

Dear Redistricting Committees,

My name is Lauren Martin. I'm a former community organizer and registered voter who lives in Prairie Village. I am submitting written testimony to the redistricting public hearing held in Overland Park on Aug. 12, 2021. I'm testifying in my capacity as a private citizen.

I am incredibly disappointed in the redistricting process so far. It is troubling that former Senate President Susan Wagle and numerous other Republicans have made it clear that they believe that they, as the majority party, get to draw the maps that best suit their own ambitions. They are not interested in making sure that their constituents are fairly represented

Furthermore, the rollout of the redistricting public hearings has been rushed and chaotic. The public hearing schedule was rolled out on a Friday evening, just 10 days before the first meeting. The 14 hearings are crammed into five days, and the majority of the meetings occur during the work day. I'm especially disappointed that the Johnson County hearing occurred in the middle of the workday. This meeting is being held five minutes from my apartment, and I can't attend because I would need to take time off work, and I don't have the vacation time to spare. In fact, it's hard to look at the schedule and not see the decision to hold the most populous county's hearing on a Thursday afternoon as anything but an attempt to stifle participation. If you are invested in creating fair maps that re

I urge the Senate and House Redistricting Committees to improve the process moving forward. In an effort to rebuild public trust in the process, the committees should schedule additional hearings around the state that are held in the evenings and on the weekends so more people can participate in the process. The committees should also make every effort possible to provide necessary translation services so everyone can participate.

Additionally, the committees should do their best to maintain the core configurations of the existing Congressional Districts. These districts should be as compact as possible, and the new maps should try to keep similar communities united as possible. Wyandotte County and Johnson County are both an integral part of the larger Kansas City metro area. They have several interconnected interests as well as a similar cultural and historical identity. Splitting these counties into different Congressional Districts means that you are moving these counties into districts featuring counties with very different priorities. This emphasis on maintaining the core of the existing districts and not splitting similar communities into different districts should also be considered when the committees draw the state legislative maps as well.

In my past career as a community organizer, I travelled around the state, encouraging voters to participate in the electoral process and teaching them how to mobilize their communities. I quickly realized that my methods - tailored to reaching suburban voters - were not as effective in other communities. It's easy to push voters to early vote in a county that has several locations open throughout the week; it's much harder to push early voting in a county with one early vote location open for limited hours. I learned an incredibly important lesson during this time - the people who live in a community will know it better than I, an outsider, ever could. I urge the committees to take that lesson to heart as they

Sincerely,
Lauren Martin