

**Testimony to House & Senate Interim Committees on Redistricting**  
**Rep. Andrea Salinas, Co-Chair**  
**Rep. Shelly Boshart Davis, Co-Chair**  
**Sen. Kathleen Taylor, Chair**  
**Sen. Tim Knopp, Vice-Chair**

Senators and Representatives,

My name is Davis Dyer. I am retired State of Oregon employee. I reside in Keizer. I have lived in Oregon, in and around Salem, since 1971. The testimony I offer here perhaps will not raise any new issues; both parties have published their talking points and any number of people testifying before you and submitting written testimony have repeated them. My comments derive from my personal perspective and analysis of the draft maps published by this body.

On 25 August *Willamette Week* published an [article by Aaron Mesh](#) under the headline “Democrats Want to Redraw Congressional Districts So They Can Control Oregon’s New Seat. **Get Ready for Some Gerrymandering.**” (Emphasis added) On 9 September *The Oregonian*/OregonLive published an [analysis of the redistricting plans](#) (likely subscription paywall) this body had recently published under the headline “Oregon Legislature’s Democratic majority would **gain power** under redistricting plans” (Emphasis added). The offense of gerrymandering is decried by both sides, yet it is impossible avoid, if only for the uneven distribution of population across the landscape. But when even news outlets and writers that typically sympathize with Democrats conclude that they are guilty of the sin, one should take notice.



*Wikipedia* defines “[gerrymandering](#)” as the “practice intended to establish an unfair political advantage for a particular party or group by manipulating the boundaries of electoral districts” (Citations removed). The [Oregon statutes](#) controlling redistricting, with which this body is quite familiar, are designed to prevent the practice. This is eerily analogous to the attempt to craft obscenity laws that did not violate the protections to free speech contained in both the U.S. Constitution and Oregon Constitution. As Justice Potter Stewart wrote in his concurring opinion in *Jacobellus v. Ohio* (1964), “I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be [obscene] ... and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it ...”.

By definition, however, only the majority party can be held to the responsibility of defending its maps against charges of gerrymandering. Maps drawn by the minority party cannot legitimately be said to violate statutes barring undue manipulation of district lines since attempts to restore a sense of balance cannot be characterized as establishing “an unfair political advantage.” In that light, then, this body must reject outright the maps designated with the letter “A” on the ground that they result in a grossly unfair advantage for the majority party for the next ten years. Additionally, this body must reject outright the maps designated with the letter “C”, even though proposed by a smaller caucus within the legislature, on the ground that they expand on and exacerbate the flaws of the “A” maps.

Looking specifically at the district boundaries proposed for Marion County reveals how poorly the “A” maps reflect any sense of fairness. While Salem’s population warrants three House districts, the map proposes four by pulling in Woodburn in one district and Keizer in a second. Even though I agree that Keizer and Salem are inextricably linked, that common interest does not extend all the way to the Four Corners area. Even if the Representative from Keizer were not retiring at the end of this term, the new district would plainly favor the Democrat incumbent. The same can be said of the new district connecting to Woodburn: Even though Woodburn has much less population, the incumbent, who lives there, has a huge advantage even if one can scarcely detect the communities of common interest tying SE Salem to Woodburn. Linking Keizer to Woodburn, as the “B” map does, makes just as much sense.

The “B” maps do a much better job in preserving the relationships between legislators and constituents currently served. I must note, however, the chuckle I had when reading the *Oregonian* article linked above about consequences of the gross gerrymandering accomplished by the secretaries of State in their 1991 and 2001 legislative district lines. To have **four** current legislators living within blocks of each other in SW Portland is truly tragic for their constituents in the more suburban/rural reaches of those districts.

I urge this body to adopt the “B” maps for Congressional Districts, Oregon Senate Districts, and Oregon House Districts as the templates upon which it makes any necessary tweaks and revisions. For example, the concerns of the resident in Lake Oswego who expressed his grievance that the “B” map placed his neighborhood into a Portland-centric district rather than with the district taking in Lake Oswego with which his neighborhood is currently aligned, should be accommodated.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Respectfully,

Davis I Dyer  
Resident of Keizer