

Chair Murphy, Vice Chair Klevorn, Lead Torkelson and members of the Redistricting Committee, good morning and thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Mark Liebow and I'm a semi-retired internist. I live in Rochester, the largest city in the 1st Congressional District, and have for almost 28 years. I want to testify about drawing legislative districts in Olmsted County.

Thirty years ago, the redistricting of the 1990s created a Senate district that was almost exclusively in Rochester when the population of Rochester was a few thousand more than was needed for a Senate district. The Senator and both Representatives from that district were quite attentive to the needs of the city and its people over the next decade. However, in 2001, the then-mayor of Rochester asked that Rochester, which had grown by 15000 people in the decade and so was the size of 1.2 Senate districts, be split in half in the hopes of having two Senators responsive to the needs of the city. It wasn't inherently a bad idea, but in hindsight, it backfired. More importantly, it split communities of interest. Most of the minority populations in southeast Minnesota live in Rochester and unlike some other cities, they are not concentrated in a neighborhood or two close-by neighborhoods. Splitting Rochester in half diluted their ability to elect representatives of their choice or to advocate effectively for their interests, especially in the state Senate. Duluth, the other regional center city whose population is more that that needed for a Senate district, is predominantly in one Senate district, with a small amount of the city overflowing into an adjacent district.

Fortunately, remedying this has become easier. Rochester has continued to grow briskly, with 35,600 more people than six years ago. It's just about 6300 people short having enough people for three House districts, so any redistricting that doesn't just split the city in half again will help give Rochester a Senator whose focus is on the city. However, to best accommodate communities of color, which are largely in the northwest and southeast parts of the city, combining the successors to House Districts 26A and 25B into a Senate district will do that.

The current Senate Districts 25 and 26 between them cover Olmsted County while Senate District 25 also has 14875 people in Dodge County. Both those Senate districts have more people than the ideal population for a district. All other districts in southeast Minnesota have too few so it would be reasonable to give up territory at the east and west ends of these two. However, Kasson is increasingly becoming a bedroom suburb of Rochester, so it makes sense to keep Kasson and nearby Mantorville, which are in Mantorville Township, in a district that includes Olmsted County. That House district, most likely the successor to 25A could also become the district of most of the smaller cities and rural townships in Olmsted County, a community of interest, while leaving two House districts completely in Rochester and a fourth that would be made up of some of southern Rochester, Stewartville, and adjacent townships. These would be contiguous and relatively compact.

Thank you again for letting me testify today.