

**Date: October 14, 2021**

**TO: MN House Committee on Redistricting & Rep. Mary Murphy, Chair**

**FROM: Debra and Michael Benkovich, 2362 Fawn Hill Court, Chanhassen, MN 55317**

**RE: Redistricting Eastern Carver County**

Dear House Redistricting Committee:

Thank you for the time and effort that you are putting forth to ensure that the redistricting process in Minnesota is fair and transparent and reflects a commitment to non-partisan collaboration that emphasizes neutrality and respects the principles that have guided redistricting in our state historically.

It appears from the dialogue and discussion pertaining to the issue of redistricting that there is an attempt by some to embrace a “one size fits all” mentality where districts would potentially radiate from a central locus point, in this case being the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Historically, districts have focused on being compact in order to effectively meet the individual needs of the citizens residing within them. It is critically important that the needs of all are valued and that they are given a meaningful voice when it comes to the issues and legislation that will impact them.

The issues and interests pertaining to Western Hennepin County and Eastern Carver County are unique. They are communities with their own individual needs that, in many cases, are distinctly different from the Twin Cities and the surrounding first ring suburbs. For instance, according to 2020 Census data, Carver County which currently has a population of 106,922 people grew by 17.4%. Nearby Scott County houses 150,928 residents and grew by 16.2%.

This type of growth presents both opportunities and challenges that must be addressed by the stakeholders involved. Fast growing areas such as Carver County will need to actively address the demands that such expansion creates. Issues pertaining to roads and infrastructure, addressing the impact of a growing school population, and managing the planning and growth of neighborhoods are all critically important for local leaders to address. How can growth be effectively managed to ensure safety, quality of life, environmental issues and the myriad of other challenges that may arise?

The impact of this growth is practically on our doorstep with new homes being built just around the corner from us, with the biggest development taking place on Galpin Boulevard. The untimely passing of Minnesota’s rock legend, Prince, presented our local leaders with a significant challenge. Once his enormous land holdings in Chanhassen were sold, the Chanhassen City Council and Mayor had to work together to cultivate a plan that would create a new neighborhood that would add hundreds of homes. It was essential that this new development reflect the community’s values when it came to creating a plan that respected the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods, carefully examined issues pertaining to traffic and safety, prioritized environmental responsibility as well as quality of life issues related to parks and walking paths.

The success of this development is but one example of why it is important for districts to be compact. Local governments need to be able to advocate and answer to the citizens that they serve. The Twin Cities and first ring suburbs have issues and interests that are unique to them. The outer ring suburban areas and rural areas also have distinct individual needs that are just as important and their rights to representation must be respected.

On the national level we have observed a “winner takes all” mentality that has created mistrust and fomented unprecedented divisiveness. It is our hope that Minnesota can serve as a model of fairness, logic and neutrality when it comes to redistricting our beloved state.

Sincerely,

Debra and Michael Benkovich