

Hello, my name is Britton Mikkelsen and I live at 380 5th Ave S St Cloud 56301. I've lived in St Cloud since 2014 where I first learned about how poorly the districts were laid out while working on voter engagement at SCSU. Since 2014 I have voted and worked in each election with a focus on the campus community until recently. I've been lucky to see the increased politicization of young people but have also been frustrated by the efforts elected officials have taken across the country to make it more difficult for young people to navigate our election system.

If you have ever worked with first time voters, you know how important it is to not only share information about your preferred candidate but to also educate them on the process of voting. We know that when voters start voting young, they continue that pattern. But this takes more investment, from candidates, campaign workers, and activists. The way the district is split makes it even more difficult to do that since a lot of that education is housed on SCSU's campus.

The split between 14 a and 14 b cuts 3/4^{ths} the campus off from the other fourth. While all the dorms are in 14b the athletics center and all the students who live near it are in 14a. **Students traditionally live close to their campus, so if the house district with SCSU in it is split, so is the student district.** However, because most of the young people living in 14a go to school in 14b they interact with candidates running for office in 14b.

This also splits city council ward one, which houses most of the student district, splitting the ward means that what would be a solid block of young voters has less voting power, thus less of a voice. Even though the campus community and surrounding area is one area it is very much two, less powerful, voting blocs when you consider the district.

This causes a lot of confusion on election day. I have had students tell me they didn't see their preferred candidate, the 14b candidate, on the ballot so they "just skipped it".

Another unfortunate problem is that when someone is elected to office with high support from the township's vs the campus community, they spend less time investing in the city centers where more young people, people of color, and new voters live. This pits the district against each other, and the cost is that we can't do what is right for the whole.

It's important to me that we make it easier for young people to vote. My philosophy is that we should be building the future we wished we had when we felt powerless, we can't do that when voting districts are drawn in a way that splits communities.

We need to fix the split of Senate District 14 and I think it needs to include all the campus and the surrounding area to make sure young people get a fair voice in who represents them compared to the quieter voice split between two districts. Thank you for your work on this and I ask you to do what you can to not split the voting power of those who want to participate in our democracy.

Thanks,
Britton