

My name is Kate McMichael. I am a small woodland owner living in Vida, East Lane County, District 4. The following testimony is not in response to any particular proposed map or plan, nor limited to a particular existing district, but is about the process and ultimate outcome of your deliberations.

I grew up on the outskirts of Boise, Idaho—a hybrid rural-city kid, rarely without a layer of dust from the dirt road that separated life at home from that in town. Since moving from Idaho (first to Washington then to California) after high school, I have lived the majority of my life immersed in an urban environment. I experienced homelessness in my twenties. I worked for a decade in the inner city of San Francisco in faith-based and social service agencies. I know, firsthand and up-close, urban realities, needs and priorities. My final years in California and my first years in Oregon straddled the urban/rural divide. Now I live on a (burned) forest property in Vida and consider myself a rural Oregonian. My life experience gives me a window into both urban and rural realities—realities that are distinct and very different in terms of priorities, needs and perspectives. Oregon is not served by any attempts to "smooth over" these distinctions and, indeed, risks diluting the voice of either by such efforts in the redistricting process. By sheer force of numbers, urban voices will be heard, urban priorities heeded, urban needs met. It is vital that every effort is made to insure that rural voices are heard as well—particularly where there are priorities, perspectives and needs that are different and indeed inexplicable from outside a rural context. Please take the extra step to insure that rural communities are not "lumped in" with their urban neighbors. Extreme weather events, catastrophic fires and ongoing drought have and continue to disproportionately batter Oregon's rural communities. They—we—need you to see us, hear us, work with us in our context, boots on our ground—and this redistricting process is an opportunity to do just that.

As a rural Oregonian, I urge you to oppose any gerrymandering or undue partisan influence in the redistricting process. Oregonians across the state expect maps to be drawn fairly and in a compact manner, with communities of common interest like school districts and neighborhoods left intact. Fairness demands that you ensure that rural Oregonians are kept in districts with similar population density, and not drawn into districts with a higher population density and different needs. I ask that you ensure all Oregonians receive the representation they deserve. Oregonians are not served by gerrymandered maps that blatantly benefit one party, one constituency, one reality over another.

Please consider all Oregonians as worthy of fair representation in the state's political process. Please do not disadvantage more communities within Oregon in the name of political expediency.

Thank you for considering this testimony in your deliberations.

Sincerely,

Kate McMichael
Vida, OR