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Dear members of the Redistricting Committee,

My name is Les AuCoin, I served as the US Representative for Oregon's First District for 18 years, and now reside here in retirement.

My former Congressional District is a diverse district in NW Oregon, home to both urban and rural communities. In the two previous redistricting efforts ten and twenty years ago, some questioned the utility and responsiveness of a district in which a US House member residing, say, in an urban or suburban location could faithfully represent the interests of, say, commercial fishermen and their families on the Oregon coast.

They were wrong. History demonstrates that in fact one who faithfully represents all residents of one's district can do so without being pigeonholed as "that coastal congressperson." One story, as told in my memoir, demonstrates the point. Let me paraphrase and share with you.

In 1986, I, who resided in Portland, learned from a group of fishermen's wives and mothers in Newport Oregon that 49 Commercial fishermen had died in the past 12 years. Any seaman who fell into the frigid Pacific would die of hypothermia within 15 to 30 minutes, even with protective gear. The nearest Coast Guard station was in Astoria or North Bend, meaning that by the time it took the chopper to arrive, many of these men would have already died.

I was heartbroken to hear these stories, and I spent hours with these women listening with a knot in my gut to their tales of grief and despair. I knew I had to do everything I could to limit these deaths, even though it was against Coast Guard policy to have stations that close together. Ultimately, I was able to strike a deal with the commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard — I'd figure out how to fully fund their budget, if they would bring another helicopter station to Newport. The seafarers on the Oregon Coast would be protected.

Even though I lived many miles away in urban Portland, by speaking with these constituents, I could understand their unique problems and do what needed to be done to solve them. I firmly believe, and history shows, that elected leaders can effectively represent *both* Urban and Rural communities.

Thank you for your consideration,

Former Congressman Les AuCoin,
SW Portland