

Written-only Testimony for Friday, August 13, 2021 in Lawrence

From: Elizabeth & Greg Burger

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.

I am asking that this first round of meetings on redistricting be followed by another round that takes into consideration both 1) the timing of the 2020 Census data release, and 2) the schedules of busy working people.

My husband and I are registered Republicans living in a rural part of northwest Douglas County. On top of our demanding jobs, we also serve as volunteer first responders. Thus, we know our community pretty well, and know that the vast majority of people are either working or physically unable (disability, lack of transportation, etc) to attend a daytime meeting on this important issue, especially on short notice. We ourselves cannot attend due to work schedules. This is such an important issue, regardless of one's party affiliation, and could be a tremendous opportunity to get citizens actively engaged in the democratic process. The fact that just a week's worth of meetings are being held with very little notice is frankly insulting to those of us that pay taxes and believe in the concept of federal/constitutional democratic republic. When the KS Dept of Transportation was considering options on the South Lawrence Trafficway, it held dozens of meetings at all kinds of times - in person and virtually - and provided a myriad of options for both self-education and citizen feedback. It was extremely easy and accessible to learn about the issue and comment. The redistricting process, arguably even more important, has had none of that. Strong roads are important to us but a strong democracy even more so.

Finally, data are important to making good decisions. Why are we not waiting until the 2020 Census data are released? Demography is a reality, not a political issue.

I have read that these meetings are the first step. I look forward to many more options in the future - especially interactive virtual options, which only makes sense at a time when COVID cases are once again surging.

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.

I may not be able to attend Friday's meeting, but I am watching and paying attention to how Kansas lawmakers view democracy. Please expand the process for redistricting meetings, and consider both 1) timing of Census data release and 2) making it more accessible to all working people. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Elizabeth & Greg Burger

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