

RE: Testimony on HB 2795

Speaker O'Neal and Committee Members:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss the redistricting of Senate seats. Specifically, I want to compare the "Emler" map to the "Abrams" map.

The Emler map is grossly defective and should be abandoned. It violates existing law and redistricting guidelines approved by this committee in three ways. First, whereas districts should be as "compact as possible," the 38th District is stretched from four full and two partial counties to eight full and four partial counties. When analyzing this point, keep in mind the 38th District was 19 people (.03%) from being a perfect Senate Seat.

The second point concerns the 38th Districts "communities of interest." By stretching the district from the Oklahoma line to Ellis County, the population of a Hispanic, Spanish speaking ethnicity is joined with a Volga German population whose native language, in certain areas at least, is slop-bucket German.

To further illustrate this second point, consider the treatment of Liberal and Dodge City. Both cities located in Southwest Kansas must be split in two in order to be combined with Ellis County, which is considered Northeast Kansas.

Lastly, and perhaps most damaging, is "the effect of diluting minority voting strength." Remember the dilution does not need to be purposeful, it only needs to be present, which is undisputable. The 38th District currently contains a 45.61% Hispanic population. The non-Hispanic White population is less than a majority, 48.72%.

By splitting Liberal and Dodge City and collapsing the 38th into the 36th District. The "Emler", Map destroys the only effective Hispanic majority-minority. The Hispanic population is diluted from 45.61% to 19.58%.

For these reasons, the Emler map is seriously flawed and could not withstand court scrutiny. The only viable replacement at this point is the Abrams map. This map, which keeps all 410 districts as near intact as possible, keeps "communities of interest," is more compact, and does not dilute minority voting strength.

Additionally, the population deviations of Senate districts are far superior in the "Abrams" map. The 10 largest deviations in the "Emler" map are so great so as to contain another seat (e73,000 people). Whereas, the "Abrams" map contains districts with much lower deviations.

To have defeated another chamber's map may have been unprecedented, but so too would have been the act of passing into law a defective map that collapsed an effective majority-minority district.

Terry Bruce
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