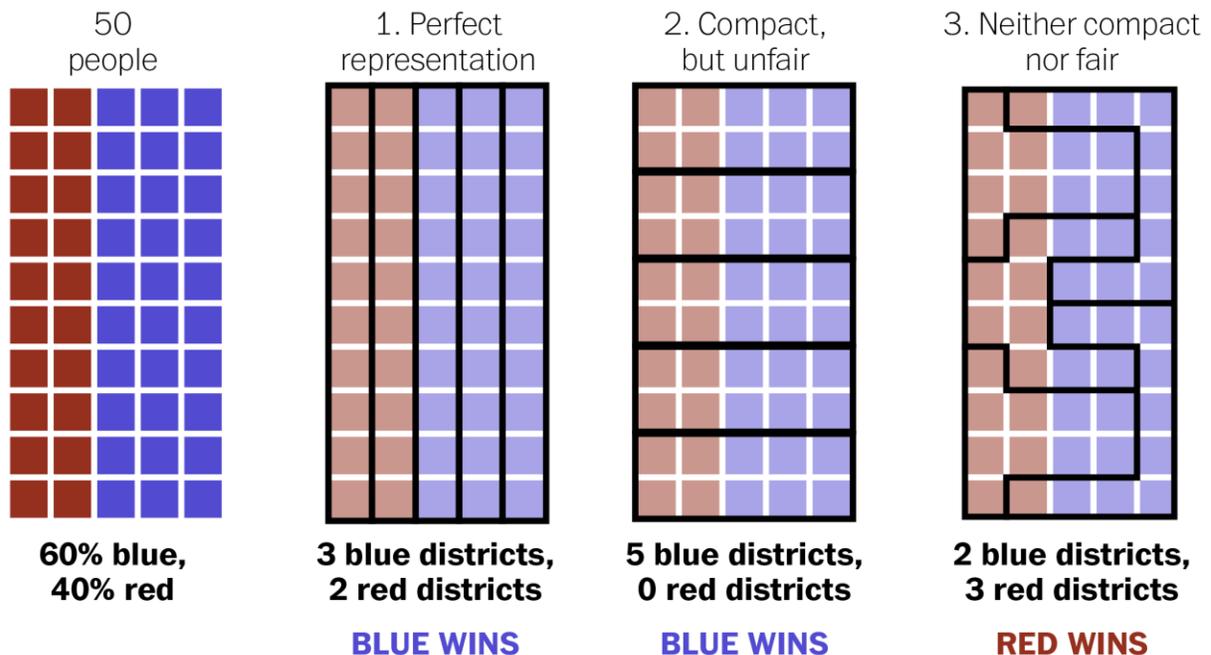
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We all know that redistricting can be gerrymandering. Gerrymandering is now easy with so much voter data available and software to model different outcomes. My purpose is to discourage gerrymandering and promote fair, optimal districts.

The obvious objective of redistricting in a functioning democracy is to make sure that as the population grows, shrinks, or moves, that all voters have equal representation. (This is the basis for my concept and usage of the term “fair.”) However, with various manipulations of the map, that very goal may be completely subverted. Please refer to the following figure for some examples:

## Gerrymandering, explained

Three different ways to divide 50 people into five districts



The figure demonstrates how district lines can be drawn fairly and unfairly. In the example, there are 50 people, each with one of two party preferences and 5 districts of 10 voters. 2/5 of voters make up the minority and 3/5 make up the majority. Three different scenarios are shown. The first is perfect representation where all each district is a monoculture, but every person gets equal representation. The second permutation shows compact districts, but all districts are controlled by one party and the minority gets no representatives. The third example shows district boundaries that ensure the majority gets no representatives at all.

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To: The Joint House and Senate Committees on Redistricting

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For me, there are several takeaways. It is interesting that compact districts are not always fair (even though strangely shaped districts were historically the telltale sign of gerrymandering.) What's really disturbing is that one manipulation of the district borders can deny the majority party any representation at all. However, assuming the majority currently has power, that particular scenario is not likely to happen.

My concern is largely around the second scenario – that seemingly compact and innocuous boundaries would underrepresent the minority, or further water down an already underrepresented minority. “But surely the representatives chosen by Kansas voters would not do something dishonest like that,” one might say. Perhaps. I hope that is true, but our nation's history, distant and recent, across multiple parties, suggests this is a difficult temptation for the majority.

Susan Wagle was infamously recorded saying that Republicans needed a supermajority so they could redraw boundaries to make her own district easier for a Republican to win, despite conceding that the district was moving left. She also indicated an intention to redistrict with the goal of unseating a political opponent, Sharice Davids. She made it clear that it was the intent of the majority (or should be) to reduce the representation of the minority.

Another concern is that neither our constitution nor laws in Kansas effectively prevent such unfair redistricting. It does not seem right that an elected official can pick their voters – the voters should pick their elected officials. I would like see an independent, non-partisan commission handle redistricting transparently. That's not the process our current laws dictate and so that's not happening. The current effort to rush through public hearings in one week seems designed to make input difficult and get past a mere formality (listening to the voters). Hearings and deadlines are only during business hours which makes it more difficult for entire classes of working voters to appear. The streaming format does not allow for online video/verbal testimony. Lastly, timing the week as school is beginning makes it harder for parents to participate. These factors further reduce trust in the process underway.

Redistricting must be done, but short of an independent commission doing it, it will be hard for the public (especially the minority) to trust the process. The following might help:

- Give more varied opportunities for public testimony.
- Publish all data, maps, goals, rationale and expected outcomes considered and chosen.
- Transparently and diligently demonstrate that the proposed redistricting leads to better (fairer) representation (of the major parties, of rural, urban/suburban interests, ...)
- Allow public scrutiny to ensure published models aren't deceptive or inaccurate.
- Reject any *goals* of unseating the minority or protecting any incumbent.

My hope for this process is that it handled honestly, transparently, and without intent to disenfranchise voters or consolidate power for the majority. I have concerns, but the best comfort I have is that Kansans are honest people and that the public will be watching.