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Representative Niska
Rules and Legislative Administration Committee
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Testimony submitted for 3/10/2025 Rules and Legislative Administration Committee
in opposition of HF550.

I am Tom Wiesen, I am a resident of Mahtomedi. Having spent over 30 years as a Manufacturing professional, I have learned one immutable truth: The quality of a product is directly proportional to the quality of the process that created it. Likewise, the quality of our government is directly proportional to the quality of the election process that elects its members.

One of the primary root cause barriers to representative elections and representative government is the gerrymandering of districts that allow only 10 percent of state elections to be competitive. As redistricting only happens every ten years, it's important that we get it right whenever we carry out the exercise.

Some basic principles need to be understood before assessing the likely outcomes of HF550:

- Bipartisan is a bad word.

George Orwell illustrated in his book 1984, you control the people if you control the language. The deceptive use of "Bipartisan" is a great example of this. Bipartisan is often used as an indicator of fair, equitable, and representative circumstances or decision outcomes. Since our state and federal government is dominated by two and only two political parties, Bipartisan seems like a good word on the surface, since it's better than "Partisan" or one-party rule. One-party rule is what North Korea, China, and Russia have. We have just one functional party more than those countries with oppressive regimes.

Partisan is biased, Bipartisan is biased, non-partisan is not biased. Bipartisan means that the outcome will likely be satisfactory to the two parties, and only the two parties, independent of the needs or will of We the People. Only non-partisan has the potential to be impartial. Non-partisan needs to become the new expected status quo goal.

Bipartisan is what has given us the gerrymandered districts we have today, as evidence by the <10% of politically competitive elections. Bipartisan needs to be accurately understood as a word meaning last-resort compromise, inequity, mis-represented, and independent of constituent's interests.

- Clean Constitution.

The founding fathers of our country warned us against the affliction of factions (political parties). As such, the only reference to any political party in the Minnesota Constitution should be in prohibitive language; language that blocks or prohibits any rights, authority, responsibility, or entitlement for political parties. The Constitution shall not convey, create, endorse, or allow any special status upon any political party, as this is in direct conflict with

the interests of, and self-governance by, We the People. Currently, Minnesota has only one party stain on its Constitution in the form of Article IV Section nine, that mandates partisanship when determining pay raises for the legislature. This stain needs to be removed as well. The act of adding any reference to political parties in the Constitution is to piss on the graves of our founding fathers and the citizens of Minnesota.

- Party purpose

The purpose of the Duopoly monopoly political parties in Minnesota is fundamentally to be election tools, to elect members that share their values as demonstrated by their common purpose or objective statements, or simply, to gain an unfair advantage in elections.

Various Constitution purpose statements of local Political party units:

- SD33 GOP Constitution
 - The primary objectives of MN SD33 shall be to elect endorsed Republicans to public office and to promote Republican philosophy and advance conservative principles.
- MN DFL Constitution
 - The purpose of the DFL Party shall be to elect candidates to public office who represent the party's shared values. Those shared values are embodied by the DFL Party Platform, consisting of the Ongoing Platform and Action Agenda, and by the Charter and Bylaws of the Democratic Party of the United States.
- MN GOP Constitution
 - The object of the Party shall be the maintenance of government by and for the people according to the Constitution and the laws of the United States and the State of Minnesota, and the implementation of such principles as may from time to time be adopted by Party conventions. To obtain this object it is essential the party shall organize at all levels to elect Republicans to public office.

Political parties are self serving organizations. There is nothing inherently wrong with self serving organizations, most organizations form around a set of ideas that are not in the mainstream. If their ideas were in the mainstream, there would be no need for an organization to support the ideas. Political parties form around ideas, ideals, principles, and political philosophies. They recruit like-minded candidates and support their campaign efforts. These activities are all beneficial for a healthy government ecosystem. It is at this point where a line needs to be drawn.

Any direct participation or control of elections by political parties is an In-your-Face, Out loud, direct conflict of interest. Giving political parties, organizations focused on gaining an unfair advantage in elections, control of elections, is like mandating that gang leaders be on the juries for criminal cases where their members are charged with crimes. In any other domain, this conflict of interest would be prohibited or even outlawed.

HF550

This bill has a multitude problems:

- No redistricting committee member restrictions on lobbyists, party leaders, party members, or other party biased people
- It's a different system from what is used today, is untested, and expected to immediately become a permanent part of the constitution
- Any proposed Constitutional amendment that provides political parties, party members, or party officers with any authority, preference, or responsibility that is above and beyond or supersedes any citizen's rights or authority should not be allowed.
- No contingency for when the commission cannot agree on boundary maps
- Contains no review effectiveness of the process to revise over time
- No defined process to elect the committee positions
- No defined contingency if the committee cannot agree on electing committee officers
- There is no districting principle that addresses the competitiveness of the district as a desired outcome
- The major problem with this bill is its foundation, a foundation built on a transparently partisan house of cards. The issue is embedded in the bill's title and the frequent (15) number of times that "Bipartisan" is used in the bill. A pre-requisite to drawing boundaries that directly affect election outcomes, is the need for the redistricting committee members to be specifically objective and impartial and focused on achieving the districting principles. This cannot have even an illusion of impartiality when this bill requires the top four most partisan, party loyalists in State government to select the redistricting committee members, and there are no restrictions on selecting intentionally biased member. You cannot put the fox in charge of the hen house. Again, parties are exerting authority they have not been given by We the People. As the effects of redistricting directly affects the outcomes of elections, no member of parties or active members of congress can be involved in the selection of or participate as committee members as this is a direct conflict of interest. Any Representative voting for this bill, with redistricting members being selected by political party bosses, shows that the Representative care more about party loyalty than they care about their constituents or free, fair, and representative elections and government.
- Aside from the bills explicit corrupt foundation, the Author has failed to provide contingencies for its many expected failures in execution.

Recommendation:

The motivation of redistricting committee members needs to be the objective and impartial creation of representative districts that produce competitive elections, while still meeting other constitutional and legal requirements. These motivations will not be found in the most partisan party leaders in government, or the party minions they would select.

I would recommend that the redistricting committee be comprised of non-partisan staff members nominated by the Secretary of State and could come from the Secretary of State's office and/or non-partisan county election officials. The nominated members could be vetted by a third party organization and approved by another non-partisan government department or a different branch of government.

One element that the author raised that has received no consideration in committee discussions is the use of software. There are a number of software options for redistricting and they should be carefully benchmarked and evaluated by a standing non-partisan redistricting committee. Well chosen software could likely remove most partisan influences from the selection of districts. As software will only provide results that reflect the programmed goals, these goals need to be carefully evaluated in terms of their weight and effectiveness.

I would also recommend creating a non-partisan standing redistricting analysis committee that would track the effectiveness of the redistricting process and make recommendations for improving the process and guidelines for future re-districting events.

With selection of committee members left to party bosses, I strongly recommend voting NO on HF 550.

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