

Dear Legislative Policy and Research Staff,

I am emailing to submit written testimony on redistricting in Congressional District 2. Your redistricting information states “Under current law, the Legislature must attempt to create districts that are 1) contiguous, 2) of equal population, 3) utilize existing geographic or political boundaries, 4) don’t unnecessarily divide communities of interest, 5) and are connected by transportation links (ORS 188.010).” I believe that our current State House and Senate districts ignore existing political boundaries and unnecessarily divide communities of interest in the following way:

1. Residents east of Lakeview who use Lakeview for almost all of their primary services are in Senate District 30 while Lakeview is in Senate District 28. They are also in House District 60 while Lakeview is in House District 56. The total number of residents in that area is quite small, so respecting the existing political boundary of the county would have a negligible effect on the overall population of a district.

Additionally, it is true that Lake County has two main communities of interest based on where services are located. For northern Lake County, needed services (expanded groceries, health care, etc.) are oriented to the north in Deschutes County. Southern Lake County is usually oriented to the east towards Klamath Falls and Medford. I am not sure that the existing State Senate and House boundaries accurately reflect where the line between those two communities of interest lie, and I would encourage the Redistricting Committee to seek more information on that point.

Finally, I would ask that the Legislature and Secretary of State to consider carefully the redistricting process itself, particularly with regards to public engagement. It is critical that the process be inclusive, efficient, and transparent and use actual Census data. Sufficient time to understand the Census data once it becomes available will be critical for marginalized communities to organize themselves to provide appropriate input. Sufficient engagement around proposed district boundary changes will also be essential and must be provided in a way that the average citizen can understand. I recognize that Census 2020 information is delayed, and both statutory and election deadlines are creating pressure to create maps in as timely a manner as possible. However our communities will have to live with these maps for another decade, and it is essential that their concerns be heard during the process in order to have equitable districts. It is worth taking the extra time to ensure that happens.

Cordially,
Amy C. Hutchinson, Library Director (she/her/hers)
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