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Democrat

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### Testimony before the House and Senate Redistricting Committees

When I travel and people ask where I'm from I say Kansas City because I identify with the metropolitan area of KC. I have lived in this area since 1976 and in Leawood since 1989. I started my business in KCK and later moved to a larger building in the west bottoms of KCMO.

If the conversation goes longer I explain that I live in a Kansas suburb and extoll the virtues of my state: The beauty of the Tallgrass Prairie and the Flint Hills, where native peoples lived before the settlers arrived, and how those settlers withstood the brutal attacks from across the border in "Bleeding Kansas", one of them being my wife's great-great-grandfather; The aerospace industry in Wichita; The fiercely independent farmers and ranchers, like Representative Adam Smith on this committee (whose newsletter I read regularly) from the western portion of the state; The small towns, like Humboldt, reinvigorating themselves to prepare for the future; The vibrant restaurants, sports, and arts venues, and medical facilities like the KU Med Center, where our daughter was born. Kansas is a wonderful combination of different communities that make it a great place to live.

As a whole, Kansas looks to its statewide elected officials to administer our state government and represent us in the US Senate. We rely on them to address our common concerns like the limited access to healthcare, healthy food, and to the internet in both our rural areas and our most urban areas. However, in making state and federal law, we look to representatives who share our local community concerns to give us voice in the legislative bodies. These are the districts you are now tasked with drawing.

The members of these committees and the legislators in the current session have the opportunity to set a 10 year legacy. While it might be tempting to draw districts to serve a partisan purpose I would urge you not to do that. We are in what is the most partisan political atmosphere of my lifetime. Some people are making decisions on what businesses to patronize based on the political affiliation of the owners rather than the quality of the product or services rendered. That is not healthy for society or government. Drawing districts that divide people with common interests so they have no voice will only exacerbate that partisan divide. In order to maintain a "government of the people" the people must feel their voices are heard. Please don't take that away. We have a lot of common goals as Kansans that are not well-served by the partisan rancor that exists today.

So, for the U.S. Congressional Districts as well as the state legislative districts, I would urge you to keep the areas with the most common interests together and to keep them as geographically compact as possible. You have the power to draw districts of any shape but do you wish to be remembered for a brief political victory and odd-looking maps or for living up to the vision of the founders of this country, "to form a more perfect union" by giving voice to the people? Also, while we can broadly estimate future trends, there is no guarantee that the demographic distribution today will remain similar for 10 years. So, the victory today might translate to a loss in 6-10 years. However, if you keep the areas geographically compact, residents will still be neighbors and will share common interests and feel adequately represented. And, compact districts make it easier for representatives to reach their constituents and vice versa.

Thank you for serving on these committees; thank you for serving in the legislature; and thank you for listening to/reading my testimony and that of all the other Kansans who testify. We look forward to seeing your work as it progresses and when finalized as your legacy.

Sincerely,  
Alan Sunkel