

House Redistricting Committee Hearing

August 24, 2021

Prioritization of compactness should be relatively mid-to-low if the committee members wish to achieve their stated goals

At the August 18th hearing of this committee, Representative Torkelson stated two goals he would like to see in this redistricting cycle: (1) first, he noted that certain rural counties were often split and he wanted to see that happen less often, and (2) he wanted to draw House districts first and pair them into Senate districts, rather than draw Senate districts first and split them into House districts.

Unfortunately, the prioritization of compactness in HF1884 would frustrate these stated goals:

1. Highly prioritizing compactness often will result in split political subdivisions, including rural counties (particularly because the split will affect fewer voters in rural areas)
2. Drawing House districts first may make it more difficult to create compact Senate districts, because combining two compact House districts does not always necessarily create a compact Senate district.

Both of these issues can be somewhat avoided by prioritizing compactness lower than the preservation of political subdivisions.

Communities of interest (COI) are key in developing people-powered maps that reflect the real interests of Minnesotans rather than arbitrary lines

- COI can assist in decide how and where to split a political subdivision when formation of a district would require a political subdivision split.
- COI can also assist in determining what political subdivisions should be paired together in a district, even if none are split in the formation of a district.
- COI can make a legislator's job easier because they represent one or two clear interests in their district, whereas not preserving COI may result in a large number of conflicting interests within a district.
- COI represent the actual interests of voters, which are not always reflected by administrative or political boundaries.
- Unlike some of the more mathematical criteria (like population equality, VRA compliance, or compactness), defining COI is a process that everyday Minnesotans can

participate in. This can ensure a more publicly engaging and transparent process that builds more political legitimacy and social trust in the resulting maps. While qualitative data cannot substitute the valuable qualitative insight from Minnesotans, it need not be rejected and may be used to further clarify these communities or show proof of existence.

Historical examples of COI in Minnesota

At this time, LWVMN does not endorse or oppose the use of any of these examples of communities of interest for the 2021 cycle. We only note for demonstrative purposes that these communities of interest have been used historically in Minnesota's redistricting process.

- Rural vs. suburban vs. urban character
- Agriculturally based
- Lumber, mining, and tourism industries
- I-94 corridor
- Iron Range
- Red River Valley (because of the need of flood protections)
- St. Croix River Valley and the eastern metro
- Moorhead and Detroit Lakes (because of job opportunities and shared community resources)

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