

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

From: Kathleen Outlaw

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 concerned about having redistricting that respects everyone's chance for fair representation.

I have been a resident of Johnson County for twenty-nine years. I am advocating for a redistricting process that respects everyone's chance for fair representation. I can remember what the proposed maps drafted by the legislature looked like the last time that redistricting took place. The proposed districts were so gerrymandered that the designing of boundaries was taken out of the legislature's hands by the court. I am concerned about the hyper-partisan, and at times undemocratic, initiatives that have taken place in the last decade. One example is the previous attempt to supposedly solve a problem with voter fraud in Kansas, which was adjudged by the court to not exist in even minimally appreciable amounts to justify the obstruction created. Currently, in our own state and others, there are again attempts to use restrictive voting measures to solve a problem that does not exist, by attempting to have the populace believe "the big lie" that the 2020 election was unfair and rigged, even after recounts and court cases did not produce any objective proof of this. Additionally, Susan Wagle, previous State Senate President, stated in a speech in 2020 at the Wichita Pachyderm Club, that the GOP desired to unseat the current Democratic U.S. Representative by means of gerrymandering. How can those who are not of the GOP persuasion believe that their interests will be objectively and fairly served in the face of such actions by our legislature and sentiments expressed by their leadership? Obviously, the public would be best served by an independent citizen's commission which was appointed by expert and unbiased individuals to propose boundary lines which are fair, where political races will represent a legitimate contest of which candidate will best represent and serve his/her respective district, rather than one who is forced on the populace by gerrymandering and whose primary loyalty is suspect and not the population served.

Johnson and Wyandotte counties of the greater Kansas City area share economic and diverse cultural and religious populations that will not be represented well if they are isolated into an unheard minority by inappropriately redistricted areas. Health, infrastructure, social, cultural, and many other needs require adequate representation at a state level in to maintain an attractive, thriving, and safe community for residents and new businesses. "Taxation without

representation” was one of the reasons we broke bonds with England. Gerrymandering deprives voters of adequate representation. It prevents others from having a legitimate voice. It encourages resentment, hardship, and disrespect for governmental authority within our state. It is not an attractive quality for encouraging newcomers to our state individually or as industries.

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.

Please appoint an independent citizen commission to propose redistricting boundaries to be considered by the legislature and approved by the court for equitable and effective representation in our state. I would presume that these would closely align with those currently in place, which were developed ten years ago by such a commission. Thank you for allowing my written input on this matter.

Respectfully,

Kathleen Outlaw

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