

Members of the Minnesota House Redistricting Committee:

My name is Gary Fifield. I live in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood of St. Paul. I am a white, male, upper-middle class retiree. Given all that, I would like to stand the concept of community of interest (COI) on its head in this testimony.

Usually, a COI is defined as a group in a geographic area with common interests or concerns or values which would like to be placed in a political jurisdiction so that it is able to have those factors fairly represented in the governing entity. In my case, considering my 'community', I feel that I currently reside in such a jurisdiction or district.

However (here's the head-standing), when I really contemplate my COI, I realize that the community I am most interested in having represented extends beyond a district. My real community of interest encompasses the whole state. It is all of us who want to see that representation in government is envisioned and implemented as fairly as possible for everyone. In other words, we do not want the drawing of district lines, at any level of government, to be designed to give any person or political party, or anyone, an unfair advantage. In fact, what we want is that as many communities as humanly possible are given a FAIR VOICE. That is, communities and their interests must be considered strongly in the drawing of district lines, not politicians or outside entities, but people in their communities. It is nice to know that you have a bill before the House, [HF 2594](#), that does exactly that in Sec. 2, Subd. 8.

Minnesota is not considered a state with gerrymandered districts. This is primarily because relatively disinterested parties, the courts, have drawn the lines due to divided government. However, the courts have not been known to give priority to COIs. Rather, they draw the lines to maintain the districts as closely as possible to what already exists. Given the movement of people and the significantly changing demographics of our state, that is not an acceptable way to draw the lines for this redistricting cycle.

Please do everything you can to design and implement a process which will give priority, after Constitutional requirements, to communities of interest. And, while you are at it, make the process as transparent as possible. Sec. 3 of HF 2594 describes a very open process. NO CLOSED-DOOR MEETINGS, PLEASE.