

Koy Kunkel_SC

From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
Sent: Tuesday, December 29, 2020 9:47 AM
To: Senate Redistricting
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input

Date: 2020-12-29
First Name: Eva
Last Name: Silverfine Ott
Title: N/A
Organization: Self
Address: [REDACTED]
City: San Marcos
State: Texas
Zipcode: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: ALL

Message:

Dear Members of the Senate Select Committee on Redistricting,

I am writing to you today because I feel passionately about the need for fair representation in our electoral process. Too many voters are disenfranchised because they and their communities are not being represented by their representatives.

I live in Congressional District 21, Texas Senate District 25, and Texas House District 23. Of these, only House District 23 is coherent, following county line rules. The other two districts disregard communities of interest and established jurisdictions (cities and counties). So, for example, it clearly would make sense for Senate District 25 to include counties along the I-35 corridor (e.g., Hays, Comal, and Guadalupe), avoiding splitting cities such as Kyle, San Marcos, and Seguin, and to move Kendall County into District 24, with which it shares more commonalities.

Even worse is U.S. District 21, with its spindly eastward extension to mirror the spindly District 35. Whereas a solid block of rural counties could be grouped, this district now splits several cities along the I-35 corridor as well as mixes these urban areas and fast-growing nonurban areas, such as where I live in Comal County, with still largely rural counties. The result is that geographically and demographically defined segments of these districts have no voice representing their particular concerns and values.

There is no mystery in why these contorted districts exist. Gerrymandering is not new to politics, but technological advances in mapping and accessing voter registration records have raised it to a fine art. So now, instead of voters choosing the individuals they want to represent them, the legislators are choosing their constituents so that they can retain their seat: the only contest, if there is one, is within party during the primaries.

I am writing to ask for a fair redistricting process, including the following:

1. Hold hearings on maps after they have actually been drawn. Any fair and open process should include the ability for public comment before a map is passed to a final vote of the legislature.

2. Allow enough time at these hearings for other legislators and the public to introduce alternative map suggestions.
3. Don't look at partisan data (data showing which political party people vote for) while drawing maps.
4. Explain how the maps were drawn, why there are deviations from traditional redistricting principles, including county and precinct splits and population deviations. Given Texas's history of racial discrimination and Voting Rights Act violations, an explanation of how a map affects the ability of minority communities to elect candidates of their choice is especially important.
5. Make all communications regarding proposed maps open. Any map considered should have a fully transparent history regarding how and why it was created.

I truly believe that fair representation would go a long way toward advancing the well-being of our state and healing our nation. We have become cynical and distrustful about our elections.

People need to feel that the process has been fair. A fair and open process of drawing maps would go toward restoring faith in the electoral process.

Near the capitol building I've read a quote from the first constitution of the State of Texas:

"All political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority and instituted for their benefit." It is time for the Texas legislature to live up to that directive.

Sincerely,

Eva M. Silverfine Ott

[REDACTED]
San Marcos, Texas [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]