



OREGON 2021 REDISRICTING

Chair Taylor, Chair Salinas, and members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Caitlin Baggott Davis. I lead the work of the North Star Civic Foundation, and have been collaborating with the team at We Draw Oregon to understand redistricting best practices that have emerged nationally this winter.

We've focused on the shared challenges of 20 states like Oregon where deadlines for map making occur before the projected September 30th Census data will arrive, and what that means for **community mapping**, which is the civic process of engaging communities of interest in evaluating and developing their own maps of the places they call home.

Community mapping is typically led by community groups, not the legislature. It supports a fair and transparent legislative process in the same way that voter registration drives support fair and open elections. Imagine an election without the voter registration and get out the vote efforts led by labor unions, churches, and culturally specific community organizations.

Without an engaged community mapping process, states see low attendance and participation in public hearings and experience resulting low trust in the maps developed by legislative bodies or commissions. Community mapping efforts are organizing efforts that strengthen democratic norms and build civic capacity that lasts beyond the legislative process.

I'll summarize three key points from the best practices guidance that we're seeing coming from national foundations focused on protecting democratic processes and engagement in states that share our scheduling predicament:

1. **Authority and timeline.** States should maintain the intent of the constitution or law, specifically advising that if a body or commission is given the first opportunity by state law to draw a map, it should retain that authority rather than automatically flipping to a prescribed backup process. They are advising to seek the administrative, legislative or judicial actions that allow them to extend their timeline.

As in New Jersey and California, this may also require moving Oregon's partisan primary elections to allow candidates sufficient time to campaign in

new districts. For BIPOC candidates and candidates without significant access to a donor network, this time to campaign is critical for achieving equitable electoral outcomes.

2. **Sequencing.** States should split up the process into what can be done in advance of the release of Census data and what needs to be done afterwards. For example, community groups could begin to coordinate community mapping conversations and activities this spring to engage community members in the process and engage them in the kinds of activities that result in the most deeply informed mapping – like community walks to identify possible boundaries or familiarizing communities with the mapping software on your website, so that the final process can be streamlined after the arrival of the census data.
3. **Transparency.** National best practices advise allowing significant time for communities to engage with both mapping tools or software and with the 2020 census data itself. The Common Cause timeline shared at Tuesday’s hearing aligns with this guidance – allowing several weeks for community engagement following the data release.

The most important role for the State in this effort is to provide ample time for community groups to do their work. You have been clear that the hearings you’ve scheduled in March are not intended to be the only hearings or only opportunity for communities to engage with this process. Thank you. **What I have not yet heard is a commitment to provide sufficient time for communities to engage with the Census data itself in October and November.**

Ultimately, the choice you face is between following a predetermined calendar of activities without full, data-informed democratic participation, or designing and fighting for a process that supports full democratic participation. In this case, you cannot have it both ways.

Thank you,



Caitlin Baggott Davis,

Executive Director, North Star Civic Foundation