

Written-only
August 12, 2021
Overland Park, Kansas

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Members of the Redistricting Committee,

Thank you for providing this opportunity for Kansans to weigh in on this fundamental process of our state. I am writing today to ask that this process be made as transparent, fair, and accessible as possible. I would also ask that current legislative boundaries be shifted as little as is necessary.

My concerns about this process began when video of former Senate President Susan Wagle circulated widely, of her stating, "I guarantee you we can draw four Republican Congressional maps. But we can't do it unless we have a two-thirds majority in the Senate and the House." Through elections, Republicans now have that two-thirds majority in both the Senate and the House; what assurances do I have that the supermajority will not simply follow through with Wagle's "guarantee"?

My apprehensions were exacerbated when the schedule for these town halls was released. Perhaps chief among my worries is the fact that, at minimum, 9 of the 14 town halls were scheduled to occur before Census Bureau data is even available. As a result, this committee does not have the information necessary to present proposals for constituents to provide feedback on. Certainly this raises questions about the transparency and fairness of this process. This could be addressed by providing Kansans with opportunities to review the district maps well before a vote is taken in the legislature with opportunities to provide feedback.

In addition, I have concerns about the accessibility of these town halls to Kansans. Ten of the 14 town halls are scheduled during the 9-5 work day. For families like myself, who have too-young-to-be-vaccinated children at home, the only option to safely participate in this process is through written testimony. While I very much appreciate having this option, it does not allow for dialogue with committee members. For my neighbors who *are* able to attend in person, the length of town halls has been cut in half from previous redistricting town halls, providing significantly less time for them to express their wishes. These town halls were also announced with very little advanced warning, making it more difficult for constituents to research and prepare testimony to present. I would like to see additional town halls made available across the state later in the fall, with opportunities to attend and participate via Zoom.

Finally, the Kansas City metro area has 25% of the population of Kansas. Despite this, residents in the metropolitan area have only 14% of the total meeting times available. Again, this instills doubt in the fairness of this process. This disproportionality should be given consideration if and when follow-up town halls are scheduled in the fall.

Taken together, there is more than enough reason for this Kansan to have concerns over the transparency and fairness of the redistricting process. I would ask that the committee reflect on the process as it's occurred so far, and look for opportunities to increase the transparency, fairness, accessibility, and accountability as it takes on the critical task of redistricting. One way this could be addressed is through the passage of "Guidelines and Criteria" as a means of comparing and evaluating various proposals for district maps, as has been done by previous Redistricting Committees in Kansas.

Without access to Census Bureau data, I can only point out that current Congressional and Legislative maps were created by the courts, and ask that they be altered as little as necessary to fulfill reapportionment shifts. Specifically, the Kansas City Metro is currently whole within

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Kansas' Third congressional district and I believe should remain in a single district as residents have shared interests in representation.

Again, I want to thank the Committee for this opportunity to provide feedback about the redistricting process thus far. I would ask the Committee to proceed with special attention given to transparency, fairness, accessibility, and accountability, with relatively minimal shifting of current legislative boundaries.

Thank you for your time.

Colleen Cunningham
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