

Testimony on Redistricting

Chair Taylor and members of the Oregon Senate Committee on Redistricting

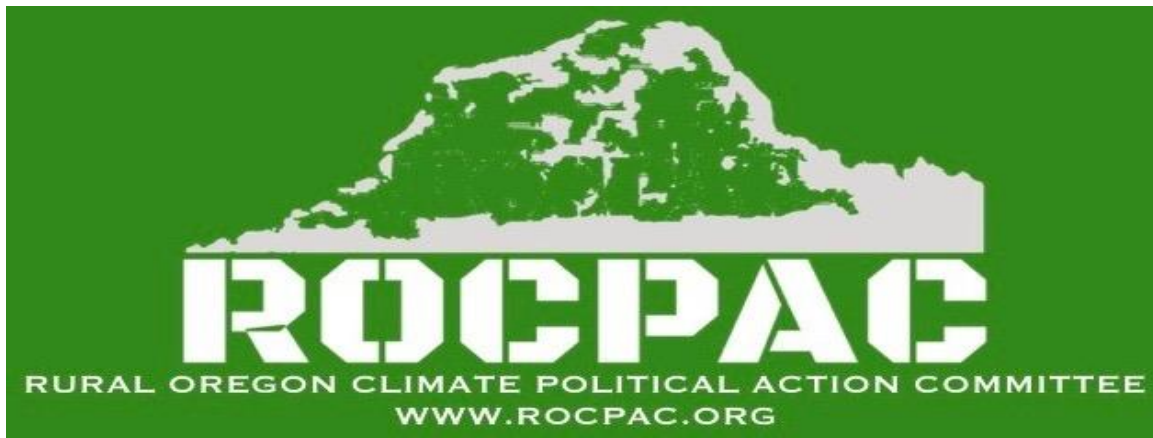
My name is Dr. Hogan Sherrow and I am writing on behalf of rural Oregonians concerned about the impacts of climate change and determined to see meaningful climate legislation passed in Oregon. Given the ever-increasing threat of climate change, the impacts of which are felt most strongly by rural communities and the politicization of the issue by some lawmakers, redistricting has the potential to significantly impact climate action moving forward.

While it is essential to regularly reconsider, and in some cases redraw state legislative and Congressional districts, the process must be thoughtful, careful and non-partisan. ROCPAC recognizes that the priority is to maintain population balance between districts. We also recognize that if you take a metaphorical axe, instead of a scalpel to our maps and cleave up the state based solely on numbers, you run the risk of alienating individuals and marginalizing communities. In addition to overall population, the redistricting process needs to consider communities of interest and how best people are fairly represented.

A community of interest is a neighborhood, community, or group of people with a common set of concerns that may be affected by legislation. Examples of communities of interest include ethnic, racial, and economic groups (ORS 188.010). A way of understanding a community of interest is that it is simply a way for a community to tell its own story about what neighbors share in common, and what makes it unique when compared to surrounding communities. They are defined by the local community members.

Keeping communities of interest together is an important principle in redistricting. It can be especially helpful to communities that have been traditionally left out of the political process. Community members can define their communities by telling their own stories and describe their concerns to policy makers. Without this, those who may not have their best interest in mind will define the communities for them. We at ROCPAC urge you to prioritize communities of interest when you set to the task of redistricting.

I live in Talent and watched as the Almeda Fire swept away my neighborhood, coming to within fifty feet of my home in September, 2020. I live in Congressional District 2, Senate District 3 and House District 5. While our communities are diverse, we share common interests that should be considered when redistricting. We are rural but rely less on



agriculture than many of our neighbors to the east. However, we share the same vulnerabilities to drought and wildfire as the rest of our district. We also have a more diverse ethnic make-up on our Senate and House Districts than in many other parts of Congressional District 2. All of those factors need to be taken into account as the committee attempts to fairly and equally divide our state into districts for the next decade. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Hogan M. Sherrow, Ph.D.', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Hogan M. Sherrow, Ph.D.
Director
Rural Oregon Climate Political Action Committee
(ROCPAC)