

Monday, September 6, 2021, 2021 1:30 pm
KU School of Business
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Chair and members of the Redistricting Committee

My name is Charley Crabtree. I am a Board Member of the League of Women Voters of Lawrence and Douglas County. I have lived in Lawrence for the past 52 years. Our League, along with many other Leagues in our State, plus nearly two dozen additional groups have been actively studying and advocating for a Redistricting map that accurately represents the varied make-up of our state population. Our concern focuses on Kansas' Third District containing the most dense population in the state.

In my oral remarks I will focus on my particular interest in:

- The Federal Court's decision.
- Recognizing economic, political, cultural, environmental and educational differences.
- Preserving Communities of Interest.

The following are the points I wish to address in this written presentation:

- Federal Court ruling on fair maps.
- Economic, Political and Cultural differences.
- Communities of Interest.
- Educational differences.

THE FEDERAL COURT'S DECISION:

We agree with the **Federal Court ruling** in 2012 creating legislative and congressional districts for Kansas. The Court's ruling agreed with all of the recommended plans presented by all interested parties that the **entirety** of Wyandotte and Johnson Counties should be included in the Third District. Those counties have formed the core of the Third District for decades, and as the Court concluded in O'Sullivan, they should **stay** in that same district because they represent the Kansas portion of greater Kansas City, a major socio-economic unit whose economic, political and cultural ties are significantly greater than their differences. The Court also agrees with O'Sullivan that Wyandotte County should be placed in a **single district** so that the voting power of its large minority population may not be diluted. The Court's ruling also stated that placing Wyandotte and Johnson Counties in the **same congressional district** maintains the voting strength of the minority population of Wyandotte County and most effectively furthers state goals of creating compact and contiguous districts, preserving existing districts, maintaining county and municipal boundaries and grouping together communities of interest.

RECOGNIZING ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, CULTURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES:

Many households in both counties fall within the \$25,000 to \$50,000 income range and there are areas in Johnson County that have the same median income as their neighbors to the north. Residents of the metro area depend on jobs across county lines more than is common in other areas of the state, which leads to economic and social connections. The population density in this metro area is vastly different than in other parts of the state leading to unique environmental concerns when compared to the balance of the state: water quality and run-off/flooding issues related to acres of buildings and other hard surfaces; air quality issues from concentrations of vehicle traffic; air quality issues arising from the combination of population density and being downwind from areas where certain agricultural practices contribute to smoke and particulate matter in the air.

COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST:

This community of interest on the Kansas side of the metropolitan area actively participates in and benefits from metro regional planning and service provisions through MARC and its affiliates. Regional planning at this level involving so many jurisdictions is unusual in Kansas. This description of the community of interest in the current Third District of Kansas **sets it apart** from the rest of the communities west and south and requires a different approach in its representation in the Legislature. A watering down of this representation by moving boundaries west or south **would be a huge disservice to the district.**

EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES:

The Kansas City Metropolitan area is home to many branch campuses of post-secondary institutions as well as two public community colleges and numerous private post-secondary institutions. By its nature as a metro area, the student profile in this region is much more non-traditional than in other areas of the state and student's needs for federal financial assistance are greater.

CONCLUSION:

We view this Redistricting Town Hall as our opportunity to raise our voices in support of **accountable government** that represents Kansas – not partisan politics. Democracy is served when districts are drawn with respect for **fairness** and the **integrity of neighborhoods**, when classes of voters are not targeted for suppression and when those in power practice the **Golden Rule of Politics** – that is, remembering that they will not always be in power, at least not in a true democracy.

We ask that you lend your efforts towards **fair redistricting**, rather than partisan gerrymandering to redraw district lines in an attempt to unseat a sitting legislator or to disenfranchise a particular voting segment of a district. Gerrymandering is an **unfair attempt to skew districts** for political gain. This is your opportunity to rise above unfairness and stand up for democracy, if democracy is to be more than just a talking point.

Thank you for this opportunity to raise my voice for **democracy.**

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