

I'm a Coon Rapids resident, and I grew up in the district.

With Anoka to the north, and Fridley to the south, the historic core of Coon Rapids essentially spans the area from U.S. Highway 10 to the Mississippi River. This boundary has its origins in regional history and geography. As the members of the committee may know, the Red River Oxcart Trails once passed directly through what would become Coon Rapids. (In fact, if you've ever been on East River Road or Coon Rapids Boulevard, you've been on the old trails, which were once used by fur traders). The Ox Cart trails, like our modern roads, parallel the eastern side of the Mississippi River. The reason for that is simple: even today, traveling across the river, say to reach Champlin, is difficult and inconvenient.

The city of Coon Rapids, on the other hand, is a self-contained, contiguous area that has home to all of the institutions necessary for a community: commercial establishments (such as Riverdale), great parks and schools (including both Coon Rapids High School and Anoka-Ramsey Community College), hospital services at Mercy, and transportation hubs (whether it's ready access to the Park and Rides, the wider metro bus system, or Highway 10).

Currently, however, the area described above is divided between three house districts and two senate districts. In particular, my current house district, 36A, covers territory in Coon Rapids, where I live and spend the vast majority of my time, and Champlin, a place that few folks in Coon Rapids regularly visit. (In fact, to show how geographically disconnected my district is, I just pulled up directions from Google maps, and I'd actually have to leave Coon Rapids, pass through Anoka, and cross the river to get to the portion on the western side of the river.)

Having my district splintered like this is much more than an issue of transportation. Coon Rapids is an important city, with some 62,000 people as of the last census, but currently we don't have a dedicated representative for much of our area. Instead, we have a number of representatives, and that makes it much harder for our community to have a dedicated voice in the legislature.

For that reason I'd recommend that the committee draft a district that accurately represents the civic life of Coon Rapids and the on-the-ground realities of the city. Such a district would reflect the tried-and-true geographical realities of the area, encompass the geographical and historical core of Coon Rapids, and enable Coon Rapids residents to have a district that reflects our thriving community.