

## Koy Kunkel\_SC

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**From:** applications.administrator@capitol.local  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 10, 2021 4:19 PM  
**To:** Senate Redistricting  
**Subject:** INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input

Date: 2021-02-10  
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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: ALL

Message:

Comments for the SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING

From the comments at the various regional meetings, it is clear that no one is in favor of gerrymandering. What is harder is defining what a gerrymander is. If we look at the current Congressional Districts, for example, Districts 19 and 11 with relation to Dawson County and Howard County would appear gerrymandered. You could move Dawson County from District 11 to District 19 and Howard County from District 19 to District 11 and make "compact" districts, all other things equal. But there are probably other criteria that need to be considered.

For a fair and equitable redistricting, the important thing is that many criteria are used in determining the map. I would ask the Committee to publish and publicly define what the criteria are that will be used to define the maps. A transparent definition of the criteria allows everyone to see that the maps are fair and reasonable.

And there are a number of criteria that I think everyone can agree to. For example, the number one, highest priority criteria, I would think, would be that the maps be a total partition of the state. Every part of the state should be in one, and only one, district. You might be tempted to draw a map that respects natural boundaries, for example a river. So two adjacent districts could be defined with one district on the North bank of the river and one district on the South bank of the river. But then the river itself would not be in a district.

What if a voter lives on a house boat, anchored in the middle of the river? While this might be unlikely, it is possible, so every part of the state must be in a district.

A second criteria would be roughly equal population in each district. A key decision of this would be what variance is allowed. Clearly if there were 133 people, you could not equally split them between two districts, 66.5 people in each. So one district will have more than another. Is it important that the difference be minimal? If we had two maps, and the maximum population difference in one was 3% and 5% in the other, would we always choose the one with 3%? And what is the definition of "population"? Residents? Voters? Voting age residents?

A third criteria I think we can all agree on is that the maps must meet all State and Federal laws. A list of the applicable ones would be valuable, but the criteria can be agreed upon in any case.

A fourth criteria might be to try to follow natural boundaries, like rivers or mountain ranges. A fifth criteria might be to try to follow political boundaries -- state, county, city, school district, census tracts. Highways, or roads?

And even at this point, we can see how the priority or importance of the different criteria must be weighed against one another.

While we may want to respect county boundaries, it may be impossible to do that and still keep districts of roughly equal population. So one criteria (equal population) takes precedence over another (county boundaries).

Where possible, it is important if the criteria that you use are objective and quantifiable. Population is quantifiable and objective. Some other criteria may be more difficult to define.

For example, the main objection to gerrymandered districts tend to be that they are not "compact". If compactness is used as a criteria, it would be helpful if it is defined how compactness is quantified, so that the compactness of two different proposed districts can be objectively compared.

To the degree possible, defining the criteria that are used to define the map, and all the criteria -- no hidden agendas -- and sticking to them will be the best way to arrive at maps that we can all agree on. If maps are presented, and a variant of the maps would better meet your published criteria, you should be willing to accept the variant maps -- they meet your criteria better.

This will assure that the new maps are not gerrymandered -- they are the best match for your publicly defined criteria.

