

From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
To: [Senate Redistricting](#)
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input
Date: Sunday, September 26, 2021 3:26:30 PM

Date: 2021-09-26
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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: ALL

Message:

My name is Dianne Reece, writing as a citizen and a representative of the First Unitarian Universalist Church Houston Social Justice team. Two of our defining principles of faith -- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations, and the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process demands we advocate on behalf of the voters disenfranchised by gerrymandering. And yet, year after year, session after session, the Legislature turns a deaf ear to the voices of its citizens and communities with a fair and open process in redistricting. It snubs warnings by courts and spends millions on lawsuits defending its gerrymandering. When 66% of the Legislature can be defined before the first vote is cast in general election, the legitimacy of Texas governance becomes questionable.

As Americans we must strive to uphold the Rule of Law where no one is above the law, everyone is treated equally under the law, everyone is held accountable to the same laws, there are clear and fair processes for enforcing laws, there is an independent judiciary, and human rights are protected. These are features that flow partly from the fact that laws are supposed to guide conduct. This is why Unitarian Universalists, as people of faith, stand on the principle of justice, equity and compassion in all human relations.

The most important demand of the Rule of Law is that people in positions of authority should exercise their power within a constraining framework of well-established public norms rather than in an arbitrary, ad hoc, or purely discretionary manner on the basis of their own preferences or ideology. It insists that the government should operate within a framework of law in everything it does, and that it should be accountable through law when there is a suggestion of unauthorized action by those in power.

The 2021 redistricting process of Texas legislative maps certainly is one which demands judiciary review of being guided by the Rule of Law. Not only were the maps drawn by a political party only intent on preserving its political power but it significantly curtailed the process by which individuals could question the outcomes these maps create. Two days of in-person only testimony after the maps release, and not including any process for redrawing the maps after public comment certain brings into question a clear, equitable and fair process for creating them.

Secondly, Redistricting solidifies voting districts for ten years, until the next census. The legislators are tasked with ensuring that these districts are drawn fairly and with transparency, so that the new districts have nearly equal populations and do not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity.

As First UU's Community of Interest demonstrates Western Harris/Ft. Bend County was sliced and diced apart to prevent new, high growth communities of color from having a voice in SD 17. In particular, it splits apart new Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Communities of interest and further cuts across western Houston to include a rural district which has little in common with our urban area. First UU's social justice programs respond to the 'no-

voice status' of diverse constituents – advocating for access to healthcare, education funding, homelessness, food insecurity, not to mention flooding – topics which Republicans give little heed by the lack of an equitable voice in the legislature.

In my justice, equity and compassion-based world, what is realized is that no one person or faction has the only answer. Leaders solicit input from many stakeholders to improve decision-making. This creates legitimacy in governance – fair competition of ideas – not distribution based on partisanship. As an individual belonging to a community of faith that seeks fairness in our practice of democracy, I urge the Legislature to draw maps that are fair, competitive, and represent all Texans. The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston citizens of this great State hold you accountable to a higher standard - the Rule of Law – and demand better governance than this.

Respectfully,
Dianne Reece

