



**Senate and House Committees on Redistricting  
September 13, 2021**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the redistricting proposals before the House and Senate Committees on Redistricting. The Oregon Farm Bureau is very concerned about the blatant gerrymandering proposed by Maps A and C, and strongly encourages you to adopt a more fair map, similar to Map B, which ensures that all citizens across Oregon are likely to be represented by legislators from their region who share their values.

By way of background, Oregon Farm Bureau Federation (OFB) is a voluntary, grassroots, nonprofit organization representing Oregon's farmers and ranchers in the public and policymaking arenas. As Oregon's largest general farm organization, its primary goal is to promote educational improvement, economic opportunity, and social advancement for its members and the farming, ranching, and natural resources industry. Today, OFB represents nearly 7,000 farm and ranch families who live and work across all 36 Oregon counties.

Democratic institutions and those structures which support them should never be taken for granted. As the bedrock upon which our elections and representative form of government rest, redistricting deserves the highest level of attention and care possible. We testified before your committees in February, asking the legislature to develop a redistricting process that meets the following objectives:

1. The process must be non-partisan and incumbent blind so that it serves the needs of the voters over the desires of candidates and incumbents.
2. The process must maintain respect for communities of common interest and not split them unnecessarily.

3. The inputs, criteria used, analysis, and rationale for decision-making must be fully transparent during and after the process.
4. The process must include and incorporates public input throughout.

Unfortunately, the current redistricting process feels destined to fail on every front. The process has been approached and executed in a way that feels hyper-partisan, with Maps A and C splitting communities of interest to maintain Democrat strongholds of power. The inputs that drove these maps are not clear, and the public process behind them as been far too short and cursory, with technical issues muddling many communities' ability to participate fully.

As a non-partisan organization, the Oregon Farm Bureau works with both parties in Salem to achieve the best policy outcomes we can for Oregon producers. It is with this non-partisan spirit that we endorsed and supported Initiative Petition 57, which would have amended the state constitution and created an independent redistricting process for Oregon. While COVID-19 restrictions caused that campaign to fall short of the full number of signatures required to appear on last November's ballot, we still believe the approach to redistricting in IP57 is the best way to ensure the redistricting process is carried out in a fair manner. We encourage legislators to put forward IP57's process or one substantially similar as a referred constitutional amendment for voter consideration in Nov. 2022.

Supporters included the League of Women Voters of Oregon, Common Cause, NAACP of Lane County, and several more groups whose common purpose was and is to fight for a redistricting process that is in its substance open, fair, and independent of political influence. In these times when the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that elected officials may legally gerrymander districts, it is more important than ever that any credible redistricting process be open, fair, and independent, and be *seen* as open, fair, and independent. The need to deliver a fair process and results where no Oregonian feels disenfranchised by lines drawn on a map may never have been greater.

It is with this backdrop in mind that we express our severe and deep concerned that two of the three proposals under consideration by the Committee –those put forward by majority leadership – represent blatant gerrymandering by every metric. Across the state, Maps A and C would cement the Democrat super majority by ensuring



that many rural parts of the state are likely to be represented by urban Democrats, diluting the voice of rural Oregon in shaping policy.

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. 25 of Oregon's 36 counties are categorized as "non-metro" rural, meaning they have no communities of 40,000 or more residents. Ten of those counties have population density of less than six people per square mile. Even Oregon's most populous counties have many rural and agriculture-dependent residents. The lower population of these communities makes them more vulnerable to gerrymandering, where districts are drawn to dilute the voice of these rural citizens. It is essential to protect rural communities of interest in the redistricting process. You must ensure that farm and ranch families are kept in districts where their voices are collectively strong and represented, not more dispersed by drawing them into districts with higher population density and different needs and perspectives.

Maps A and C are deeply partisan and hurt both the credibility of Oregon's legislature and the ability to ensure that all Oregonians have a representative in Salem who is most likely to represent their interests. We strongly encourage you to adopt a more fair map similar to Map B that will ensure that ALL Oregonians have a chance at fair representation in Salem.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these comments and please contact me with any questions.

Dave Dillon, Executive Vice President, Oregon Farm Bureau



3415 Commercial St. SE Salem, OR 97302 | Phone: 503.399.1701 | Fax :503 399-8082  
[www.oregonfb.org](http://www.oregonfb.org)