

House Redistricting Committee Public Testimony
“Our U.S. Democracy Requires Protection from Anti-Democratic Groups”
Janette Dean of CD 1

Good morning, Madam Chair Murphy and Committee Members:

I am Janette Dean from Caledonia, MN in Houston County and am a La Crescent High School graduate. I also fondly remember the privilege of being a page one year at the Minnesota Legislature while in high school. I now work on environmental policy and human rights as well as social movements and social change using my dual degree in Political Science and Sociology as an alumna of the University of Southern California and the University of Nevada-Reno.

Like many people, I believe in the benefits of a well-balanced mixed economy that combines both public and private enterprise with two other crucial elements: 1) strong regulatory oversight to prevent what is called “regulatory capture” of our government’s legislative, executive and judicial branches at the federal and state levels; and 2) better rules and enforcement of ethics in government against those who choose to abuse their office and our democracy for private benefit over public benefit.

Today, September 15, is, in fact, our [United Nations’ International Day of Democracy](#) which began to be observed in 2007, and – as your work today and forward includes redistricting which significantly impacts our elections and, therefore, our entire democracy and people’s lives and well-being – I would like you to know that the UN website at UN.org explains that today’s International Day of Democracy, and I quote:

“provides an opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world. Democracy is as much a process as a goal, and only with the full participation of and support by the international community, national governing bodies, civil society and individuals, can the ideal of democracy be made into a reality to be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.”

It furthermore states, that “The values of freedom, respect for human rights and the principle of holding periodic and genuine elections by universal suffrage are essential elements of democracy. In turn, democracy provides the natural environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights. These values are embodied in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and further developed in the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), which enshrines a host of political rights and civil liberties underpinning meaningful democracies.”

And I will add that includes free and fair elections.

So, today I ask that do your best now and forward to make sure we have fair and inclusive electoral maps all across our state to correct and/or prevent the unfair political advantage of gerrymandering in any Minnesota Congressional Districts including in my own Congressional District 1 and also nearby District 2 which you are discussing today.

While I know that we in CD1 have lost population with respect to the ideal size of congressional district maps, I hope that in the future our population will continue to grow further, particularly with regenerative and sustainable “neighborhood food hubs” that would create employment for many and which are part of the Minnesota Legislature’s important [Headwaters Community Food & Water Bill](#).

In going back to achieving fair redistricting, I have learned and wish to share that:

- 1) We must have districts that are equal in population by 1% or less to provide every Minnesotan fair power in voting
- 2) We must create maps that elect public officials that reflect the diversity of Minnesota and prevent districts from being drawn to divide or concentrate minority groups, including Black people, Indigenous people, People of Color, racial groups, ethnic groups, or members of a language minority group.
- 3) We must avoid districts from being drawn using the home addresses of incumbents or candidates for public office or give an advantage or disadvantage to any political party/candidate.
- 4) We must prevent gerrymandered districts that are not convenient for the voters who live there; a convenient district means a person can travel across the whole district without ever leaving it.

I would also like to remind everyone that while fair redistricting can protect our democratic process, our CD1 and CD2 Elections in 2020 were severely undermined by third-party candidates as well whose motives and decisions to run were proven to have been made in collusion in CD2 and suspected to have been made in collusion in CD1 with members of the Republican Party for their unfair political advantage which, of course, harms all residents in a district through corrupt acts. Redistricting cannot solve that crucial problem which hurts all of a district’s residents, voters, volunteers and communities through corruption, and so we in Minnesota and across the country need to find better ways to prevent ungentrified third-party candidates in Minnesota and other states, too, who are encouraged to run by any other party for their own advantage in election outcomes.

Thank you again, Madam Chair & Committee Members.