

13 October 2021

Dear Chair Murphy and Committee Members,

RE: Principles for Achieving Fair Redistricting

Thank you for your service. Trust in democracy depends on fair voting and fair voting depends on fair districts.

In our representative democracy, elections begin not with voting, but with the geographic district the voter is assigned to. As you well know, your current work is the first and perhaps most important step in assuring fair elections.

I endorse the following redistricting principles in order of priority.

- 1) Districts must comply with applicable federal and state laws.
- 2) Equal population. The population of a legislative district must not deviate from the ideal by more than one percent, plus or minus.
- 3) Compact, contiguous, convenient districts - The opposite of gerrymandering. If done by computer GIS modeling or a truly independent commission, even better.
- 4) A county, city, town, or tribal reservation must not be unduly divided unless required to meet equal population requirements or to form districts composed of compact, contiguous, or convenient territory.
- 5) A district must not be drawn purposely to favor or disfavor any political party, sitting legislator, candidate, or political group. This is a useful to help in a court case if the first four are not followed.

Relying primarily on geographic compactness best removes suspicions caused by gerrymandering. Attempts to identify and preserve non-geographic boundaries such as communities of interest are always flawed. The arrogance of sorting humans into communities by some “identifiable” trait denies human complexity and will always add suspicion to the redistricting process based on that group’s perceived political bent.

The constitution rightly restricts anyone from being denied a right to representation through “negative” gerrymandering. The constitution does not imply that every perceived group or community is guaranteed representation or should be given special voting assistance through “positive” gerrymandering. Good and evil-intentioned gerrymandering have an equally bad effect of reducing faith in the entire voting system.

Respectfully,

Thomas Kroll
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