

Subcommittee on Elections

Submitted Public Testimony

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I did have the experience of re-drawing voter district boundaries a number of years ago after the decennial census. I ran the GIS mapping software that was used to create new boundaries. While it was for city council boundaries for a large Minnesota municipality – it impacted over 200,000 voters and what voting district they would be located in.

While I ran the software, there literally were 3 DFL caucus members leaning over my left shoulder, and 3 Republican caucus members leaning over my right shoulder. The DFL had the first choice of boundaries for each of the voting districts as they were the majority party, and then the Republican caucus would give me their version. As I moved the boundaries to include or exclude voters, live reports from data sets showed demographics of voters and their voting preferences. The two parties would negotiate over which voters would be included or excluded in a district to benefit their party. This occurred over a number of days with the final event being a 24 hr. overnigher. This process was very confidential to only those few of us involved in the process. It was opaque and conducted with no principles other than what would benefit the party that was determining the voter district boundary.

I will say that it was done within the bounds of the process that existed at the time, however, there were no principles of fairness, nor transparency, nor even review and approval. These two parties decided the boundaries.

This experience is a big part of why I now volunteer with the MN Alliance for Democracy to support redistricting reform.

When I am out door knocking about redistricting or talking to voters at Town Halls, I have this nagging sense that I should apologize to them because I saw, and participated in, a redistricting process that moved unsuspecting voters in and out of districts not for the benefit of the voters – but for the benefit of the political parties who were deciding these districts. The voters were treated like a commodity for the benefit of the parties.

If the voters knew how their vote was being manipulated, they would not be very happy.

As we talk with voters during door-knocking, or attending town halls to collect signatures, it is exciting to see how enthusiastic voters are to support redistricting reform and an independent commission. They literally step forward and take the clipboard out of our hands to sign, and they look us in the eye and say “I don’t want any of that gerrymandering thing to go on”.

The voters in our state of Minnesota - the state typically known for good democracy - deserve a fair and open redistricting process. They deserve, and they want, a process they can trust that is based on principles of fairness, that is open, and is driven by citizens on an independent commission.

Sincerely,
Tim David
White Bear Township (38B)
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“Basic fairness and transparency” gets me a signature, a handshake, and a big smile at just about every door. That’s what redistricting for people, not parties, means.

My weekend up north with fellow volunteers from the MN Alliance for Democracy was bookended by cordial conversations with a Tea Party Republican in Long Prairie and a super progressive young DFL’er in Brainerd. Both hate gerrymandering, want basic fairness, openness and transparency in redistricting, and enthusiastically signed our petition for voter-focused redistricting reform. We door knocked on a stretch of sparsely populated northern highway. After peering out at us in initial surprise and puzzlement, homeowners invited us inside to talk about what brought us there on a crackling cold winter Saturday morning. In just a small stretch of 10-15 houses, we found 6 households willing to take our non-partisan yard signs for fair voting maps. Our signs say “Voting maps for people, not parties.” People like that.

I’ve petitioned and door knocked around the state, from Sartell and St. Cloud and Brainerd down to Faribault and Rochester. I’ve talked about redistricting with more than 500 Minnesotans. Voters across the political spectrum sign our petition supporting redistricting by a multi-partisan citizen commission. They want voting maps drawn in the open, not behind closed doors. They want voting maps based on community needs, not on incumbents and political parties. They want to have faith in our political process, not cynicism. They want to have a good reason to participate, not to feel that the system is rigged and it’s all pointless.

The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce supports redistricting by commission. Red and blue states around the country have voted for citizens’ commissions and an open, transparent process. It saves hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees, because the maps are less frequently challenged. It gives time back to the legislators to do the important work of the people – pass good legislation.

It’s time. If we don’t fix this now, together, we the people of Minnesota lose our chance for a fair, fully open and transparent process. We’ve been working hard on it. Now we need your help. Please support Rep. Klevorn’s bill and help move us all forward, together.

Thank you for your time and your service.

Respectfully,
Deborah L. Zvosec
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Hello, my name is Stephen W Smith from Minneapolis.

It is time for Minnesota voters to choose their legislators rather than legislators choosing their voters.

For too long, districts have been drawn by the legislators who have a conflict of interest. Fortunately for us, the outcome has not yet been disastrous because the courts have intervened. But the future is not so secure.

The time has come for comprehensive redistricting reform. We need to stop gerrymandering in Minnesota. This means transparency in the drawing of maps, and excluding consideration of incumbency and party in the drawing of those maps, in addition to other important principles outlined in the bill. It also means forming a commission that is designed to draw maps in a way that is most fair to all Minnesotans.

We have found in our extensive contact with voters all over the state that voters of major parties and minor parties think this is important. We encounter no resistance to this idea anywhere. That's because it appeals to everyone's basic sense of fairness.

So let's pass both a statute and, hopefully, a constitutional amendment, to take redistricting out of the hands of the legislature and put it in the hands of an advisory commission or, even better, an independent commission.

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Redistricting, done right, is difficult. We all know this because in Minnesota our representative government, legislature and governor, have failed for decades to come up with a plan which could be implemented. We have relied on the courts to bail us out. That should not be their job and they do not want it. The US Supreme Court recently sent that message to you loud and clear.

You will recall one definition of insanity: 'When you keep doing the same thing over and over and expect a different result.' Let's put some sanity and fairness into the process and take the task of redistricting out of the hands of those with a conflict of interest and create a process which is designed to produce the fairest result humanly possible.

As a member of the Minnesota Alliance for Democracy I have been petitioning and door knocking in support of HF 1605, or its next iteration, since last summer. I personally have had interaction with well over 200 people on this matter. My informal tally of the most common concern expressed by your constituents is that the government is not fairly representing the wishes of the people. That much too often it is serving the interests of the politicians and the political parties. We could site many examples.

In my mind one of the most important things that you can do as a legislature is to put in place a process for districting which is transparent, has state of the art principles in place and involves voters in a very significant role. Please do the right thing for democracy and for trust in our government.

Gary C Fifield
St. Paul
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I submit this written testimony for the public record of the hearing on the Census and Redistricting by the Subcommittee on Elections, to be held in Shakopee, MN on January 22, 2020.

I am a Minnesota voter who has spent many hours of my retirement as an enthusiastic volunteer and a member of the Minnesota Alliance for Democracy: doorknocking, talking to legislators at the Capitol, and collecting petition signatures of voters throughout Minnesota to support fair redistricting reform. Involvement in these activities helped me understand the vital importance of our citizenry's engagement with those who represent us in government. An accurate count in the upcoming census and resulting redistricting are tantamount to fair elections, and I applaud your efforts to improve these systems.

I have talked with over 700 Minnesota eligible voters about the redistricting reform. I remember a conversation with a gentleman who at first didn't even want to talk to me, but I asked a few questions and listened. He was quite knowledgeable and revealed the discouragement he felt with redistricting reform ("it's been tried, they can't agree on anything in the legislature anymore"). He thought that redistricting should happen with a public commission. Another individual wasn't sure it mattered that he voted: the results in their districts wouldn't change because "the incumbent had the vote locked up". A woman who had taught many years in the public schools in St. Paul disclosed living her young adulthood in Spain's Franco era and Chile's Pinochet era, and felt similar fears for our election process. Many people already knew about potential gerrymandering of a more partisan legislature doing redistricting work behind closed doors. Most folks signed our petition because they agreed that voters need to be part of the process.

I ask our representation for politically actionable support of our multi-partisan redistricting reform based on Rep. Ginny Klevorn's bill HF 1605. At its core, this bill acknowledges redistricting principles that put voters before incumbent, party and special interest groups and secures a public advisory commission to oversee an open process of drawing district maps. The end result may not be perfect, but we should strive to connect voters to elections in a fair manner.

Thank you for your time and service.

Respectfully,
Dr. Ann Jennen
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I am writing to urge the House Elections Sub-committee to do everything possible assure that the new voting maps after this year's census will be fair to voters. The bill that best assured this in the last legislative session was HF1605, which your committee wisely approved to include in 2019 Omnibus election bill. Though some details of the legislation are likely to be different in this session (and it may get a new number), I implore the Committee to endorse such legislation once again.

This plea is urgent this session, as the map-redrawing is near and its consequences are great. Please consider these current points supporting the bill's multi-partisan, principle driven, voter-focused reform:

1. Without this legislation, MN will go through a failed redistricting process, as it has repeatedly. In the upcoming redistricting process, it is likely that again, as each time in the last 50 years, map creation will end up in the Supreme Court, due to inability of the chambers and the governor to agree. This will waste the precious time of the legislature and the Court. If this by-now-traditional outcome does not occur, the maps that will be drawn may well be partisan—by one party or another—and so likely will be challenged in court, also wasting resources. The time is now to establish efficient, effective, and fair procedures that will protect the voters of MN during the upcoming redistricting and many more to come.
2. It is particularly important that the maps this time be drawn fairly, as the faster population growth of other States makes it likely that MN will lose a Congressional seat. This means that that the redrawn of maps will be especially consequential, moving many thousands of citizens into newly drawn districts. It is imperative that the maps that will be drawn next year be drawn in the most careful and fair manner ever.
3. The members of the citizen commission to recommend maps, as proposed by HF 1605 last session, would be drawn fairly from all parts of the state, based on clear criteria that will exclude persons tightly connected to political work, and will include a balanced composition of individuals who identify with the major parties or other parties/no party. The size of the commission will be large enough to include an array range of opinions, yet small enough for practical function. Members will be chosen in an impartial process overseen by the Secretary of State, with real but limited input from legislative leaders. The commission will function transparently, with open meetings across the State. This proposal takes into account the concerns of both major parties and citizen democracy advocates, and is consistent with the way successful impartial commissions function in other states. No fuller or fairer proposal arose last session.
4. In HF 1605, the principles guiding the drawing of maps are clearly specified and are prioritized, giving high priority to factors of most concern to community members and no priority to incumbent residency, with a change in priorities by the commission or regulatory processes not permitted. This carefully places voter rights and needs above partisan concerns, so preventing legislators from choosing their voters, a practice which underpins gerrymandering (by either major party).
5. The commission would operate whether or not a Constitutional Amendment removes map-drawing from the legislature. While such an Amendment would be the strongest protection against gerrymandering, it is at best very, very unlikely it could pass in time for 2021 redistricting. Any law that would confine the functioning of a citizen commission to operation independent of the legislature would sentence the State to continue its current reliance on usual dysfunctional redistricting, and so to rely on luck to avoid serious gerrymandering for the next 10 years. Passage of HF1605—or its successor—will assure that a MN advisory

commission recommends the fairest possible maps now, and also leaves open the possibility of a Constitutional Amendment for an independent commission in the future.

6. HF 1605 (and its successor bill) will be the only one you will consider this session that has been drafted over a period of years, led by the non-partisan organization Common Cause, guided by a transparent coalition of democracy advocates, taking into account the concerns of partisan perspectives yet prioritizing none of these. The competing bills in the last session—from both parties—were drawn by lobbyists, in a non-transparent way, with clear and consistent partisan motivations that were spoken of only in whispers. Passage of such a bill will not be a credible action by a legislature that seeks to prove that it represents the voters, as is particularly necessary in this election year. Nor will it be credible to pass no redistricting reform in the upcoming session. For these reasons, you previously approved HF 1605. You carry the trust of the voters to do so again.

Thank you for your consideration,

Katherine Kaufer Christoffel

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As you know, 2021 will soon bring new voting maps to Minnesota. Voters across the parties (and no party at all) are clearly saying it's time to bring their interests directly into the process, via public commission, to end the merry-go-round of one-party advantage in redistricting.

I volunteer for the multi-partisan MN Alliance for Democracy because I am among the legions who believe voting maps should be drawn party-blind and incumbent-blind. Voter demand for fair maps is more than verbal: While door-knocking to assess support for a multi-partisan citizen redistricting commission (as outlined in Ginny Klevorn's house bill), I've gathered eager signatures and commitments for supportive yard signs ("Voting maps for people, not parties") in urban, suburban and ex-urban communities like Rochester, Faribault, and Sartell, among others.

In one poignant, cold-November instance petitioning in Brooklyn Park, an elderly retired firefighter, in the midst of lunch, was initially surprised and confused by my visit. Wishing to disturb him no further, I simply left him with the basics of party-focused vs. voter-focused redistricting and went on my way. Several minutes later, surprising me this time, I saw the man had donned his parka and with some physical difficulty caught up to me to sign his name and add his wife's, too. Once the petition's goals were clear to him, he didn't let a little weather and discomfort get in the way of something bigger to him.

That retired public servant represents a lot of Minnesotans of all stripes, judging by their stories and my full petition sheets. They tell us party and incumbent power has gone too far, cost too much in taxpayer dollars, and they want it fixed. They agree that the path to reform is through public hearings conducted in an open, transparent process by a commission of citizens operating under fair redistricting principles.

Thank you for working hard for Minnesotans.

Gail Helland
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Concern about the gerrymandering I saw in Wisconsin following the last census led me to join the multi-partisan MN Alliance for Democracy coalition nearly three years ago. Folks that I talk with through doorknocking and petitioning are as surprised as I was to learn that our state legislature has been unable to agree on redistricting maps for the last forty years and that the State Supreme Court had to intervene. Enough! Now is the time for change. Several bills have been discussed over the last three years, but no agreement can be reached. I personally support the bill authored by Rep. Ginny Klevorn because it gives carefully vetted citizens the responsibility for drawing the maps in an open and transparent process that allows for public input. But what is most important for me now is that we act. I urge this committee to do what it can to gather together those proposing redistricting reform legislation and to agree on a bill that takes the responsibility out of the hands of legislators and makes the process fair, open and transparent. At the end of the day that is what Minnesotans want, and what our state needs, if we are to avoid the fate of our neighbor to the east.

Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Ann Minnick
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I am a self-employed consultant who loves to bike, rollerblade, cross-country ski, garden, travel, and get together with family and friends. Since 2017, though, I regularly give up these things that I love in order to volunteer at all kinds of events, with multiple volunteer groups, to spread the word and gain support for a somewhat esoteric cause, redistricting. It's not as clear-cut and common a topic as, say, school funding or a candidate running for election. So why do I give up my time on the things I love to work on redistricting? Initially, it was for intellectual reasons – I saw the gerrymandering issues in our country, how they are influencing our election outcomes unfairly, and how fair and transparent redistricting could be done if we took action. But as time wore on, and I could feel 'redistricting fatigue' coming on, I also felt my motivation morph into something deeper. My son is in his early 30's now, he's on his own, there's not much I can (or need to) do for him now, but I came to see that leaving him, and his children to come, a world where our voting districts are fair is fundamental to his well-being and his kids' (my

grandkids') well-being. Redistricting became personal for me, a mom-thing, something I can do for him, now that he no longer needs me to cook for him, help with his homework, or go to his track meets.

So I ask you: make our redistricting fair, make it happen. Look beyond the immediate political and personal concerns obstructing our progress. Think about your own kids and grandkids – what a great gift to them it would be to give them fair redistricting for their lives!

Cathleen Barczys Simons
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I've been volunteering my time and energy for the Minnesota Alliance for Democracy to enact legislation or a Constitutional Amendment or both that will prevent partisan political gerrymandering in Minnesota. I want to prevent from happening in Minnesota what's happened in States like Wisconsin and North Carolina where the political party in control of these State's legislatures have redrawn legislative and Congressional district boundaries to maintain their hold on power. I've learned that while the redistricting process in Minnesota has not evidenced the more blatant forms of partisan gerrymandering, the districts drawn each ten years over the past 40 years at least have been subtly gerrymandered to favor incumbents by relying on data about the voters and their preferences. The legislative and Congressional district maps which have been drawn have avoided the more extreme variations on partisan gerrymandering by behind-closed-door political compromises to maintain a rough balance of power between the two major political parties.

There is a reason that the past two redistricting efforts have ended up in court. Blatant partisan gerrymandering was avoided by district boundary changes by the Minnesota Supreme Court that made the least change from prior boundaries. It is no comfort to me and the many other citizens I have spoken to in my door-knocking and petition signing efforts that a judicial back-up exists in Minnesota. The courts have admitted that they are powerless to address the problem of partisan political gerrymandering.

The stakes today for a new process have never been higher. The gridlock and rancor that poison our political process and government today make it all but inevitable that whichever party comes to power in 2020 will use that power to suppress the voice of the opposing party and consolidate its power for the next ten or more years by redrawing legislative and Congressional districts. That process will dilute or deny the vote to thousands of Minnesota voters for years to come. There is no denying that partisan gerrymandering is every bit as effective in denying democratic elections and the bedrock Constitutional principle of one person-one vote as gerrymandering for racial discrimination purposes. It's imperative that the present legislature take action now to adopt legislation or bring a Constitutional Amendment to Minnesota voters in November that establishes an open and transparent process that protects the one-person-one vote principle in Minnesota and democracy based on fair elections.

That's why I'm asking this committee to recommend and approve the bill authored by Rep. Ginny Klevorn, introduced in the last 2019 legislative session as HF 1605. HF 1605 embodies a basic principle of one person-one vote that our courts have recognized as a basic Constitutional guarantee. It defines other principles which an advisory redistricting commission and ultimately the legislature itself must follow in redrawing legislative and Congressional districts. It establishes an open and transparent process for selection of commissioners in an advisory commission that avoids the commission becoming the tool of any party or politician. It prevents redrawing legislative and Congressional boundaries in 2021 from being drawn to gain partisan political advantage. HF 1605 places voter interests ahead of the interests of

special interests, political parties or candidates. It also creates a process that makes redistricting transparent and the legislature accountable.

HF 1605 may not be a perfect bill. But it has bipartisan support. It is better than any alternative bill that I've read by creating a redistricting process based on principles that places voters ahead of parties and candidates and also creates a redistricting commission that makes the redistricting transparent and accountable. I urge this Subcommittee to recommend and approve HF 1605 early in this session of the Legislature to make sure that the next redistricting in Minnesota protects democracy and the Constitutional principle of one person-one vote.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
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I want to address how Minnesota can secure the integrity of its elections by establishing a Citizen's Commission. This issue is pivotal right now as the census draws near so I encourage you to act in this session. Minnesota has always valued fair and competitive elections. Citizens always want to know that their vote matters, and gerrymandered maps drawn for party gain can throw those values out. Think back to before you became a representative. Remember how excited you were to run for office so you could do good in your community. Now, imagine if you were in that position and instead you look at your district and know that it has been drawn so wickedly to favor an incumbent. The inspiration and hope that pushed you to campaign could easily have turned into fear and apathy. People should never turn away from caring about others through politics just because of the way a map was drawn. It is not hard to avoid that situation. It is not hard to protect our elections. All we need is a citizen's commission that draws maps on a set of principles and procedures that ensures fairness and transparency.

Now is the time to act. We all know that the history of drawing these maps has been contentious. For decades the legislature has failed to come together to get these maps passed into law and the Minnesota Supreme Court has had to step in. Decades of parties attempting to pass maps that no one can agree on. Decades of the power to decide representation being given to a body of appointed judges. We can do better. A citizen's commission would take the pressure off the legislative and judicial bodies and ensure that representation is back in the hands of the people for decades to come.

To me, this is an easy decision to ensure fairness in our elections. I hope that it makes sense to you and I encourage you to act not in the interest of parties, but people.

Luke Varien
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I am a liberal Democrat. I spend a lot of time studying climate science and working to avert a climate crisis. I support increased minimum wages, help for the disadvantaged, gun control - a pretty liberal agenda. So why am I spending much of my time working with the MN Alliance for Democracy to ensure non-partisan redistricting? Shouldn't I be hoping the Democrats take the Senate and gerrymander themselves into power? I've thought a lot about this issue, and come up the following reasons:

1 Partisan redistricting is bad for Democracy. If the voters think one party will win no matter how they vote, they become disenchanted with the whole process. Too many countries have lost their democracies because the people stopped believing in the process.

2 Gerrymandering is bad for the party doing it. A politician in a 'safe' district doesn't need to worry about losing in the general election. They only need worry about powerful interests supporting a primary challenger who is more extreme, or more compliant, than they are. The party loses its 'soul.' A 'conservative' party stops being conservative, a 'liberal' party stops being liberal, and nothing either conservative or liberal actually gets done.

3. Policies are not improved through the arguments. As I said, I'm pretty liberal. But I'm humble enough (or maybe just old enough) to know I'm not always right. People on the other side also can have good ideas. A great example is with climate change. There is a free market, old fashioned conservative policy that would go a long way toward a solution in the form of carbon taxes. But in our polarized state, 'conservatives' won't even mention it (or the need for it), and my leftist friends won't even consider such a capitalist idea. If politicians from both sides needed to appeal to a wider range of voters, we would all be more likely to listen to and learn from policies presented by our 'opponents.'

Along with my fellow members of the MN Alliance for Democracy, I've knocked on a lot of doors, attended and testified at a lot of congressional hearings, written many letters to representatives and to our local papers. We all have different ideologies, different ideas on how our country could be improved. What we share is a commitment to the belief in the non-partisan redistricting process needed to keep our elections fair. Only with fair elections can we hope for the improvements we all desire.

I urge you to support a non-partisan redistricting commission as laid out in the bill sponsored by Rep. Klevorn.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your service to our state,

Michael Schwartz
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Voters around the state (and around the country) are very concerned with how polarized our politics has become. The parties are so far apart that it is difficult to actually get the peoples' work done. One of the main reasons for this polarization is the ability of parties to gerrymander districts to the advantage of their own party and their own incumbents. If a district is drawn to be totally safe for one party, candidates from that party don't need to worry about appealing to members of the opposing party, or even to moderates in the district. Over time, parties protected by unfair districts move toward their extremes, get elected with extreme positions, and it is we, the voters, who suffer.

As a member of the MN Alliance for Democracy I have spent a lot of time around the area explaining our desire for a non-partisan redistricting commission to draw districts after the next census. I have heard this complaint over and over: politicians need to be more concerned about getting the people's work done, and less concerned with fighting with their opponents. And people we talk to all across the political spectrum support fairly drawn districts, where we choose our representatives instead of them choosing us.

I hope you will support the establishment of a non-partisan redistricting commission, as set out in Rep. Klevorn's bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration for positive action,
Lori Volding
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As a member of the MN Alliance for Democracy, I recently attended a meeting in Coon Rapids to meet with state representatives from the area. There was a lively, outgoing older woman who related that she had been the representative for that area, winning three consecutive elections. Before the fourth election cycle, the opposing party managed to redraw her district and put her in the same district as a fellow incumbent. Having won the previous three elections, and now being matched with the district incumbent, the opposing party's intent was obvious. I know nothing about this woman's policy positions, and can only guess at her party affiliation. What I am certain of, however, is that this misrepresentation of democracy is not what MN voters expect of their government.

Members of the Alliance have knocked on doors across the state and have found wide support for non-partisan, fair redistricting, from conservative Tea Party voters to the most liberal. We all want our representatives to be elected fairly.

I urge you to support Rep. Klevorn's bill to establish a non-partisan commission to draw district boundaries.

Thank you for your consideration and your service,
John McGill
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What a coincidence. Tonight's redistricting hearing is taking place on the first real day of only the 3rd impeachment trial of the president in the history of the United States. But don't get me wrong. Tonight is not about Republican versus Democrat. And the issue at hand here is not just about redistricting...but rather, it's about a swiftly growing, grassroots movement to make a stronger, more unified state and republic. But this movement is unique in that it has proven to be one of the few, if not the only one that consistently receives overwhelming support from all political parties.

What the people want, and I dare say need, is fairness and transparency in our elections. It's a cornerstone of any self-governing society. Without that, in this respect, we may as well join the ranks of Mexico or even North Korea. There are likely many here among us who think we're already there. Isn't it painfully obvious that our political system is very broken...wounded, perhaps even in critical condition?

But it's not simply broken due to circumstances beyond our control. I guess that's both the good and bad news. Because the truth is, our elections, and therefore a huge portion of our political system are intentionally broken. In other words, our elections in Minnesota are in fact rigged. Rigged by both major parties. Rigged not just since Governor Walz took office a year ago...or since Arne Carlson in the 90's or even back when Rudy Perpich was first elected Governor in 1976. No. We must go back at least 6 decades...to 1960. That's right. For the past 60 years, the Minnesota legislature has failed to produce any bipartisan, NON-gerrymandered district maps. So as much as we like to tout our state as being innovative, intelligent, cutting-edge, and a leader...Minnesota has certainly not lived up to these standards when it comes to how we elect the representatives of its 5.6 million inhabitants.

In Minnesota, congressional and state legislative district boundaries are drawn by the Minnesota State Legislature. These lines are subject to veto by the governor. This currently partisan, self-serving way of drawing the maps should have been a huge red flag long ago. Regardless, this issue has finally been brought to the forefront. The time to once again let the people choose their representatives instead of letting the reps choose their people is now. To quote one of my favorite movies: "Not tomorrow! Not after breakfast! NOW!"

Here's a brief, non-exhaustive list of the benefits to ending the archaic process of gerrymandering by politicians:

1. Elections become more competitive
2. Holding elected politicians accountable for their votes and actions becomes easier
3. Independent, non-partisan drawn districts are less polarized, and therefore the elected official tends to be less extreme
4. Again, voters will actually be choosing their representative instead of the other way around
5. It would likely result in a critical first step to fully fixing our broken election system by paving the way to change how elections are funded; by letting voters rank their preferred candidates; and leading to enacting reasonable term limits

In closing, let's stop talking about reaching out to the other side of the isle and actually start doing it. End gerrymandering. Strengthen our democratic process. Bring the power back to the people. Now is the time. Thank you.

Keith Peterson

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I consider redistricting and the drawing of fair electoral boundaries to be as fundamental to elections as both the right to vote and counting the votes. Rather like a three legged stool. In this era of political cynicism it is vital that some faith be restored to foster constructive political health.

Please support Ginny Klevorn's bill to provide fair and transparent redistricting in Minnesota. Let's face it neither political party knows who will win in 2020; both think they are in with a chance, this is a great way for them to hedge their bets and take credit for something good.

I am a member of the Minnesota Alliance for Democracy and have been active door knocking and petitioning to promote fair redistricting.

Thank you in anticipation,
Charles Griffiths
Uptown Minneapolis
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I'm writing to urge support for redistricting reform as defined in bill HF1605, authored by Rep. Ginny Klevorn.

All of us want our opinions to count, our voices to be heard. A gerrymandered voting map is a gag that effectively silences the voices of voters, and there is no place for this in our country, much less in Minnesota. It is time for Minnesota to step up and back legislation that guarantees fair districts.

The voting public already agrees with this. There is an emerging wave of support for independent redistricting commissions across the country, and Minnesota needs to be a part of that wave. The 2020 census will result in new voting maps for Minnesota and the 2021 redistricting cycle must be different from previous years.

I recently volunteered on a cold day in northern Minnesota to talk about redistricting reform, and the show of citizen support was amazing. People's eyes lit up when they realized why I was knocking on their door. "Oh! Gerrymandering! Yes, it's got to stop!" We have spoken with young people, old people, retirees, election judges, farmers, businesspersons, conservatives, liberals, & libertarians. They all get it.

We Minnesotans work hard. We pay our taxes and we raise our children. And we stay politically involved & keenly attuned to what our legislators are doing, more so than your average US citizen. And when we cast our ballots on that first Tuesday in November or when we write a

letter to our representative, we know full well that our voices deserve to be heard. This is one message that voters understand clearly, and why fair redistricting should be supported by every Minnesota legislator. Support HF1605.

Sincerely,
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It is time to take back our democracy. Gerrymandering has long been a way for political parties and specific legislators to create a process to unfairly advantage that group at the expense of the citizens' right to have his/her vote count.

I support HF 1605 because it gives citizens, that have been carefully vetted, the opportunity to draw the maps in an open, transparent process. This is not only bipartisan but also allows for unaffiliated and other parties to be a part of the process.

I have had a consistently positive response when discussing this issue with friends and family of various political persuasions. This is truly a bipartisan issue. The time to act is now! Please support this effort!!!

Thank you,
Lehlia Paschke
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I am writing to express my hope that you will support the Redistricting Reform Bill authored by Representative Ginny Klevorn. As you are probably aware, her bill is aimed at creating more transparency in the drawing of maps, ensuring that the people within districts are fairly represented and forming a commission of citizenry to help oversee it's implementation. In this current political climate of partisanship, divisiveness and distrust in our Legislators and Government, I believe that it's vitally important to show The People that our elections are set up fairly and that their vote DOES count. That they DO matter. That's why I urge you to cast your support behind this bill, and know that by doing so you are truly standing up for our Democracy.

Sincerely,
Emilie Hossick Schott
612.203.9127
ehossickschott@comcast.net

I'm writing in support of redistricting reform, specifically, bill HF1605 authored by Representative Ginny Klevorn.

Free time is precious. None of us has enough. But I've spent many hours knocking on doors (most recently in sub-zero temperatures!) and attending various County fairs and parades during the summer, explaining to MN residents to why we need their signatures on our petition in support of HF1605. When I'm asked how I chose this particular topic to support with what little time I have left after work and family obligations, it's because redistricting reform is at the very heart of democracy. Given the divisive politics on the national stage, it feels more important than ever for citizens to reclaim our democracy from self-interested politicians.

I don't actually know the political preference of a single one of the dozens of people I've spoken with who ended up signing my petitions; I don't know if they are Democrat, Independent, or Republican; they didn't bother to tell me and I didn't bother to ask.

What mattered to them and to me was the need for fair elections. It's a truly non-partisan issue that reflects core American values we hold dear. I was thanked and encouraged by most of the people I met, and met with cynicism by others. Though almost none of the people I spoke with were against redistricting reform, the cynics felt betrayed and concerned their voices wouldn't matter. If left unchecked, this weariness is dangerous to our democracy.

HF1605 takes redistricting out of the hands of politicians and restores our faith in the political process on both sides of the political spectrum. Please join us.

Sincerely,
Laura G. Duncan
Minneapolis, MN
lfgross@gmail.com

Please do everything you can to ensure that there will be hearings for redistricting reform. I want to see voter focused reforms, such as an independent redistricting advisory commission. I believe that it is imperative that these reforms be put in place to protect the 2021 redistricting cycle.

There are endless demands on our time - family, church, community. However, I can't think of a more important thing to do right now than to join with the Minnesota Alliance For Democracy in urging you to use your considerable abilities to ensure redistricting reform in this legislative session. The time is now!

Respectfully Submitted to the Committee,
Sandra Larson
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It is time for Minnesota voters to choose their legislators rather than legislators choosing their voters. The old way of legislators choosing their voters represents a clear conflict of interest rather than representing the people of the State of Minnesota.

2020 is the year to pass both a statute and, hopefully, a constitutional amendment, to take redistricting out of the hands of the legislature and put it in the hands of an advisory commission or, preferably, an independent commission.

It is critical to our wonderful democracy to prevent gerrymandering in Minnesota. 10 years ago Wisconsin was drastically gerrymandered following the last census and we have all seen how the government there serves the interests of the politicians, taking away the power from the people.

I am a member of the Minnesota Alliance for Democracy and fully support Representative Ginny Klevorn's redistricting bill. I urge you to do what is right and take action this cycle to protect the integrity of our elections.

Jeremy Olsen
Minneapolis, MN
doctorolsen@gmail.com

I'm a Minnesota voter who is hopeful for a better, more representative redistricting system. As a member of the non-partisan MN Alliance for Democracy coalition I've spoken with Democrats, Republicans and Independents who support the notion that Minnesotas should choose their legislators rather than legislators choosing their voters.

I'm urging you to support Minnesota democracy and to support HF 1605 bill.

Thanks
Metti Shank
mettishank@gmail.com

Democracy is built on a few principles, mainly that every voice should be heard, and every vote should be equal. In our most recent election we saw a LOT of different tactics for voter suppression, from intimidation to "no power cords" to closing voting districts in poor neighborhoods to directly disenfranchising Native Americans in ND. Also information was made public about the DECADES of gerrymandering strategy the GOP has used (google Thomas Hofeller for the disturbing and un-American details).

This is NOT the America I was taught about in school and NOT the America my parents raised me to believe in. This is NOT the America my father and nephews went to war to protect.

Luckily in MN there is really only one major form of voter suppression at play- Gerrymandering. Gerrymandering has been around for a very long time, and has been used by both parties to try to increase their power. It's time for us to put a stop to it. Gerrymandering directly contradicts our

principles, allowing incumbents to pick their voters, rather than voters picking their representatives in government. It dilutes and perverts the will of the people. While door knocking before the midterms the one complaint I heard over and over was that the legislators did not need to listen to their constituents... that individual votes didn't matter. We need to change that, and at this time of hyper-partisan activity in Washington, DC, it's time for Minnesota to show that our politicians care about their constituents, not just their own paychecks.

The constitution of Minnesota specifies that redistricting maps be drawn by the legislature, however this puts legislators in the awkward position of having the power to help themselves or hurt their opponents at the cost of their integrity. It can lead to in-fighting and loss of the cooperative nature needed in government, even among members of the same party, who might end up running against each other due to political machinations.

The MN Chamber of Commerce has put forth the idea of redistricting by committee, not by the legislature, as a top priority. This committee will need to adhere to redistricting principles, the most important in my mind being that no plan can be drawn to purposefully favor or disfavor a political party or candidate, and that residences of incumbents will not be taken into consideration. If the residence of an incumbent is used, or if the prior district shape is just re-used no matter what changes may have occurred, then by definition the "newly" drawn districts will favor the status-quo and give preference to the incumbent, rather than making districts competitive! Incumbents should have no advantage over their challengers other than the record of work that they have done for the people who elected them. By preserving the old districts as is, or by taking their residence into account, then they are being protected against competition, which should not happen.

Not only is gerrymandering directly Ant-American, it is COSTLY. There were SEVEN lawsuits related to the 2010 census, not counting appeals! This combined with the amount of time wasted by the legislature submitting plans that were then vetoed because they were too partisan likely amounts to millions of dollars (both actual, and wasted-opportunity) spent that could have been used to help Minnesota in other ways. Please stop this inefficient and wasteful process!

Thank you very much for your consideration of my testimony.

Paul Bock MD
docbock@me.com

Speaking as a concerned citizen and a member of the MN Alliance for Democracy, I want to express my support for redistricting reform. I have been told by a member of the legislature that we don't have gerrymandering in Minnesota, but I disagree. It just isn't as egregious as it is some places. I support a bipartisan committee which draws districts in full view of the public. This is especially needed now that the primary elections give political parties a new tool for choosing their voters. I have knocked on doors in support of candidates. I have made phone calls on behalf of candidates. That has taught

me just how much cynicism is out there regarding the efficacy of the vote. Preventing gerrymandering is perhaps our best tool to combat this corrosion. This isn't a matter of political preference. Both major parties take advantage of drawing district lines preferentially, as recent court cases have demonstrated.

Therefore, I ask your committee to recommend the bill authored in the last legislative session by Rep. Klevorn, HF 1605, because it defines the principles I believe are necessary for such decision making, principles of openness and bipartisanship.

Again, I believe this is of utmost importance.

Thank you for listening and thank you for your service.

Sincerely,
Gloria Plautz
Minneapolis, MN 55419
4849 Dupont Avenue South
gloriaplautz@yahoo.com

I have not been involved with politics for much of my adult life. As a resident of Minnesota and the father of two school age children, I have started paying attention the corruption in government. The more I learn about how our government operates, the more frustrated I get. There are parallels between government and the corporate world; as companies grow, they often don't update their infrastructure at the same rate until systems become so ineffective that they start to choke the organization. Our government has become so riddled with corruption in the form of election financing, super PACs, political party-controlled primaries, a deaf ear to constituents, and gerrymandering, that it has difficulty performing basic functions such as passing a budget.

I live in a Gerrymandered district. Two of my representatives have been in office a combined 41 years. I voted for the incumbents in my district, but it's not like I had much of a choice. Because it is gerrymandered, there are no viable contenders in elections. Long shot opportunities do not draw quality people that will govern rationally. It also means that incumbents have no incentive to hold town halls or participate in debates. In Russia, people only get to vote for one party. In my district, only one party has a viable candidate. Voting when you don't have viable choices is not freedom. Fair definition of voting districts is a requirement to have freedom, choice, and competition in elections.

As a manufacturing engineer, I know all too well that robust processes are required to accomplish repeatable positive outcomes in the long run. Processes that when followed, negate the accidental or intentional contrary actions of the people executing those processes. The greed for re-election, fundraising requirements, the need to feed the political party that got them into office, the need to feed the .05% of wealthy donors and special interests that will need to pay for their re-election heavily influence elected official's behavior. There are too many temptations to take shortcuts to stay in office. There needs to be objectivity and zero influence by political parties and elected officials when defining voting districts. Voting districts need to be selected by an independent non-partisan group of citizens using a well-crafted robust process to create competitive balanced voting districts. I urge you to support a constitutional amendment or legislation that will mandate independent non-partisan commissions for drawing district boundaries. I urge you to adopt robust rules for drawing and approving districts that prevent intentional or unintentional partisan biasing. We all know that Minnesotans are all above average. You have the opportunity to make Minnesota a shining example of how to do elections right.

Tom Wiesen

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Member, RepresentUs Minnesota