

Chair Taylor and Members of the Redistricting Committee:

My name is Michael Firestone, I live in Carlton which is in congressional district 1.

My family has been farming in the Northwest for generations and in addition to farming, we run a hazelnut processing facility in Dayton, which is also in Yamhill County.

I've noticed in my county, that one of the fastest ways to bring residents together, regardless of their political party, is on the topic of gerrymandering. When politicians gerrymander districts to ensure their own re-election, and in the process divide communities, the results are confusion, loss of representation and loss of cohesive efforts to support that community.

Yamhill County is very diverse, with strong agricultural and timber influences in most of the county, and densely populated areas in McMinnville and Newberg. Even though the county line abuts the Portland Metro region, our citizens have consistently voted for conservative representatives that advocate for fiscal restraint, strong family values, and a focus on our communities' most vulnerable populations.

The map of Plan B shows a gerrymandered district 24 which is redrawn to include the cities of Newberg, Dundee, Lafayette and McMinnville. This is a drastic change from the current district 24. Lumping all of these cities into the same district makes no sense, other than it exposes an attempt to group the highest populations in the county together for political purposes. I have lived in both Newberg and McMinnville and I can tell you the communities are very different. Newberg is pretty much a bedroom community now for Sherwood and has completely different districts for public safety, schools, recreational taxing districts and economic centers. McMinnville is our county's largest city and not only serves the outlying rural areas, but has a uniquely different school district, public safety, and social services. Those areas don't extend to Newberg. Lafayette is still completely rural and those voters really have no direct connection to anything happening in Newberg or McMinnville.

I currently live in House District 24 and our state representative Ron Noble is respected by members of all political stripes for his ability to manage the needs of his district and strike a balance between competing interests. He's done an excellent job as an elected Republican, representing some of the most progressive areas of McMinnville. That is the kind of balanced, geographical representation we should strive for in redistricting.

The Oregonian and Willamette Week have already called out some of these maps for their blatant gerrymandering and political posturing. As you know, roughly a third of this state is registered as something other than Republican or Democrat. Those voters are not being represented by this process, and I urge you to consider a more fair and transparent approach to how these lines are drawn.

Thank you.