

Co-Chairs Taylor, Salinas, and Boshart-Davis, Vice-Chair Knopp, and members of the committee...

For the record, my name is Steve Smithsted. I live in Alder Creek, which is located halfway between Sandy and the Mount Hood Villages in HD52, SD26, and CD3.

I'm here today to share my support for House and Senate Maps A and C. For starters, while I am not from Hood River I know enough about the area to know that Hood River and The Dalles should be paired together under one House District as they are both on the Columbia Gorge.

I also believe that it makes sense to separate Sandy from the rest of HD52 because of the unparalleled growth the Portland Area has seen over the past decade -- a trend we can expect to continue in the future. This growth has led Sandy to become more of a "bedroom community", populated by folks who have been priced out of the Portland housing market but still commute toward Portland for work. This makes Sandy more of a Portland suburb as opposed to a rural or mountain community, or a community that relies on tourism like the small towns along the Mountain and Gorge do. I liken Sandy to Hillsboro or Happy Valley, which only a few decades ago were vast expanses of agricultural land and now are suburban and are incorporated into the Portland Metro Area. One thing in particular that I prefer about Map A is that it includes the entire city of Sandy in one House District, instead of keeping small pockets to the north in House District 52 like Map C does.

While folks in the western mountain communities like mine also travel west for a number of things, our communities are more aligned culturally with the rest of HD52, composed of a variety of smaller, rural, older forest communities. We share common interests of conserving and preserving our natural wonders for visitors and for future generations; and for prioritizing the recreation industry that sits at the heart of the mountain's regional economy.

The largest employer in our district is Mt. Hood Meadows, which employs people from all around the mountain. The outdoor recreation industry along the mountain impacts communities from Hood River to Sandy, but are felt most prominently in towns like Dee, Odell, Parkdale, Government Camp, Welches, and Rhododendron -- which are closer to the mountain itself and in the thick of the Mt. Hood National Forest. Many of my neighbors, who live all around the mountain, work in fairly low-income jobs, often seasonal, and they have common needs for low-income housing and other social services. These communities must be kept together.

I would also like to highlight my strong support for Congressional Map A, which places me in the 3rd Congressional District. I appreciate that it connects communities along the mountain, gorge, and central Oregon to Portland because these communities share a number of similarities including a wealth of natural splendor and tourism economies. They are also connected via transportation links like the Columbia Area Transit Bus, the Sandy Area Metro Bus, and major roads like I-84, HWY26, and HWY 35.

Congressional Map A provides a balanced mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities; giving us the opportunity to work together with the Portland Metropolitan Area to bring forward policies at the federal level that are representative of Oregon as a whole.

Congressional Map B does quite the opposite, aggravating existing tensions between rural Oregonians and their urban counterparts -- establishing new Congressional Districts that isolate these communities from one another instead of acknowledging the many ways in which we depend on one another and are connected.

Thank you for taking my thoughts into consideration. I look forward to seeing the final map proposals.

Steve Smithsted