

Saturday, April 10, 2021

Co-Chairs Taylor, and Salinas, Vice-Chairs, Knopp, and Boshart-Davis, and members of the redistricting committees,

For the record my name is Britney VanCitters, my pronouns are she/her/hers and I've lived in the South Tabor neighborhood, House District 46, for just over a year, and I've lived in east Portland for four years.

I'm fortunate to currently live just a five minute walk away from Mt Tabor Park. It's become a weekend ritual for my partner and our dog to walk to the top of Mt Tabor every Saturday-- it's a popular gathering hotspot for folks in (and outside) the area. Our apartment is just a few blocks west of Portland's Jade District-- one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Portland and the state.

As Oregon becomes more diverse it's important that we take these changes into account when drawing new districts so that historically marginalized communities can have a seat at decision-making tables. We must be careful not to divide members of these communities from each other, from their schools, or from their places of worship-- all of which would hamper their ability to build power and elect leaders who have lived their experiences and who can truly represent them. Representation in government matters.

I'm very concerned about the redistricting timeline, especially given the Oregon Supreme Court's decision on Friday. I want to be clear-- the census data is valuable, and the work that was done to ensure we have one person one vote in Oregon. However, we cannot delay this process in order to wait for census data to arrive. Oregon is extremely fortunate to have other sources of reliable population data that can be used to draw preliminary maps. These reliable sources include the PSU Population Research Center, the American Community Survey, and school district data.

The new deadline will almost certainly have adverse ramifications on the upcoming 2022 election. Candidates can file for office as early as September 9th, yet the deadline for our new maps is September 27th. If we don't know what the new districts look like, how will folks know whether they want to run for office and which district they'll be running in? This can have disproportionate impacts on low-income and BIPOC candidates-- the later they kick-off their campaign, the less time they have to fundraise and build name recognition with voters in their district. Given this new deadline, I expect robust public education and engagement tailored to communities of color. I also expect additional public hearings that include opportunities to comment on preliminary maps drawn by the legislature.

With uncertainty remaining on when exactly we will get all the Census data, the legislature should begin the process of drawing maps now using other reliable data sources as mentioned above. And the State Legislature (or the Secretary of State) must be the ones to draw the new

maps. It is far too late to establish a fair and equitable independent commission to take up the task. The voters have entrusted you, our state elected officials, with the task of redrawing our districts-- I believe you will do a fine job by using the dozens of pieces of public testimony provided over the past several weeks and the reliable population data that we have access to today. I do not envy you, and I thank you for doing this job.

I look forward to working with this committee, the Oregon legislature, and our communities to ensure that redistricting engages all of Southeast Portland's communities and that it responds to our growing needs. The Legislature's process for engaging Oregon communities in redistricting is going to be critical.

Thank you very much for your time and work on this issue.

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