

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

From: Bruce Roberts
Vice Chair
Douglas County Democratic Party

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 urge the redistricting committees and all members of the Kansas Legislature to follow the guidelines advanced by the Kansas Revisor of Statutes for both state legislative districts and congressional districts. By respecting these guidelines you respect the importance of voters and their belief in the integrity and fairness of our democratic processes.

These guidelines include:

Use the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census as the basis to assure that districts adhere to the distribution of population requirements.

Redistricting plans will have neither the purpose nor the effect of diluting minority voting strength.

Districts should be as compact as possible and contiguous.

The integrity and priority of existing political subdivisions should be preserved to the extent possible.

There should be recognition of similarities of interest. Social, cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic interests common to the population of the area, which are probable subjects of legislation (generally termed "communities of interest"), should be considered. While some communities of interest may be more readily embodied in legislative districts, the Committee will attempt to accommodate interests articulated by residents.

Contests between incumbent members of the Legislature or the State Board of Education will be avoided whenever possible.

The core of existing congressional districts should be preserved when considering the communities of interest to the extent possible.

Whole counties should be in the same congressional district to the extent possible. County lines are meaningful in Kansas and Kansas counties historically have been significant political units. Many officials are elected on a countywide basis, and political parties have been organized in county units. Election of the Kansas members of Congress is a political process requiring political organizations which in Kansas are developed in county units. To a considerable degree most counties in Kansas are economic, social, and cultural units, or parts of a larger socioeconomic unit. These communities of interest should be considered during the creation of congressional districts.

Districts should be easily identifiable and understandable by voters.

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.

Thank you very much for giving due consideration to redrawing districts that sustain the integrity of our representative democracy.

Respectfully,

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