

**To: Senate and House Committees on Redistricting**

**From: Sandra McDonough, President & CEO, Oregon Business & Industry**

**Date: February 23, 2021**

**Re: Redistricting Comments**

Chairs Taylor and Salinas, Vice Chairs Knopp and Boshart Davis, and members of the committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am Sandra McDonough, president & CEO of Oregon Business & Industry. We have more than 1600 members across our state, representing some 250,000 Oregon workers.

There are some issues where individuals on my side of the public hearing table know they must tread carefully. Redistricting is one of them.

We realize that how this very important job gets done has a deeply personal impact for every single member of the Legislature, and the outcome could determine the make-up of this body for the next decade. And that is why, quite honestly, we don't believe the Legislature, or any elected official, is the best body for drawing legislative district lines.

In our view, the redistricting process must be guided by the following principles.

- Be nonpartisan. Keeping partisan concerns out of the conversation will result in a better product for our state.
- Be incumbent blind. As hard as it may be, who currently holds a district should not be considered at all as new district lines are drawn.
- Avoid gerrymandering. The Supreme Court may have said some partisan gerrymandering is ok, but that does not mean it is a principled way to draw a legislative district.
- Respect communities of common interest. Moving a district boundary a block or two – or miles – could dilute the voting power of a community. Respecting communities of common interest, like BIPOC neighborhoods or rural communities, helps ensure that the voices of those Oregonians are heard at the ballot box and here at the Legislature.
- And, last, the process must be balanced and fair. There should be a conscious decision not to try to tip the scales for any special interest.

The 2021 redistricting effort is particularly important because we may receive a sixth seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. It is imperative that this new district be drawn in an impartial way, with no effort to tilt the voter balance in any particular political direction. This is an opportunity to strengthen the voice of some sectors of our state, particularly rural Oregon. We would urge that the process of drawing the new district be guided by the principles listed above.

In our view, the best process for ensuring the once-a-decade redistricting process is completed in a fair, balanced and nonpartisan manner would be to move the task from the Legislature to a nonpartisan and nonelected commission made up of individuals who have no stake in the outcome. We would urge you to act quickly to pass legislation creating a redistricting commission, and then hand the job off to them so it can be completed by the end of the year.

This is a big job. We have seen redistricting in the past become a contentious and divisive process, and that benefits no one. It is time to approach it differently, taking the path of many other states. This is a job that is better done by a nonpartisan, non-elected body. We hope you will consider it.

Thank you for your time this evening.