

House Redistricting Committee, 8th Congressional District

Dear Committee:

I am a resident of Hackensack, Minnesota in Cass County. The purpose of this correspondence is to offer my personal testimony regarding the pending redistricting of Congressional District 8, House 5A and 5B, and Senate District 5.

Cass County is located in the heart of the lakes/forest area of north-central Minnesota. Our county has a wide variety of agriculture, logging interests, reservation lands, lakes, and many tourism businesses. As considerations for redistricting advance, I would ask that the committee takes into account that our area would be better served in matching our county with other counties with similar socio-economic distribution.

Historically, redistricting has amounted to a numbers game of trying to create state house and senate districts of the same size based upon population. Because much of this area is decreasing in population density, the past practice of “size matters” most does not seem to be the most pragmatic. In large metropolitan areas like Duluth, the Twin Cities, St. Cloud, and Rochester, the numbers crunch can work well. In greater MN, when legislative lines are drawn based solely upon crunching numbers, the results end up creating huge geographic districts that make representation very difficult for legislators. In Cass County, that numbers approach often leaves out effective, local representation for indigenous peoples, education, small businesses, water protection, housing, agricultural assistance, social welfare, and healthcare (to mention the most pressing issues).

I ask that geographic setting also be a primary consideration for melding similar counties so that representation can be more easily achieved for ALL citizens of a given area.

Personally, I feel that with the politicization of the courts it is far more equitable for an independent commission to be created to help with the redistricting should the state legislature not be able to accomplish that task.

There is much more that I could write about redistricting ideas, but I want to keep this commentary to no more than one page.

Thank you for allowing me to present this testimony to you.

Sincerely,

Myles Wagner

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