

Chairs Taylor and Salinas, Vice-Chairs Knopp and Boshart-Davis, and members of the Redistricting Committee,

My name is Jennifer Bonham and I am a resident of HD 59, SD 30, and CD 2. For the past three months I have watched all your committee hearings and listened to about half of the 2011 Redistricting Committee hearings. There are three main things I want to share with you today about this process and my districts.

First, I want to reiterate that an independent commission would be in the best interest of underrepresented Oregonians. I think it is irresponsible that the committees, throughout multiple informational hearings, did not even discuss the possibility of an independent redistricting commission; especially when you were exploring options for keeping the redistricting process out of the hands of Oregon's Supreme Court. You heard unprovoked support from multiple organizations and constituents for an independent commission. At the very least a discussion on a potential commission would allow legislators and constituents the opportunity to raise concerns and have those concerns addressed. Last week, Senator Jama voiced concern that a 15 to 20-person commission would not be able to represent the diversity of Oregonians as effectively as a 90-member legislature. So far this session there have been around 1,200 public hearings where legislators have talked about a portion of the 4,000+ bills that have been posted. It is unlikely that all 90 members will have the ability to be actively involved in redrawing the maps while also working on all the bills moving through their own committees. The independent commission would have the ability to focus all their attention on redistricting with the help of legislators. Representative Fahey pointed out in her testimony that legislators are a unique group of individuals with very in-depth knowledge of their districts due to their engagement with the various communities within them. For this reason, I think it would be extremely wise of an independent commission to invite state legislators and local elected officials to their hearings to speak to the various communities of common interest they believe are most important to keep together when redistricting. Representative Hudson expressed concern that in the commission designs he heard suggested that many Oregonians would actually end up being excluded from getting proper representation due to their ties to a major political party. The independent commission described in HJR 7 would be made up of not only Democrats and Republicans but also members from neither party. I think this would drastically improve representation because over one-third of Oregonians are not registered members of the Democrat or Republican parties. The commission, as outlined by HJR 7, would also be comprised of members with no recent ties to federal, state, county, or other elective offices. This would limit any sway or personal bias that is, at the present, a likely outcome due to currently serving members drawing their own lines, especially in a supermajority. People have also expressed concern about an independent commission's lack of transparency compared to the current legislative process. It is easy to be transparent and nonpartisan during public hearings where people are simply providing testimony or their personal redistricting priorities. Once it comes time to draw the lines though, legislators will gather with their like-minded colleagues behind closed doors to create their own maps to bring forward to the committee. While I would love to put my faith in your committees to draw fair, equitable, partisan blind, non-gerrymandered, *legal* districts, Oregon's redistricting history gives little reassurance that will be the case. The Oregon Legislature has only "successfully" redistricted once in the 60 years since this process began. The Secretary of State drew the district lines the first four times due to the legislature's inability to draw legal lines according to the courts. The 2001 legislature, with a Republican supermajority, approved a set of plans that were then vetoed by the governor and yet again, the lines were drawn by

the Secretary of State. Some have argued that the 2011 redistricting committees succeeded in drawing bipartisan, non-gerrymandered districts but none of the currently serving legislators were drawn out of their current district.

This brings me to my second point which is that using the current map as the basis for drawing future districts is fundamentally flawed. The base map is 20 years old and was drawn by a single individual. You have heard countless individuals talk about how much Oregon has changed in just the last 10 years. If you want to create districts from lines that already exist, use county lines as your basis. I understand there are 36 counties in Oregon and 60 House Districts but as we all know, some have larger populations than others and can be broken down or grouped together based on what your constituents feel are communities of common interest. You have heard a few individuals share their frustrations with their current districts already. So many districts touch urban areas and reach out to more rural areas which goes against the principle of compactness and often cracks communities of common interest. While some may argue this is simply to add population to each district to make sure each one has a similar population, there are better ways to do this. I appreciated testimony from Representative Wilde and his opponent from the 2020 general election pointing out the current flaws in House District 11 which crosses over and through multiple geographic and political boundaries and areas of common interest.

Lastly, the moment you've all been waiting for, my personal recommendations for how districts should look. As for House District 59, I agree with my representative that it is the most beautiful district in the state and if you disagree, you should take a drive from Sisters to the Painted Hills up to the Columbia River and re-evaluate. When it comes to communities of common interest, I think it is very strange that The Dalles was put together with cities like Fossil and Spray but not Dufur or Hood River. The Dalles has many family owned orchards, a hydroelectric dam, and a bridge to Washington that set it apart from the southern parts of our current district. Senate District 30 also does not make much sense covering a large portion of eastern Oregon then cutting over to north central Oregon. Especially if the population of each district is supposed to be relatively the same, it would make much more sense to have a Senate District that covers the entire Idaho border and another that combines districts along the Columbia River (see maps from Will Evans' testimony for reference). Also, please do not commit the same crime the current map does and avoid making districts like House District 53 that are donut shaped as this goes against all the training you did in the beginning of this process.

Thank you so much for reading my testimony and taking it into consideration when you draw the new lines. While I still believe that redistricting will end up in the hands of the Supreme Court due to census delays, I wish you all the best of luck in this process as representation for all Oregonians over the next decade is currently in your hands.

Best,

Jennifer Bonham

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