

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

From: Paul Heiman

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 am asking for an end to Gerrymandering and requesting a fair system for drawing district boundaries that puts the needs of our communities first and not the needs of politicians, first.

Politicians shouldn't be allowed to draw voting maps that benefit themselves. The current system gives politicians the means and the incentive to gerrymander district maps that give their political party an advantage. Why wouldn't a politician redraw a district voting map to ensure it doesn't flip to the other party in the next election? The drawing of these maps will affect our elections for the next decade. In our current system a district's boundaries can play as much a role in who wins elections as the candidates and voters do.

An independent redistricting committee would be an improvement over the current system but a better solution might be to get rid of boundary lines entirely and change to proportional representation. Regardless of which system is chosen, reforms need to be made to make the usual gerrymandering tools of cracking and packing voters less effective. Rules need to be made to create a fair system that benefits the voters by ensuring they are choosing their politicians, instead of the politicians choosing their voters.

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.

Gerrymandering must end now! There's no freedom more essential in a Democracy than the right to freely choose who represents us. The People should pick their representatives and not the other way around. Thank You for your consideration.

Respectfully,

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