

**Subcommittee on Elections Meeting**

**Chair:** Rep. Raymond Dehn

**Vice-Chair:** Rep. Kristin Bahner

**Wednesday, October 2, 2019**

10:15 am to 12 pm

Austin City Hall

500 4th Ave NE, Austin, MN 55912

Submitted written public testimony

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Please let the subcommittee know that Minnesota Citizens for Clean Elections strongly supports the creation of a citizens' commission to advise the legislature on how maps should be drawn based on the 2020 census.

We want to avoid what happened in Wisconsin in 2011 which resulted in a badly gerrymandered redistricting to the advantage of one party and the disenfranchisement of many voters.

Thank you,  
George Beck  
Chair  
Minnesota Citizens for Clean Elections  
mncce1@gmail.com

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October 1, 2019

House Government Operations Committee

Rep. Raymond Dehn – Committee Chair

Rep. Jim Nash – Republican Lead

Re: Public Testimony Supporting Redistricting Reform

Dear Representative Dehn and Representative Nash:

I previously had first-hand experience in determining voting district boundaries for a large municipality after the completion of a decennial census. I worked for a large city in Minnesota and I was tasked with running the mapping software that was used to create the city council ward boundaries. While these were not state legislative boundaries, these boundaries impacted over two hundred thousand registered voters. This

experience exemplified how voting districts can be manipulated as a result of well intentioned, although biased political parties.

As I ran the GIS mapping software, I literally had three DFL caucus members leaning over my left shoulder, and three Republican caucus members leaning over my right shoulder.

The DFL would be the first to tell me where to map the voting district boundary and which city blocks to include or exclude. Then I would run reports based on that boundary that identified by household the total number of Democratic voters and Republican voters within that boundary and their voting history.

Then the Republicans would tell me where to draw their version of the voting district boundary and I would run reports for them also with the voting records within their boundary. The two caucuses would each have copies of each other's reports. They would meet in separate rooms, and then they would meet together and negotiate. Over the course of many long hours and many live negotiations and many revisions to the voting district boundaries, these two parties would trade city blocks back and forth in an attempt to give their party a majority of their version of a gerrymandered voting district. And these city blocks that they would trade back and forth were filled with registered voters who had no idea they were being moved in and out of a voting district. In retrospect, what is most impressionable is that over two hundred thousand registered voters were being manipulated by this process and their vote was being moved into a voting district by these six individuals that had very biased intentions. These individuals, representing their two parties, were operating well within the rules of the process that existed, however the end result was that they created gerrymandered voting districts designed to favor their party's ability to win a majority and determine whether a voting district would be represented by a democrat or a republican. The registered voters were completely unaware that their ability to vote an elected representative into public office was being manipulated through this redistricting process.

These two parties traded blocks containing voters back and forth like they were just a commodity. It resulted in the parties and politicians picking the voters – not the voters picking the politicians.

It is essential that the Legislature reform the redistricting process and establish non-partisan principles and non-partisan processes that create a confidence in the citizens of Minnesota that their vote is not being manipulated as it was in the process described above. The Legislature should work with groups such as the CCMN Democracy Partners that is being convened by Common Cause Minnesota to put voters ahead of biased parties and special interests.

Sincerely,  
Tim David  
tldavid@comcast.net

cc: Rep. Mike Freiberg

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Please accept my comments here as part of the record for the October 2, 2019 informational hearing at Austin City Hall on the Census and redistricting.

Counting millions of people in the State of Minnesota is an immense undertaking, and I appreciate that elected officials are preparing now to do all they can to make possible a complete and accurate census that will benefit the people of the state as a whole.

To that end I believe it is essential for the State of Minnesota to appropriate funds for census outreach to reach people who will have difficulty accessing and completing the process the federal government has put / is putting in place. To under-fund this undertaking will result in a waste of taxpayers' dollars, so the amount must be impactful. The state must be smart and target its efforts to benefit the state as a whole. I also believe the state should establish a "complete count" program; I know Minnesota has done this previously and I want to hear this is being done again. There are many citizen groups that can help in this process and I ask the state to engage them in it

I also recognize the huge significance that redistricting will have on our state as a whole. I am part of the majority that is critical of politicians being allowed to draw their own maps without citizen oversight. Most citizens - me being one - are leary and weary of the way politics are run these days. I have become more civically engaged, and want to find ways to help politicians - who have been elected by citizens to represent them - to actually do that and represent them, people like me. I don't want elected officials hanging on to some rigid political party that insists on blaming others and can't find a way through to actually affect positive change in our state and country, which we so desperately need. Because of this, it is essential for the legislature to work with an organization like Common Cause and its other coalitions of citizens groups to partner a process that will benefit the people of the state overall.

Specifically, I am want a non-partisan approach to redistricting that builds new maps from the ground up. Prejudiced politics must be neutralized in this process by a having citizens with a non-partisan focus equally (not symbolically) involved. Further, the process MUST be open and honest and voter-focused, i.e., it puts the citizens first over any party. Lastly, because the Minnesota House is controlled by Democrats and the Senate by Republicans, it is essential that whatever language that is formed, is language that has the ability to pass; I do not want to see a non-partisan, citizen-focused initiative languish in a committee somewhere.

By handling the Census and redistricting needs correctly, legislators will help restore some of the eroded confidence that people have in our political process, which I personally am keen on getting fixed. I am watching you. I care about my state and country. I am working with other citizens together and I vote.

Sincerely,  
Elizabeth (Betsy) Wehrwein  
Volunteer Coalition Lead

RepresentUs MN  
1403 Albany Ave  
Saint Paul, MN 55108  
albanskye@mac.com

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To: Amanda Rudolph, Rep. Raymond Dehn, Rep. Jim Nash  
Re: Redistricting Reform

This is an important issue for me. I am involved with efforts to get out the vote and if we don't have fair voting district maps then many votes will not be relevant to election outcomes. It is essential that voters think their vote matters and fair redistricting is important in that perception.

I went to hearings on redistricting reform last session and my assessment is that some of the proposed plans for redistricting will not accomplish fair redistricting. A grassroots organization I have been volunteering with for many years, Organizing for Actions, worked closely with Common Cause Minnesota to try to influence the Subcommittee on Elections to use reforms and redistricting principles that support fair redistricting.

Please work with Common Cause and our coalition to make every effort for a fair, open, transparent and accountable redistricting process that puts Minnesota voters ahead of special interests.

Sincerely,  
Jean Ross  
Board president  
Vote-Climate.org  
jfross@umn.edu

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Testimony for the House Elections Subcommittee, October 2, 2019

Dear Representatives Dehn and Nash,

This summer and fall I have had the opportunity to work with a large multi-partisan group of Minnesota citizen democracy advocates focused on the issue of reforming our process of redistricting. One of our primary goals is to educate as many people as we can about the importance of a fair, transparent and citizen-focused process for redistricting after the 2020 census. We have promoted the concept of a multi-partisan, balanced citizen commission, critically, with strong up-to-date rules of the road to create the new district maps. We have argued against having the maps drawn by politicians/legislators because they have an inherent conflict of interest in that they will want to create districts which favor their incumbents and political party.

We have used two primary tools in our redistricting reform work. Letters to the editor, I have had them published in 5 different newspapers, and getting names on a petition which urges legislators to create a citizen commission. I have personally obtained hundreds of names on the petition in St. Paul, Minneapolis, Olmstead County, Dakota County, Morrison County and elsewhere. In this process I have learned some things I believe should inform your decisions on this issue.

People often ask if we have a gerrymandering problem in Minnesota. I tell them that our problem is much less acute than in many notorious situations around the country. The reason for this, of course, is that for several cycles the legislature has abdicated its responsibility to the courts. The courts have tried to do a fair job, but it should not be their responsibility. It would not be if we had a fair, transparent voter-focused process in place.

Many other people are enthusiastic about the prospect of a fair and transparent process. They are eager to put their name on the petition.

Then there are those who say that they do not believe it would make any difference or that they have given up on politics and politicians. They have lost any hope of change. Often people say they have stopped voting. Many in this group say that politicians have self-interest and retaining power as their primary goals and not the interests of the people.

You know well how the perennial process at the end of a session, where big decisions (and mistakes) are made behind closed doors, leaves voters feeling totally in the dark. Anything that you can do to make the political process, and especially our electoral process, more transparent will help to bring these folks back to believing that we really do have a democracy that involves them. In addition, you will make those of us who are engaged and want an open democracy very happy.

Please work together in bipartisan fashion to craft a redistricting plan, such as proposed by Rep. Klevorn, which everyone can see is open, fair and efficient in the creation of voting districts. We need you to begin the work of reestablishing more trust in our government and how decisions are made by and for WE THE PEOPLE. Redistricting reform would be a big step in that direction.

Gary C Fifield  
garyfifield@comcast.net  
Saint Paul (64B)

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I support redistricting reforms in Minnesota. I know we are better than most states, but I know we can make improvements.

We need to have voters be our first priority and not a special interest or the majority party.

We need politically feasible reforms that have a chance to become law.

I encourage the committee to work with Common Cause which has a national track record and resources to help.

Thanks,  
Mark Powell  
8058 Pennsylvania Rd  
Bloomington, MN 55438  
mark\_m\_powell@comcast.net

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Dear House Government Operations Committee:

I am writing in favor of your effort to define bipartisan voter-focused reforms regarding redistricting principles which put voters ahead of incumbents, party and special interests. I urge you do develop a bipartisan bill that has a good chance of being passed by the Senate. Please work with Common Cause Minnesota and their coalition to define redistricting principles that promote fair elections that are not biased in favor of one party or another. The setting of district boundaries should not be left to the Legislature. An independent commission made up of citizens and retired judges would be an excellent solution to ensure a fair, open, transparent and accountable redistricting process

Thank you for listening,  
*Ronald Bardal*  
1783 19<sup>th</sup> Terrace NW,  
New Brighton, MN 55112  
rbardal@hotmail.com

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Dear Members of the State Elections Subcommittee;

I am writing to you today as a constituent who hopes you will consider what I have to say as you meet on Wednesday in Austin at the hearing for Redistricting and the Census. As all are aware, we are living in extremely divisive and partisan times where many people are not only questioning the trustworthiness of Politicians, but of our Democracy itself. This is not only sad to me, but also concerning as I think about how citizen's loss of faith in our system of Government tends to hamper their involvement in it. Especially in their motivation to vote; which is the cornerstone of Democracy itself. So, as you discuss a bill for redistricting please keep in mind how the following principles could help people feel that they are truly a part of our Democracy and increase their sense of connection and commitment to it:

- 1) Bipartisan redistricting principles in which the voter's interests are placed above party or special interest groups.
- 2) Redistricting reforms that include and reflect all of the citizenry in our State...not just the few or those already holding public office.

3) Redistricting reforms that are politically feasible and have a chance to move through both the State House and Senate.

As a member of a non-partisan coalition working to ensure that every vote matters and that our elections are fair, I also ask that you work with and include the valuable input of Common Cause MN. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Emilie Hossick Schott  
612.203.9127  
ehossickschott@comcast.net

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Dear Reps. Dehn and Nelson, and Members of the Subcommittee on Elections,

I am writing to submit the following as testimony for the hearing that you will be holding on October 2, 2019.

The upcoming legislative session is likely the last that can substantively modify how redistricting proceeds after the 2020 census. How that redistricting is done will affect how MN voters are represented in State and Federal legislatures for a decade. Fair redistricting--i.e., redistricting which fairly reflects the composition of the electorate--is crucial to fair lawmaking of all types, including budgeting for community resources and services. Therefore, every Minnesotan has a critical stake in this process.

You are well aware that for 50 years, districts in MN have been drawn by the Courts because consensus could not be reached among the legislative branches and the Governor at any time in that period. As a result, our districts are more fairly drawn than those in many states, but they still show some evidence of gerrymandering. This surely shows that substantive change in the process is needed. In the upcoming redistricting we can and must do better procedurally; the redistricting results will be improved as a result.

The maps that are drawn, and ultimately approved by the legislature, must be designed in keeping with widely accepted principles of redistricting, as prioritized by community members as well as experts. Drawing of districts by a non-partisan commission, composed of members from both the legislature and the public, is known to be a fair and successful process. Rep. Klevorn introduced a bill to accomplish exactly this in the last session. The bill describes a commission and commission work, designed to be fair to all parties and offering undue support to no party or interest group. It is not a coincidence that the bill was developed by a large, community-based coalition, led by the non-partisan organization, Common Cause. I urge the Committee to endorse this bill, as you did last session, and to make sure it passes in the coming session.

There were competing bills in the previous session, but none had community support, assured a non-partisan result, or was politically feasible in the time frame needed. This is even truer for the coming session, when time is very tight to get a fair result. The bills that sought a constitutional

amendment are unlikely to succeed on that basis alone, given the very long odd of success of the amendment referendum process. The only amendments that do succeed have massive community support, which the competing redistricting bills do not.

Your Committee is key to the accomplishment of the goal of fair districts in MN after the 2020 Census. MN voters are counting on you to work with knowledgeable and established community coalitions to do what has to be done in the coming session to bring that about.

Thank you for your consideration.

Katherine Kaufer Christoffel  
3920 Excelsior Blvd  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416  
kathychristoffel@gmail.com

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I urge you to work with Common Cause MN and their coalition to identify reforms and redistricting principles that we can all support, regardless of party affiliation. These principles should put voters ahead of incumbents, parties, and special interests.

To be fair to all citizens, we need a citizen commission (not politicians) to draw the district lines.

Carol M. Duling  
1337 Prior Ave. South  
Saint Paul, MN 55116

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Honorable Chairs and Members of the Committee:

Election integrity begins with a complete Census count. It is critical that the collected data then be used to draw District maps which accurately reflect Minnesota voters. A transparent, open, and accountable redistricting process is necessary to accomplish this.

The redistricting process must be an inclusive, bipartisan effort. It must be voter-focused, putting Minnesota voters ahead of political parties, incumbents, and special interest groups.

By working with Common Cause and its coalition this Committee can create a bi-partisan redistricting bill which incorporates principles and reforms that are equitable for the people of MN. Additionally, a solid, bipartisan voter-focused bill will be better received in the Senate than one which is flawed by partisan politics and deference to incumbents and self-interest groups.

In closing, work with Common Cause to create a redistricting bill which will serve all Minnesotans by ensuring fair and accurate elections.



Please submit this as written testimony.

Respectfully,  
Catherine Engel  
444 Marnie Street S  
Maplewood, MN 55119  
cathengel1@gmail.com

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To Whom it May Concern:

RE: written testimony for the hearing of the Subcommittee on Elections about the census and redistricting.

I am a shaken Minnesota voter that has been spending the last three years working on what I call “core democracy” issues as a partial antidote (I hope) to the poisonous partisan divide and internationally-sourced election mischief-making that has injured our country.

Going back to basics and protecting the integrity of our vote and the fairness of the boundary-drawing process is the most fundamental step to insuring the fairness of our elections and restoring public faith in election integrity. So, you have your work cut out for you. Business as usual will not suffice

There are a host of election reforms that have been discussed and promoted by a coalition of “good government” organizations, led by Common Cause. I am writing to tell you that I support their work, and I support a process that emphasizes bipartisan, voter-focused reform that puts Minnesota voters ahead of incumbents, parties and special interests. Also, I am not interested in solely symbolic bills that stand little chance of being approved in the Republican-led Senate. This is an opportunity, not unlike the insulin reform effort, for our state to produce truly bipartisan reform. Genuine reform!

I urge you to use all your energy and skills to capitalize on this small window to get this accomplished.

Sincerely,  
slh

Susan Herridge  
306 West 52nd Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55419  
(612)990-3369  
sueherr@aol.com

P.S. I have been out door-knocking to garner petition signatures on this matter and I will

tell you, there is a high level of interest in election reform and anti-gerrymandering laws. In fact, I can barely complete an introductory sentence before the clipboard is snatched from my hand AND when at events, lines form of people that wish to sign. The electorate needs these reforms. You need to make the effort on our behalf.

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Partisan Gerrymandering is undemocratic, un-American, costly, and undermines the faith our citizens have in their elected officials. Both parties have done it and both parties will continue to do it unless we change the rules. In the USA every vote is supposed to be equal, whether rich or poor, white or black, democrat or republican or independent. But gerrymandered maps mean this is not true; and your voters know it. Recently while talking to Minnesotans about this issue, from Plymouth to Olmstead County, I have heard overwhelming disgust for the lack of respect politicians give their voters when you allow manipulated maps to disenfranchise us. Conservatives and liberals alike know that this is not the way it is supposed to work. We are also tired of the waste: Minnesota has already spent millions of dollars' worth of court fees and time when previous maps have been challenged in the MN Supreme Court, and we as voters are sick of it all.

I firmly support the vision of reform as put forth by Rep Ginny Klevorn. Her work with a broad coalition of bipartisan groups has led to an idea of a citizen redistricting commission, driven by principles that will make our districts more fair, more competitive, and more in keeping with the Democratic principles on which this country was founded. More competitive districts means more cooperation between politicians, as the fringe element of both parties will have a harder time carving out "safe" districts. Politicians would have to listen to ALL their constituents, not just their base. And isn't that why you all got into politics in the first place: to be a representative voice for the people of your district? Aren't you tired of the hyper-partisan games? I know the majority of Minnesotans are.

I know you can work together with each other and with groups like Common Cause MN to put forth politically feasible reforms, those that put voters ahead of incumbents or special interests.

Sincerely,  
Paul Bock  
9340 W 28<sup>th</sup> street  
St. Louis Park, MN 55426  
docbock@me.com

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I write to support creation of a redistricting commission, preferably one that includes citizens. The 2020 census should not provide an opportunity for partisan gerrymandering that warps election results in Minnesota for a decade. The state has been fortunate in the past that partisan disagreements about redistricting have led to judicial action to redraw boundaries that don't thwart the will of the voters in favor of either party. This background should provide a strong object lesson to representatives in both major parties that fair maps result from sources that don't wear partisan blinders. The leaders of the two major parties in the House should come together to create a plan

that has a chance of approval in the Senate. In that effort, they might fruitfully work with Common Cause MN and the redistricting coalition it has built.

Respectfully,  
David Miller  
5929 Sunrise Drive  
Minneapolis, MN 55419  
davem5929@gmail.com

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To Rep. Raymond Dehn (Committee Chair), Rep. Kristin Bahner (Vice Chair) and Rep. Nash (Republican Lead) and members of the committee:

I submit this written testimony for the public record of the hearing on the Census and Redistricting by the Subcommittee on Elections, to be held in Austin, MN on October 2, 2019.

A full and accurate 2020 census is critical for fair redistricting in the 2021 cycle. Faith in our Minnesota democracy depends on successful completion of both.

“Sorry, I’m here to enjoy the fireworks.” Accompanied by a stony gaze, this was the response from a man at the Stone Arch Bridge July 4th fireworks whom I approached, clipboard in hand, with a petition for redistricting reform. I also had a sign on my bike about declaring independence from partisan gerrymandering. It was my first time out petitioning and he was the first person with whom I spoke. Immediately filled with doubt about the wisdom of this particular choice of petitioning time and venue, I gulped hard and considered packing it in for the night.

Then I heard a woman nearby say, “Give me that clipboard, please. I’ll sign your petition. This is a really important issue.”

I pressed on with our coalition petition that proposes a commission of 9 citizens who would draw voting maps in a fair and transparent process. As I spoke with small groups on the bridge, people walked up behind me and waited to ask about my petition. I got 40 supporters. Then I left them in peace to enjoy the fireworks.

Fast forward to a day in August when a guy whizzed by me in the bike lane in downtown Minneapolis. I still had the sign on my bike. He had a sign on his back that read “MAGA. Trump 2020.” I caught up to him at a stoplight and we chatted about the weather as we rode side-by-side. Then he said “I really like the sign on your bike. Partisan gerrymandering drives me CRAZY!” We stopped at the next traffic light, I told him about the bill and our petition, and he said, “Sure, I’ll sign it!”

Now, we in this hearing room know that Minnesota hasn’t been gerrymandered as severely as other states and many other Minnesotans know this too. But that’s largely due to divided leadership and the fact that the redistricting has gone to the courts for most of the last 40 to 50 years. There’s nothing to say that significant partisan gerrymandering couldn’t happen here in

the future, with a single party in control. Every day Minnesotans of all parties with whom I've spoken absolutely hate that idea. It's an issue of basic fairness.

And there's another important issue of fairness to voters. A gentleman at a Rotary Club meeting asked me, "What about parties drawing lines to include or exclude incumbents?" We all know that it has happened and voters hate this as well, because it puts parties and incumbents first, ahead of voters and communities. This practice needs to be stopped.

I'm one volunteer in a multi-partisan coalition formed by Common Cause MN to pass voter-focused redistricting reforms in 2020. We support Rep. Klevorn's bill and the ongoing bipartisan process to come up with a bill that everyone can support. Coalition volunteers have petitioned at parades, farmers markets, county fairs, art fairs, National Night Out, and Open Streets. We've petitioned friends, co-workers, and neighbors at Book Clubs, dinners, and neighborhood gatherings. And we've door knocked in districts around the state, going up to any open door and dog-walker to ask for support and for feedback. We don't ask what party they are. I've talked with folks at doors in North Branch, Sartell, north Minneapolis, south Minneapolis, Plymouth, Burnsville, Brooklyn Park, Golden Valley and other suburbs. I've gotten lots of questions and feedback. Everyone loves the idea of a fully transparent process, with open records, communications and meetings. Sunshine is the best disinfectant. Some people love the idea of including independents/greens/unaffiliated voters as commissioners. Others aren't sure about that. Everyone has their reasons. I write them all down and share them for consideration in our multi-partisan collaboration on the bill.

Our online coalition petition now has nearly 3000 names. Our person-to-person paper petitioning has gathered more than 2500 names. We'll keep talking to voters and I hope you'll talk to us so that we can work together to pass real redistricting reform in 2020.

This is not the time for partisan posturing or symbolic efforts. It's the time for true reform. Minnesotans need to have faith in our voting maps for decades to come.

Thank you very much for your time and for your service.

Respectfully,  
Deborah Zvosec  
Minneapolis, MN  
dzvosec@gmail.com

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To Rep. Raymond Dehn (Chair), Rep. Kristin Bahner (Vice-Chair), Rep. Jim Nash (Republican lead) and members of the Subcommittee:

I submit this as written testimony for the public record regarding the Oct. 2 hearing of the Subcommittee on Elections, on the subject of the census and redistricting.

I have been out to many public functions gathering signatures for the proposed bipartisan redistricting reform bill sponsored by Rep. Ginny Klevorn. Minnesotans enthusiastically support this and eagerly sign the petition.

This bill puts voters first, ahead of partisan interests, special interests, and ahead of the interests of the legislators. It is supported by a broad grassroots coalition. It is a politically feasible bill, not just a symbolic one; it has a very good chance of passage in the legislature and of being signed by the Governor.

It is critical for the future of Minnesota politics to eliminate any partisan or incumbent gerrymandering. That's what this bill does. It outlines a specific process for choosing a committee, has provisions for open and transparent debate, and is governed by important redistricting principles.

Please support this bill and pass real redistricting reforms for Minnesota voters.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your attention to this important issue.

Respectfully,  
Steve Smith  
Minneapolis, MN  
smith253@gmail.com

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To the Subcommittee on Elections,

I write to report on the earful of anger and armfuls of eager signatures I've recorded as I petition around Minnesota (from Sartell to St. Paul to Faribault, thus far) gathering support for a public-member, multi-partisan commission to replace party-controlled drawing of legislative district maps.

Our representatives don't yet fully appreciate their voters' disdain over this self-dealing practice (by both parties) and the degree to which voters expect a solution this year—before the 2021 redistricting process starts. These voters want reform that constitutionally places them before incumbent, party and powerful/monied interest groups. When people open their doors and learn that a multy-party coalition, led by nonpartisan Common Cause of Minnesota, has built a solution gathered through hearings all over the state, they typically can't sign fast enough. Currently that solution comes in the form of Rep. Ginny Klevorn's bipartisan bill to establish a statewide, citizen-comprised, legislature-vetted, and Secretary of State supervised commission all conducting its work under a shared set of redistricting principles.

THIS session is the window to come together and support substantive legislation over symbolic bills that can't pass in the opposing chamber. Neither party should

overestimate its chances for redistricting control in 2020 nor underestimate its ability to further alienate voters who object to any hand on the scale—left or right.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Gail Helland  
Minneapolis  
651-274-8230  
gail@hellandhoven.com

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Minnesota legislators and governors have a long history of not being able to reach bi-partisan consensus on redistricting principles. Repeated impasses between the legislature and the governor's office has forced the judicial branch of government to draw the lines. This is hardly the preferred course of action.

It seems obvious to me that a point of agreement for both Democrats and Republicans would be to give fair representation to every citizen in the state of MN. I am writing to ask the subcommittee on elections to make every effort in the upcoming legislative session to pass a process for redistricting that will empower every citizen to have their voice heard.

I am aware that Common Cause MN, Minnesota Citizens for Clean Elections, The League of Women Voters and other organizations represent a significant number of MN citizens concerned about democracy. I recommend you seek good counsel from these organizations in crafting a redistricting process that can be passed in both the House and Senate.

Gilbert J. Gustafson  
994 Livingston Ave.  
West St. Paul, MN 55118  
gustafsong55102@yahoo.com

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To Members of the Subcommittee on Elections:

I write in strong support of Rep. Ginny Klevorn's redistricting reform bill, which would establish a commission of carefully vetted citizens responsible for drawing voting maps in a fair and transparent manner. Through my conversations with average Minnesotans in places as different as Golden Valley and St. Cloud, it is clear this state's voters are eager for change. They are concerned with what happened in Wisconsin following the last census and gladly signed a petition expressing their support for bi-partisan redistricting principles and other reforms that put the needs of Minnesota voters ahead of the needs of incumbents, parties and special interests.

Now is the time for the legislature to act. Failure to pass a meaningful, politically feasible redistricting reform bill this session means Minnesotans will need to live with the consequences of our current process for the next decade. Legislators on both sides of the aisle should be in favor of having fair maps drawn in an open process.

Sincerely,  
Ann Minnick  
2401 Girard Ave. So. #4  
Minneapolis, MN 55405  
amminnick@gmail.com

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To Rep. Raymond Dehn and members of the Subcommittee on Elections:

Please accept this written testimony for the public record as part of the Oct 2, 2019 hearing on the census and redistricting.

This summer I spoke to hundreds of Minnesotans about partisan gerrymandering. As a member of a group working on redistricting reform, I engaged my fellow citizens at town parades, farmers' markets and other public events. Most knew what gerrymandering is and the rest got it quickly with a brief explanation. A few cynics waved me off saying, "Good luck with that." But virtually no one thought gerrymandering was ok.

People wanted to discuss how exactly we might guard against gerrymandering. How would members of a redistricting commission be chosen? Would the commission actually be less partisan than our current redistricting system? How can independents and small party members participate? Could the public have meaningful input to district maps or would they remain the product of powerful insiders?

We also discussed what I've learned about redistricting commissions in other states—that their work has led to less litigation around voting maps and fewer races in which a major party candidate is uncontested.

I am not starry eyed about the wonders of democracy, but I am encouraged after all these conversations with civic minded strangers. Most Minnesotans are not cynics, and we want and expect our legislature to protect our voting rights. I hope members of this subcommittee will support a redistricting bill such as *HF 1605* so that it can pass early in the upcoming session.

Susan Cushman  
2415 Vale Crest Rd

Golden Valley, MN 55422  
612-741-8740  
s.cushman@comcast.net

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To whom it may concern,

I believe that Governor Walz's message of One Minnesota would be strengthened by supporting Representative Ginny Klevorn's bill to establish a citizens redistricting commission. Pulling together citizens from urban and rural districts to draw their boundaries will be a great example of bipartisan cooperation in a time where our House and Senate are split.

I have knocked on doors in cities like Burnsville where politics seems more purple than red or blue. I did not find a door that would turn us away with unpleasantness. Instead, I found neighbors who would listen to ideas about free and fair representation. Citizens that stood outside with strangers to hear about how their name on a petition could prevent a danger to democracy. For me, this is evidence that the people will support changes made to halt any threats partisanship may throw their way.

Uphold fair and free elections and work with your counter parts on either side of the isle to show the people the vision of One Minnesota.

Sincerely,  
Luke Varien  
lvarien@gmail.com

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I'm submitting this written testimony for the public record of the October 2 hearing of the Subcommittee on Elections, to be held in Austin, MN.

Testimony of Jon Erik Kingstad in Support of Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Reform

I've been working with Common Cause Minnesota and a coalition of citizens of both parties to adopt legislation or a Constitutional Amendment or both that will prevent partisan gerrymandering in Minnesota. I'm concerned about the trend appearing in many States like Wisconsin and North Carolina where legislatures dominated by one party has abused its power to redraw legislative and Congressional districts that favor that party's electoral advantage. Minnesota has stayed out of that trend of the more blatant forms of partisan gerrymandering but I've learned that the districts which have been drawn over the last 40 years have not been drawn according to any principles but reflect pragmatic compromises between the two political parties. The last two efforts at legislative redrawing of these maps ended in the Courts.



Blatant partisan gerrymandering was avoided by district boundary changes that made the least change from prior boundaries.

That's why I'm asking this committee to support the bill authored by Rep. Ginny Klevorn, introduced in the last 2019 legislative session as HF 1605. HF 1605 embodies a basic principle of one person-one vote that our courts have recognized as a basic Constitutional guarantee. It defines other principles which a redistricting commission must follow in redrawing districts without regard to previous district boundaries. This bill places voter interests ahead of the interests of special interests, political parties or candidates.

Not everyone agrees that HF 1605 is the answer. But it does establish redistricting principles that places voters ahead of parties and candidates and also creates a redistricting commission that makes the redistricting transparent and accountable. I'd urge you to work with Common Cause Minnesota and the coalition of voters of both parties to agree to a bill that preserves and has a real chance of passing the Republican majority in the Senate.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Jon Erik Kingstad  
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Amanda, I am writing to you in your role as House Subcommittee on Elections Administrator, in hopes you will pass along to the representatives in the Mn House that this voter's bottom line is a fair, open, transparent and accountable redistricting process. I'd so like to see the interests of the MN voters placed first in consideration, ahead of partisan politics or special interests. Please ask the legislators to work with Common Cause MN and the coalition to come up with reforms and redistricting principles that we can all support. Most importantly, ask them to please talk creatively across the aisle, so what is put for a vote is reality-based and will thus appeal to most in both houses.

Thank you for all you do every day for this great state of ours!

Julie Palmer  
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I submit this written testimony for the public record of the October 2, 2019 hearing of the Subcommittee on Elections in Austin, MN.

This summer I have been soliciting support for a nonpartisan citizen's redistricting committee as detailed in the bill sponsored by Representative Ginny Klevorn last session. Over 5,000 Minnesotans gone on record to support for such legislation on our petition. They are tired of legislative gridlock and gerrymandering. They want an open and transparent process of setting districts so that each vote counts.

I hope you will make it a priority to pass such legislation in the upcoming session.

Respectfully yours,  
Judith Kashtan  
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To Whom It May Concern:

I submit this written testimony for the public record of the October 2 hearing of the Subcommittee on Elections held in Austin, Minnesota:

I am a Minnesota citizen, and citizen volunteer who has spent the last couple of years trying to protect our democracy by strengthening each voter's voice. A legitimate and accurate census count that includes all people residing in Minnesota, and the consequential redistricting seem to me to be a good start of the process.

I have spent tireless (and tire-ful) hours of my retirement doorknocking, talking to legislators at the Capitol, and collecting petition signatures of voters throughout Minnesota to support fair redistricting reform. Engaging in these activities emphasize the importance of our citizenry's involvement with those who represent us in government.

I experienced a conversation with a gentleman who at first didn't even want to talk to me, but I asked a few questions and listened. He was quite knowledgeable and revealed the discouragement he felt with redistricting reform ("it's been tried, they can't agree on anything in the legislature anymore"). He thought that redistricting should happen with a public commission. Another eligible voter wasn't sure it mattered that he voted: the results in their districts wouldn't change because "the incumbent had the vote locked up". A woman who had taught many years in the public schools in St. Paul disclosed living her young adulthood in Spain's Franco era and Chile's Pinochet era, and felt similar fears for our election process. Many folks already knew about potential gerrymandering of a more partisan legislature doing redistricting work behind closed doors. All of these Minnesotans want and hope for a better redistricting and election system that involves their voice, and signed my petition for reform.

I ask our representation to support politically actionable multi-partisan redistricting reform by working with Common Cause MN and their coalition. They are working on reform based on

Rep. Ginny Klevorn's reform bill supporting a public commission to oversee the process. This reform should include redistricting principles that put voters before incumbent, party and special interest groups. The end result may not be perfect, but a fair map is a good goal.

Thank you for your time and service.

Respectfully,  
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Over the last several years, I've thought a lot about democracy and how we as citizens choose our representation. At the root of it, I believe that one person should have one vote, and that they should all be counted with equal weight. Because of that, I support a full census count and voter-focused redistricting reform.

Minnesota has been lucky in the past to escape the worst of the ravages of gerrymandering, but the process we've accidentally ended up with has been contentious and expensive. As Minnpost reminded us today, in 2010 the difference between single party control and Wisconsin-style gerrymandering, and a divided government and court-drawn maps, was 9000 votes, a drop in the bucket of the state totals. This next cycle, it could go the other way, or a divided Legislature could fight about it, lose valuable legislation time, and end up with the whole mess in the courts again. Neither option is fair to the voters or the state as a whole.

I support Common Cause's principles for any reform effort.. 1. Direct and equal participation of public members as commissioners AND 2. Establishment of an advisory commission directly or as a backup in the case that a constitutional amendment fails to pass AND 3. An open and honest process AND 4. Redistricting principles putting Minnesotans first - Ahead of self/partisan and special interest.

I hope the committee will agree with me and thousands of other Minnesotans that while Minnesota is blessed with a great elections system in many respects, with reform based on principles that put voters first, we can truly have a system to brag about.

In a suitably humble Minnesotan sort of way, of course.

Thank you.  
Sarah Keuper  
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Dear Chairman Dehn: This testimony is submitted for the public record of the October 2, 2019, hearing of the House Subcommittee on Elections.

For the past year, I have immersed myself in learning the business of redistricting in Minnesota and its relationship to the U.S. Census. By “business,” I mean the history, theory, practice, and obfuscation of how districts can be redrawn with too little regard for the voters who live in them.

I’ve learned three things in the process.

1. **Drawing perfectly acceptable district lines is impossible, even in a perfect world devoid of partisanship.** Redistricting involves complex calculations, the vagaries of geography and history, and the inherent conflict between statistics and individuality. Once voters are aggregated into bloc of contiguous votes, not everyone can be pleased with the outcome.

Still, we can improve the process we have.

2. **Behind the curtain, Minnesota’s redistricting process is a mess.** Divided government and state court rulings have protected voters from the more grievous excesses of gerrymandering. But that’s no reason to be complacent.

I’ve spoken with former partisans who served in the thick of past redistricting battles. “Everything is done from the beginning with an eye toward litigation,” an operative told me. He predicted lawsuits were already being prepared for challenges to maps yet undrawn in 2021. This Machiavellian process has recently been exposed nationally with the publishing of memos from Thomas Hofeller, the “Michelangelo of gerrymandering.”

My conversations described legislators, caucus leaders, and their consultants working every angle to come up with maps that derive greatest advantage for their party and create disadvantage for the other side. They called the redistricting process murky, chaotic, wasteful, emotional, and petty. With the microphones and the cameras turned off, incumbents might say the same thing themselves.

3. **Increasingly, voters see the game and they hate it.** I’ve talked redistricting to hundreds of regular citizens at farmer’s markets, fairs and other civic events. Citizens may not understand in detail how their districts are drawn, but most know about the excesses and consider them undemocratic. They know both sides have manipulated the maps, and they suspect both sides will resist reform because they still want to draw them the old way.

As a result, many voters don’t believe government and elected representatives put them first. When voters lose trust, politics gets worse. Eventually, election outcomes become the result of war or apathy.

The voices I heard this summer want the Census to be an honest count that can guide government, business and academia, as well as redistricting. They want to make registration and polls accessible and ensure elections are secure. These are attitudes held by people of all political stripes.

This is why I hope the Minnesota legislature can agree to reform our redistricting process along the lines of HF 1605, establishing a multi-partisan independent commission, chosen for balance, guided by clear principles, operating transparently, and insulated from backdoor political influence.

Electoral reform would be a great place to demonstrate constructive bipartisanship and restore a measure of trust in the legislature.

Respectfully,  
Charlie Quimby  
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