

Written Testimony for Friday, August 13, 2021

From: Garth Strand, Kansas resident/taxpayer

To: The Joint House and Senate Committees on Redistricting

I have heard the defense that your current meeting schedule is historically transparent. I will agree that the meetings themselves may in fact be that. However, that defense seems to be a classic Red Herring. What is not and will not be transparent is the logic, strategy & decisioning that happens after the meetings. If there were a public denouncement by the majority party of previous comments made by former Senate President Susan Wagle concerning redistricting, then and only then, will you begin to establish some credibility in the transparency department. As a reminder, here is a snippet of Ms. Wagle's comments:

"During redistricting, I need to give her some more Republican neighborhoods in order to make sure she stays elected," Wagle said. "So redistricting, it's right around the corner. And if Governor Kelly can veto a Republican bill that gives us four Republican congressmen, that takes out Sharice Davids up in the 3rd — we can do that. 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 House."

If you want to demonstrate real leadership that represents the best interest of all Kansas citizens, then take action to reform the redistricting process so that neither party can behave in the way Ms. Wagle commanded. Empower a citizen-based group to drive the process and eliminate partisan data from the resources available to them. Kind of makes your butt-cheeks pucker just thinking about it...doesn't it...empowered, non-partisan citizens? Personally, I'll take my chances with that group any day.

Next, the term 'Rigged Elections' seems to be popular, especially among a certain group. I'll suggest that your failure to publically denounce Ms. Wagle's comments points to, at a minimum, the perception that the majority party intends to in fact, commit the despicable act of gerrymandering. Of course gerrymandering is simply a fundamental means of rigging elections. So, who do you think is guilty of 'rigging elections'?

My requests: Publicly denounce Ms. Wagle's comments; reform the redistricting process to eliminate the possibility of gerrymandering; complete this redistricting process respecting the integrity of all individuals and communities and in a manner that you can stand up in a well lit room in front of your friends, loved ones and faith leaders and honestly explain your logic, strategies and actions.

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