

Oral with Written Testimony for Thursday, August 12, 2021 in Overland Park

**From: Paula Schwach
Mayor
City of Westwood Hills**

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 begin by recommending to you for adoption, the proposed Guidelines and Criteria for 2022 Kansas Congressional and State Legislative Redistricting, dated May 20, 2021, and found at the Kansas Office of Revisor of Statutes (the "Criteria").

While the Criteria are important principles, they are not wholly sufficient to the redistricting task itself. I want to propose two additional criteria and say a word about the process itself.

Testimony

I begin by recommending to you for adoption, the proposed Guidelines and Criteria for 2022 Kansas Congressional and State Legislative Redistricting, dated May 20, 2021, and found at the Kansas Office of Revisor of Statutes (the "Criteria").

While the Criteria are important principles, they are not wholly sufficient to the redistricting task itself. I want to propose two additional criteria and say a word about the process itself.

The Criteria include the principle of keeping whole counties in the same congressional district. As a mayor, my experience says this is not enough. The residents of the Kansas side of the Kansas City metropolitan area have common political and economic interests that don't just coincide with the Johnson County geographic boundaries. When I attend the Council of Mayors, it is the WYANDOTTE/JOHNSON County Council of Mayors. When I sit on the MARC Board, the planning and transportation decisions for Kansas are not limited to Johnson County only. When I walk three blocks north of my home, I am in Wyandotte County, and I understand that what affects County Line Road or the Kansas University Hospital also affects Westwood, Roeland Park and Westwood Hills and more JOCO cities. There is a community of interest between Wyandotte and Johnson County residents.

The Criteria should be expanded to prohibit use of partisan data, e.g., incumbents' residences, election results, party registration, or other socio-economic data as an input when redrawing districts. Technology provides a siren song to gerrymander and it can result in ever more extreme divisions between political parties and among voters. Technology makes it possible to draw thousands of maps in a matter of minutes, with ever more sophisticated data and analytics. It's not just election results and demographics but also, increasingly, the sort of

consumer data that political campaigns and commercial companies use about voters, based on what kind of car you drive, what magazines you read, who you donate to. The map makers can build a robust profile of each voter, whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, and how likely you are to vote in presidential years and midterms. And that, in turn, enables with micro-precision a deeply undemocratic outcome: office holders selecting voters instead of voters selecting their representatives. Such a process renders elections meaningless, so I urge this committee not to engage in it. Prohibit the use of partisan and consumer data.

This committee's process and the resulting map(s) need to be transparent, reasonably bipartisan, and publicly reviewable once the actual Census data is known. I urge you to make the data used to draw maps publicly available and to provide adequate time and outreach to solicit comments on preliminary maps before proposing a final map. Allow for a further comment period and additional hearings during hours when working men and women can participate before a vote to approve one or more final maps.

The Kansas legislature adopted a voting rights bill in its most recent session. I hope the purpose was to encourage fair elections. However, elections can only be fair if the redistricting process is fair. Therefore, I urge you to: consider Wyandotte and Johnson Counties as one community of interest for congressional redistricting; prohibit the use of partisan and consumer data as a criterion for redistricting; and finally, to modify your process so as to expand public participation.

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, thank you for this opportunity to be heard.
Respectfully submitted,

Respectfully,

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