

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

From: Judith Hyde

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 the formation of a nonpartisan Independent Redistricting Committee.

To rebuild public trust in the outcome of Congressional redistricting, the process must be open and fair. Fourteen town halls compressed into a single week, with 10 of them taking place during working hours, dramatically reduces the number of Kansans who can participate. A decade ago, hearings in the same cities were spread over four months.

This short notice, with the town halls happening prior to the Census Bureau's release of detailed population counts needed to draw new districts and the adoption of Guidelines and Criteria for Congressional and Legislative Redistricting, seems purposely rushed. Kansans must have an opportunity to study the results of the Census in the context of the redistricting guidelines before being asked to weigh in on the composition of new districts. Please consider holding additional town halls after Kansans have had an opportunity to study the Census results.

I urge you to keep the new district maps as similar as possible to their current configuration. Kansas City, Wyandotte County, and Johnson County have been in the same congressional district since the 1970s. Splitting them apart seems like a partisan attempt to gerrymander the Third District. Because the Third District currently represents the most racially diverse communities in the state, those communities should be kept in one district for fair, equitable representation. Respect the different priorities and needs of urban, suburban, and rural communities in the state. Resist the urge to dilute those priorities by dividing like-minded voters between multiple districts.

I support the formation of an Independent Redistricting Committee, protected by law from party or interest group interference and prohibited from considering party affiliation, that would apply unbiased mathematical formulas to draw districts. With narrow Judicial (NOT Legislature) oversight of the process.

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.

I am asking for the formation of a nonpartisan Independent Redistricting Committee. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Respectfully,

Judith Hyde

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