

Peter S. Wattson Testimony
House Redistricting Committee
September 13, 2021

Madame Chair, Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon! My name is Peter Wattson. I live in Shorewood, in Congressional District 3, Senate District 33, and House District 33B.

As you know, I am the lead plaintiff in the case, *Peter S. Wattson and others v. Steve Simon, Secretary of State*. I appear today on behalf of the *Wattson* plaintiffs.

In February of this year, the *Wattson* plaintiffs asked the Minnesota Supreme Court to appoint a Special Redistricting Panel to draw congressional and legislative districts if the legislature failed to do so. In June, the Supreme Court did. The parties in the case are now negotiating principles for the Special Redistricting Panel to use in drawing districts. Oral argument on principles is set for November 3. The deadline for submitting plans has not been set.

Thank you for listening to our recommendations on how the legislature might draw those districts, so the Special Redistricting Panel need not.

Last Tuesday, September 7, the *Wattson* plaintiffs posted on the website of the League of Women Voters Minnesota our recommendation for congressional districts based on the 2020 Census. We sent you a copy of our press release, which linked to maps and reports on the plan, which we call 2022 PW 8C05. We have solicited comments from the public and intend to modify the plan, as necessary, in response to those comments before submitting it to the Panel.

This is the fourth congressional plan you have seen from us. The earlier plans were based on 2018 and 2019 population estimates. On January 17 of this year, I sent the committee a congressional map based on 2018 State Demographer population estimates, but without any election results. (Congress 2018, 8 Districts.) On February 2, I sent the same map with election results from 2012 to 2018. (2022 PW 8C01.) On May 18, I sent maps based on 2019 State Demographer population estimates and election results through 2020. (2022 PW 8C03.)

Likewise, we have sent you two legislative plans based on 2018 and 2019 population estimates. The first, based on the State Demographer's 2018 population estimates, with election results from 2012 to 2018, was sent in February. (2022 PW L02S, Feb. 4; 2022 PW L02H, Feb. 8.) The second, based on population estimates from 2019 and election results through 2020, was sent in May. (2022 PW L04S; 2022 PW L04H, May 18.)

Our senate plan based on the 2020 Census is out for review by my fellow plaintiffs. The

house plan will follow after we agree on the senate plan. We will provide it to you when it is ready.

The plans we will present to the Special Redistricting Panel will all be “least change” plans. That is, they will change the current district boundaries, the ones used for the 2020 election, only as necessary to meet the constitutional requirement that their populations be equal. The legislature has authority to get creative in drawing new districts every ten years. A court does not.

That is why, when you look at the plans drawn by the *Wattson* plaintiffs for presentation to the court, you will see they look a lot like the current districts, except that rural districts are larger and urban districts are smaller. The average new district retains 94% of the voting-age population of its current district.

This least-change approach also means only small changes to the partisan lean of the districts. The 4th and 5th districts are still safe for Democrats and minorities, the 6th and 7th still strong for Republicans, and the 1st, 2nd, and 8th districts are still competitive.

The most significant change is in the 3rd district, which still favors the Democrats but may no longer be competitive for a Republican. That is a consequence of the Democratic-leaning city of Anoka being added to the 3rd district from the 6th, while the Republican-leaning areas of Carver County and southwest Hennepin County are subtracted from the 3rd district and added to the 6th.

With the small changes being made by this plan, we encourage you to seriously consider enacting it at a special session this fall. That would give candidates an earlier start on organizing their campaigns, give election administrators more time to redraw precinct and ward boundaries, and relieve the Special Redistricting Panel of having to do it for you on February 15, 2022.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you for your time.