

Dear Redistricting Committee,

I live in Congressional District 5, and I am writing to provide testimony in support of a fair and transparent redistricting process. In the 5 years I have lived in Oregon and the 4 I have lived at the coast, I find that rural Oregon is as diverse as urban Oregon. Out here on the coast we do not speak with one voice, and that's as it should be in any given area. Even in my neighborhood right on the beach, we are racially and politically diverse. Do not be misled by those who claim to speak for all rural Oregonians but are really pushing an extreme right agenda that excludes Oregonians of color who have been in our area for as long or longer than many of us who now retire here, and who keep our vital industries running. Inclusiveness should mean diversity and debate. Please don't reinforce the myth of the urban/rural divide. I do not find it truthful to my experience. To be a healthy democracy we need geographically and demographically diverse districts so our elected leaders have to listen and try to deliver on an array of concerns and so we don't get fooled into thinking that one way of believing or the needs of one class of citizens is the only way that should be represented. Oregon has a lot of work to do when it comes to inclusiveness and equity. To ensure that work continues in an effective way, we need districts that truly represent the diversity of our population. Districts that are carved out by population density alone won't be representative either. The Oregon values we aspire to should be represented by an even handed non-partisan approach that ensures all votes matter and that a single interest group does not commandeer the rights of those it wishes to marginalize and disempower. A gamed process is not a fair one.

Thank you,

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