

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

From: Stephen Spain

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.

Due to the pandemic, we have all had to adjust our traditional schedules and methods of interacting, working, and learning. The change in timing for the delivery of 2020 Census results to the states for redistricting has created one such adjustment. However, we are writing to ask that while we wait for the detailed Census data you take the opportunity to plan the redistricting process as it will unfold from now until the end of the 2022 Session.

We are concerned that a Senate Redistricting Committee has not yet been created, while the House Committee has not yet met to discuss or plan a schedule for redistricting activities.

Likewise, we are concerned that a Redistricting Advisory Group, traditionally the entity that plans the redistricting process, has not yet been appointed.

To Senate and House Leadership

We encourage you, as Senate and House Leaders, to appoint members from your respective chambers to plan a series of public hearings to be held across the state this summer and fall – as has been done in the past – to collect input from Kansans about how districts can be drawn to benefit communities. Along with those hearings, we encourage you to establish and widely publicize the methods by which Kansans can provide input, including maps, for consideration by the Redistricting Committees.

To non-leadership Senators and Representatives

We encourage all legislators to start educating their constituents about redistricting by holding public meetings in their districts and encouraging conversations about communities of interest. Those meetings also could begin the process of each member gathering input and identifying those communities of interest that will be important to achieving fair districts statewide.

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.

In recent years, although the Census data arrived earlier than it will this year, time was spent adjusting the count of college students and military before the Legislature could start drawing new legislative maps. This step is no longer necessary as it was eliminated when the people voted in 2019 to remove the adjustment process from the Constitution. So, despite the delay at the federal level, Kansas Legislators will be able to begin actual map-drawing on nearly the same schedule as a decade ago.

We appreciate your attention to this fundamental element of our representative democracy.
Thank you,

Respectfully,

Stephen Spain

11201 W. 141ST STREET
OVERLAND PARK, KS 66221
17853303866
stevespain99@gmail.com