

(Opening)

Dear KLRD

Good afternoon, Mr. Chair, members of the committee and legislature, (The legislative Joint Special Committee on Redistricting.)

My name is Patty Newkirk.

I am a registered voter living in Merriam, and have lived in the Merriam/Shawnee area of Johnson County since 2004.

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And phone is 913-209-9718

I am submitting testimony for the redistricting committee hearing held on Thursday, August 12<sup>th</sup> at Matt Ross Community Center.

This testimony is Oral with written testimony.

Please let me know if you need additional information. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Patty Newkirk

Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today about an issue that is vital to all Kansans.

I recognize the limited time, so I will be brief.

I'm passionate about where I live, and I believe it is important to be involved with government at the local level.

To take my duty as a citizen seriously.

Therefore, I want to be closely involved with the process of making sure the lines are fairly drawn in the process of the new districts.

One of the redistricting criteria that I would like to emphasize in this process for District Three is the criteria of "Preserving Communities of Interest."

A Community of Interest is defined as "a community, neighborhood or group of people who have common concerns and traits and would benefit from staying together in a single district."

Additionally, the Kansas 2012 Congressional Redistricting Guidelines state "To a considerable degree most counties in Kansas are economic, social, and cultural units, or parts of a larger socioeconomic unit.

These interests, common to the population of the area, generally termed "community of interests" should be considered during the creation of congressional districts."

Moreover, members of the community are likely to know more about the effect of certain district shapes or boundaries on the local area than legislators or commissioners who may be concentrating on the redistricting plan as a whole.

I can tell you about our community, and why districts make a difference.

In Merriam, I live not far from where Johnson County and Wyandotte County meet.

Our two counties are definitely "Communities of interest" and they definitely have common economic and socioeconomic interests.

My focus is the relationship between Johnson County and The Legends/Village West Shopping complex and commerce sector in Wyandotte County situated here at the intersection of highway 435 both at State Avenue and Parallel Parkway.

For this meeting, I decided to focus on the fact that Wyandotte and Johnson County are "Communities of Interest" and thrive together economically regarding the Legends/Village West shopping Center and the economic district surrounding it.

The Legends/Village West Shopping Center was built with STAR Bonds (Sales Tax Anticipation Revenue.)

In a nutshell, a large portion of the sales tax that went to pay off the STAR Bonds to pay for Legends/Village West came from Johnson County.

The project went so well that the STAR Bonds paid off early, and then the windfall of money after that was used for improvement in Wyandotte County, including rebuilding and improving the inner core close to interstate 635

That, in turn, lead to more growth, housing. and the area offering even more amenities for Johnson County.

My own orthopedic doctor used to be in Providence Medical Center, an older hospital in the area.

He moved to a new, beautiful medical building that grew up in the development across I-435 from Legends/Village West called Village East, which includes the new Philips 66 gas station and Freddy's Frozen Custard

The new medical office is called - of all things - **Overland Park** Surgical Specialists!

There is a NEW STAR Bond project proposal being considered for the area by that medical office.

It is all a symbiotic relationship between Wyandotte and Johnson County.  
The New STAR Bond project is called "The Home Field Project."  
It is all a symbiotic relationship between Wyandotte and Johnson County.

It looks to be a big, beautiful commercial project with more shopping and growth, but it is to be financed with more STAR Bonds.

And if the redistricting process creates a new district that takes Wyandotte out of our urban Congressional District Three with Johnson County and puts it with rural District One or Two, it will disrupt the balance of the ecosystem between Johnson and Wyandotte's "Communities of Interest."

And it would dislodge the sales tax base and revenue that comes from Johnson County that is the funding, which is the essence of a STAR Bond - Sales Tax Anticipation Revenue.

To yank Wyandotte away from Johnsons County, and even further from Missouri, which the studies also find comprise a large part of the shopping tax base for the existing "Legends" shopping district, is to take it away from practically a major root system from which it draws lifeblood.

There is concern that the boundaries will be redrawn in such a way as to "Crack" Wyandotte County out of District Three and put it in with more rural District Two or District One.

### **There would be many dire consequences locally if that were to occur**

This "Cracking" would dilute the voting power of Wyandotte as separate piece that would be absorbed by the new, dissimilar district.

And the voting interests of Wyandotte County are tightly tied in with the voting interests of the rest of us in Johnson County.

"STAR Bonds – which stands for Sales Tax Anticipation Revenue - provide Kansas Municipalities the chance to issues bonds to finance the development of major commercial, entertainment and tourism areas and to use the sales tax revenue generated by the development to pay off the bonds." (<http://kanview.ks.gov>)

This following example illustrates how the benefits of STAR Bonds worked with The Legends/Village West project -

<https://klcjournal.com/unified-government-sales-tax/>

"Regardless of what happens, (Kansas City Kansas Mayor) Alvey says he will not back down from plans to invest in the urban core.

Before STAR Bonds helped finance Kansas Speedway and The Legends shopping center, Wyandotte County was perceived as a place to avoid. It has since become one of the state's top tourist attractions with the addition of Cabela's, Great Wolf Lodge and Children's Mercy Park, where Sporting Kansas City plays.

Activity was so strong in Village West that the STAR Bonds paid off in 2016, which was five years earlier than projected. It generated \$12 million in local sales taxes, which had been deferred and \$42 million in state sales tax, says Mike Taylor, spokesman for the Unified Government...It's... allowed the city to spend nearly \$2 million a year in blight reduction, (Kansas City Kansas Mayor) Alvey says. Much of that has happened east of Interstate 635 in the older areas of the city.

The city is cutting the grass faster at many unkempt properties. It's boarding up homes that need it. And it's actively working to get abandoned homes into the hands of rehab professionals. If they can't be fixed, those houses are torn down. But that isn't cheap. Alvey estimates the city spends up to \$20,000 to tear down a home in some cases."

The same sorts of benefits would be expected with the proposed "Home Field Project" created with STAR bonds.

According to the Kansas Department of Revenue "For 2018, the total retail market supported a 3.0 percent increase in taxable sales to 32.65 billion. Johnson County Kansas and Jackson County accounted for two thirds of the Kansas City MSA total taxable sales."

Please consider the importance oof keeping these communities of Interest together considering their reliance on one another in such important economic ways.

Sincerely,

Patty Newkirk

