

Compilation of Public Statements on SF 2227 Conference Committee

Chair Representative Nelson and Members of the Committee:

I urge you to support Bill SF 856 - Right to vote restoration to Minnesotans with felony convictions upon incarceration release. Vote restoration acknowledges individual dignity and encourages positive involvement in our communities. Under current law over 50,000 Minnesotans are not allowed to vote even though they have been released from incarceration and are considered safe to live in our communities. They raise families, work, pay taxes, and participate in faith communities.

Current law is punitive and is a form of voter suppression. It brings no benefit to individuals or communities. It is retaliatory. Alternatively, research shows that in states where the vote has been restored, people are less likely to re-offend. SF 856 brings hope, supports rehabilitation, reinforces feelings of personal worth, and encourages a sense of belonging - all of which are necessary for individuals to live productive lives. Finally, this bill comes at no cost to taxpayers.

SF 856 is important to me because over my 36 years as a teacher, I spent most of my time working with high school students with various abilities and from diverse backgrounds. Some of these young people have been involved in the criminal justice system. Many of those grew up in difficult circumstances. Anxiety, frustration, and alienation are among the issues with which they have had to cook. Not one of them is evil. Nor do they benefit from shame and punishment. It is important that Minnesota law focus on rehabilitation and provide a second chance to those that need it most.

Restoring the vote is a positive force for good in Minnesota. I encourage you to support bill SF 856.

Please enter this statement into the public record for SF 2227. Please make it available to the public.

Respectfully,

Catherine Engel
Maplewood, MN

Chair Representative Nelson and Members of the Committee:

I urge you to support Bill SF 856 - Right to vote restoration to Minnesotans with felony convictions upon incarceration release. Vote restoration acknowledges individual dignity and encourages positive involvement in our communities. Under current law over 50,000 Minnesotans are not allowed to vote even though they have been released from incarceration and are considered safe to live in our communities. They raise families, work, pay taxes, and participate in faith communities.

Current law is punitive and is a form of voter suppression. It brings no benefit to individuals or communities. It is retaliatory. Alternatively, research shows that in states where the vote has been restored, people are less likely to re-offend. SF 856 brings hope, supports rehabilitation, reinforces feelings of personal worth, and encourages a sense of belonging - all of which are necessary for individuals to live productive lives. Finally, this bill comes at no cost to taxpayers.

SF 856 is important to me because over my 36 years as a teacher, I spent most of my time working with high school students with various abilities and from diverse backgrounds. Some of these young people have been involved in the criminal justice system. Many of those grew up in difficult circumstances. Anxiety, frustration, and alienation are among the issues with which they have had to cook. Not one of them is evil. Nor do they benefit from shame and punishment. It is important that Minnesota law focus on rehabilitation and provide a second chance to those that need it most.

Restoring the vote is a positive force for good in Minnesota. I encourage you to support bill SF 856.

Please enter this statement into the public record for SF 2227. Please make it available to the public.

Respectfully,

Catherine Engel
Maplewood, MN

(Submitted for inclusion in the written record of public testimony before the Conference Committee on May 7, 2019).

To the Chair and members of the Conference Committee for SF 2227/HF 1935, the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill:

Please adopt the House language on redistricting reform from Article 6 of the House State Omnibus Finance Bill into final legislation.

I have worked as a volunteer on redistricting reform since 2017. I often hear people say, “we don’t have gerrymandering here, the courts take care of it!” Sadly, this is not true.

We do have partisan gerrymandering in Minnesota, particularly in the form of districts drawn to favor or disfavor incumbents. Both parties do it, each in their own way.

When partisan maps fail to pass, redistricting goes to the courts. However, because judges do not like to be perceived as activists, they do not start fresh – they tweak the maps, making minimal adjustments. While this lessens the extent of the partisan gerrymandering, it does not remove it entirely. Partisan gerrymandering to favor incumbents has been shown by independent analysis when party maps and the final judges’ maps are compared with maps drawn by non-partisan citizen groups. It’s also evident from a commonsense review of the maps and any number of curiously-shaped districts.

It’s time to fix this broken system. Minnesota needs an advisory commission that is guided by rigorous redistricting principles that put communities and voters first – this redistricting reform bill does this. This bill does not allow consideration of incumbency data at any point in the redistricting process. Public members serve as commissioners, representing the diversity of Minnesota. The process is open and transparent. And, importantly, the advisory commission can be put in place in time to fully safeguard the 2021 redistricting cycle.

Lastly, this redistricting reform bill was developed in conversation with communities across Minnesota and is supported by a broad, multi-partisan coalition. It is the only redistricting bill to have had such community involvement and careful incorporation of best practices.

Minnesota needs fresh, new maps, drawn from the ground up in an open and transparent process, in which voters and communities can have faith. Please support these important redistricting reforms by including the House language in the final legislation.

Thank you very much for your time, consideration, and service.

Respectfully,

Deborah Zvosec
Minneapolis, MN

(Submitted for inclusion in the written record of public testimony before the Conference Committee on May 7, 2019).

To the Chair and members of the Conference Committee for SF 2777/HF 1935, the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill:

Please adopt the House version of redistricting reform (HF 1605/Rep. Klevorn, as was included in the House Elections Omnibus bill) into final legislation.

Minnesota does not have a particularly strong track record of working to create non-partisan voting maps. For the last four census cycles (that is, the last 40 years) the maps created by one party or another have been booted to the courts to hash-out. I think the courts are getting sick of it, and I know I am too. Its time-consuming, expensive and does not speak well to our ability to get the job done when the job needs to be fair and non-partisan.

Because the courts don't wish to be perceived as "activist" they make minimal changes to existing maps, which were created by making minimal changes to previous maps, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Even though this has saved us from the most egregious cases of gerry-mandering, surely we have the brains and political will to create a better system?

Now is the time to address this issue. Minnesota needs an advisory commission that is guided by rigorous redistricting principles that put communities and voters first – HF 1605 does this. HF 1605 does not allow consideration of incumbency data at any point in the redistricting process. Public members serve as commissioners, representing the diversity of Minnesota. The process is open and transparent. And, importantly, the advisory commission can be put in place in time to fully safeguard the 2021 redistricting cycle.

Lastly, HF 1605 was developed in conversation with communities across Minnesota and is supported by a broad, multi-partisan coalition. It is the only redistricting bill to have had such community involvement and careful incorporation of best practices.

Minnesota will need new maps after the 2020 census, but more importantly we need a new process, in which voters (from all political parties) and communities can have faith. Please support these important redistricting reforms by including the House language in the final legislation.

We do very much appreciate your service in public office and we thank you in advance for your consideration of these issues.

Sincerely

Susan Herridge
Minneapolis, MN

To the Chair and Conference Committee Members re SF 2777 / HF 1935 (State Gov. & Finance Omnibus Bill):

This session you have a great chance to pass a multipartisan, public-supported redistricting process in the form of HF 1605 (Rep. Klevorn's bill). Once included in the House Elections Omnibus, it's now ready for adoption into final legislation via the State Gov and Finance Omnibus. **Please support HF 1605's inclusion in the final legislation.**

Though rightly perceived as a good-government state, Minnesota also has a long and expensive history of party-drawn maps that, decade after decade, the opposing party won't pass but instead challenges in the courts. And, yes, though perhaps not as egregiously gerrymandered as practiced in other states, our partisan-based maps nevertheless create the foundation the Court applies in massaging them, doing little to address the original bias.

Let's stop this costly cycle. Through HF 1605's statewide, years-long public input, Minnesotans of all stripes tell us how:

1. Establish a voter-first, public-member advisory commission to draw new district maps from the grassroots up.

2. Apply redistricting principles that put voters and their communities before parties or incumbents. No incumbent or candidate addresses can be factored into line-drawing.
3. Open the process 100%: member selection, public hearings, meeting records — complete with benchmarks and hard deadlines.

Only HF 1605 consulted the public broadly and demonstrated support like this: in bill drafting, in coalition building, and in testifying for it.

Thank you, committee members, for your hard work and service.

Sincerely,

Gail Helland
Minneapolis, MN

Dear Committee members.

I am writing regarding the upcoming consideration of the Senate State Government Finance Omnibus bill proposal, SF2227. Specifically, I urge you retain in the final bill the redistricting advisory commission that is in the House version of that bill. There are several reasons that I think that this will protect the interests of MN voters better than any other likely approach.

- The included language of HF1605/SF2575 has been developed over years with input from many, many citizens, as well as from legislators in both houses and in both parties. All other bills that might replace it have been ‘inside jobs’, created by legislators and their consultants only. This difference has been reflected in the attendance by voters at committee hearings: lots of support for HF1605/SF2575, essentially none for any of the other bills.
- The proposed redistricting advisory commission contains ample citizen participation and a reasonable sized commission. It can be in place in time for the upcoming redistricting cycle without the need for a chancy referendum at the ballot box in 2020 or the passage of other legislation to complete the plan. The constitutional amendment proposals that are still rattling around the legislature—that some want to include instead—have neither of these pluses. Indeed, some are characterized by tiny commissions hand-picked by legislators, the opposite of what is needed for redistricting that reflects the needs and preferences of all voters; and/or they fail to include criteria for selection of members that will assure that the members have the voters, not a partisan perspective, in mind as they deliberate.
- The redistricting principles that are included in HF1605/SF2575, and the order in which they are included, are those that will assure that partisan entrenchment—of either party—is not supported by the maps drawn. Other bills prioritize principles like “preserving core districts” and “preserving political subdivisions,” which benefit political parties; or “compactness”, which may enable ‘packing and cracking’ of voters into districts. A legislatively sanctioned plan for redistricting must be serious and put voters, not politicians, first. The proper principles in the proper order will assure this.
- Now is the time to pass redistricting legislation. Postponing it will condemn MN to repeating the expensive and time-wasting debacle of past years, in which the legislature tries to pass a plan, then fails, leading to a Court plan. If fair legislation is passed now, we can stop this embarrassing cycle of 50 years, and become in this realm of voting, as in others, a beacon among States for how to run our democracy the way we all know it needs to be done.

If, for any reason, you choose to replace HF1605/SF2575 with another bill, I urge you in the strongest terms to at least include the redistricting principles from the bill that is now included in the House version of SF2227. The voters of MN, States around the country, and history are watching what you do on this. Please get it right.

Please include this testimony in the record of the Committee deliberations.

Thank you for your consideration,

Katherine Kaufer Christoffel
St. Louis Park, MN
MN Let People Vote Coalition

Dear Committee members.

I urge you retain in the final Senate State Government Finance Omnibus bill proposal, SF2227, the redistricting advisory commission that is in the House version of that bill. The House version will protect the interests of Minnesota voters better than any other approach.

The language of HF1605/SF2575 has been developed over years with input from many, many citizens, as well as from legislators in both houses and in both parties. All other bills that might replace it have been ‘inside jobs’, created by legislators and their consultants only. This difference has been reflected in the attendance by voters at committee hearings: lots of support for HF1605/SF2575, essentially none for any of the other bills.

The proposed redistricting advisory commission contains ample citizen participation and a reasonable sized commission. It can be in place in time for the upcoming redistricting cycle without the need for a referendum at the ballot box in 2020 or the passage of other legislation to complete the plan. The constitutional amendment proposals that some want to include instead—have neither of these pluses. In fact some are characterized by tiny commissions hand-picked by legislators. That is the opposite of what is needed for redistricting that reflects the needs and preferences of all voters. And they fail to include criteria for selection of members that will assure that the members have the voters, not a partisan perspective, in mind as they deliberate.

The redistricting principles that are included in HF1605/SF2575, and the order in which they are included, are those that will assure that partisan entrenchment—of either party—is not supported by the maps drawn. Other bills prioritize principles like “preserving core districts” and “preserving political subdivisions,” which benefit political parties; or “compactness”, which may enable ‘packing and cracking’ of voters into districts. A legislatively sanctioned plan for redistricting must be serious and put voters, not politicians, first.

Now is the time to pass redistricting legislation. Postponing it will condemn MN to repeating the expensive and time-wasting debacle of past years, in which the legislature tries to pass a plan, then fails, leading to a Court plan. If fair legislation is passed now, we can stop this embarrassing cycle of 50 years, and become a beacon among States for how to run our democracy the way we all know it needs to be done.

If, for any reason, you choose to replace HF1605/SF2575 with another bill, I strongly urge you to at least include the redistricting principles from the bill that is now included in the House version of SF2227. The voters of Minnesota are watching what you do on this! Please get it right.

Please include this testimony in the record of the Committee deliberations.

Sincerely,
Janice Goldstein
St. Louis Park, MN

Testimony from Stephen W. Smith

Written testimony to be included as part of written record of Omnibus Gov Fin, SF 2227

My name is Stephen W. Smith and I am a physician in Minneapolis.

I am very concerned with redistricting reform. I am asking that the conference committee please adopt the house version of redistricting reform in article 6 of the Omnibus state government finance bill.

I think we all know that we need redistricting reform.

There are several bills out there and it has thus been confusing for everyone.

However, only one bill addresses all the important issues. This bill is House file 1605 which has been incorporated into the state government omnibus bill and is now article 6 of SF 2227.

Why is HF 1605 the best?

First, there are strong redistricting principles That neither favorite nor disfavor incumbents.

Second, it protects the 2021 redistricting cycle.

Third, it has full and equal participation of public citizens as commissioners, who can represent the full diversity of Minnesota.

Fourth, it is an open and transparent process with open records, open meetings, and open communications, and does not allow the participation of lobbyists or legislators to influence the outcome.

Really, this is the **only** bill with widespread grassroots support. **In fact**, it is the only bill with any grassroots support. Finally, although not opposed to a constitutional amendment, a CA would require vastly more resources for passage than are available in the next election.

Therefore, a statutory solution is essential.

Thank you,

Stephen W. Smith

Faculty Emergency Physician, Hennepin County Medical Center
Professor of Emergency Medicine, University of Minnesota School of Medicine
HCMC ER, R-2
701 S. Park Ave.
Minneapolis, MN 55415
[612-873-5683](tel:612-873-5683)

To the Chair and Members of the Conference Committee for SF 2227/HF 1935, the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill:

Please adopt the House version of redistricting reform (HF 1605/Rep. Klevorn, as was included in the House Elections Omnibus Bill) into final legislation. When I knock on doors or make phone calls in support of my favorite candidates, I often get comments about how once a lawmaker gets elected he or she finds a way to stay in office and no longer feels a responsibility to the voters. Gerrymandering is one of the methods by which this is done, and both parties do it. In the last forty years the decision has gone to the courts as a result of exactly this, and the court has fine-tuned previous maps and erased probably the most egregious gerrymandering. But this isn't the way it should be done. I have no illusions about redistricting being easy, but HF 1605 lays out a plan for selection of an advisory redistricting board which is open, bipartisan and balanced in the members of the public who would serve, rather than seating a panel of political insiders.

The panel would at this point only be advisory, but I don't believe its decisions could be simply ignored, as some have claimed. Should the decision again be sent to the courts I can't help but feel that they would consult the board's recommendations and change what they thought was off base. This is the very reason I think we don't want to begin by empaneling such a group via a constitutional amendment. Surely the cautious method would be to try this out, and encode it later if it proves itself? As well, it gives us a plan which can be used in 2021.

Thank you very much for your work on this subject.

Sincerely,

Gloria Plautz
Minneapolis, MN

I am submitting written testimony on SF 2227. Please include this as part of the written record of public testimony and confirm receipt of my submission.

I am part of a state-wide coalition supporting HF 1605 (the Klevorn redistricting bill), which has been incorporated in SF 2227. HF 1605 is the only redistricting bill that includes the following key elements:

- 1) Protects the 2021 redistricting cycle by establishing an advisory redistricting commission either directly or as a back-up, should a constitutional amendment fail
- 2) Provides for full and equal participation of public members on the commission
- 3) Includes redistricting principles that puts voters and communities first, NOT incumbents or parties
- 4) Makes the redistricting process fully open and transparent, with open records, open meetings, open communications and public hearings to elicit public input.

In contrast, HF 1855 seeks to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot. This is time consuming, expensive and likely to fail, which means the status quo remains in effect.

The public is eager for change. Now is the time to put realistic measures in place to protect the 2021 redistricting cycle.

Thank you for your service and for supporting HF 1605.

Ann Minnick, a concerned resident of Minneapolis.

Good redistricting reform is a bipartisan issue and we, the citizens of Minnesota, should be a part of the process. When I was out doorknocking last year, I heard from neighbors (Republican, Democrat, Independent and Undecided/Uninterested), discouraged with the bitter partisanship in government and concerned about gerrymandering.

Right now, legislators in a partisan fashion fight for district lines, and courts have settled and compromised these lines to suit legislators. It's time to take the partisanship out of the process and put redistricting into the hands of an advisory commission with public input.

Please adopt the House version of Redistricting Reform with language from HF 1605 in Article 6 of the omnibus state government finance bill. Strong redistricting principles are reflected in this bill emphasizing the diversity of public commission members and drawing district lines involving public input with an open and transparent process.

This bill has had a statewide coalition showing strong public and community participation and support throughout the process: members have attended hearings, given oral and written testimony, and published Letters to the Editor. No other redistricting bill demonstrates this much public enthusiasm. We need this protection for the 2021 redistricting cycle now.

Thank you for very much for your consideration and your service.

Respectfully,

Dr. Ann Jennen
St. Paul, MN

Testimony of Jon Erik Kingstad
To Conference Committee
In Support of SF 2227, Article 6
On Legislative Redistricting Reform

To: Chair and Members of the Conference Committee for SF 2227 the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill,

I'm submitting the following written testimony to the public record, in support of Article 6 to SF 2227, which would authorize the creation of an advisory legislative redistricting commission and require legislative and Congressional districts be redrawn in 2021 from the ground up based on specific redistricting principles that would prevent political gerrymandering in favor or any political party or incumbent.

This legislation, introduced as HF 1605, authored by Rep. Ginny Klevorn and included in the House Omnibus Elections Bill, would create an advisory legislative and Congressional redistricting Commission that retains the final authority for redistricting with the Minnesota Legislature. Unlike other proposals for redistricting in this current legislative session, HF 1605 does not require any Constitutional amendment but relies on strong core redistricting principles. These principles include a prohibition on drawing maps to favor or disfavor an incumbent; the use of incumbents' addresses at any point; and a prohibition on use of information regarding registered voters, political affiliation, voting history and demographic until after the maps are drawn and then only to test for compliance with the standards and principles.

Past redistricting efforts have ended in the Minnesota courts where the courts, deferring to core districts that were created by the legislative without following any core principles, preserved political gerrymandered districts that have favored incumbents and the political party. HF 1605 and Article 6 of SF 2227 puts Minnesota voters and the principle of one-person-one vote first. The advisory commission created would have full and equal participation of public citizens as public commissions, representing the diversity of Minnesota and require an open and transparent process (open records, open meetings, open communications. Adoption of this legislation is the last best chance for redistricting reform before the 2021 redistricting cycle that will establish legislative and Congressional boundaries for the next ten years until 2031. A Constitutional amendment would be risky and costly.

I believe Minnesota can and should do better than the last two legislative redistricting efforts. SF 2227 (Article 6)/HF 1605 provides a clear path for redistricting that will protect the integrity of our elections in Minnesota and our right to vote. Please adopt Article 6 of SF 2227 for adoption by the Minnesota House and Senate and to Governor Walz for his signature. Thank you.

Jon Erik Kingstad

3684 Garden Court North

Oakdale, Minnesota 55128

I would like to submit this written public testimony on the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill SF 2227/HF 1935. Specifically, I am requesting that HF 1605, the House version of redistricting reform (main author Ginny Klevorn), article 6 of the Omnibus bill, be adopted.

Fair elections are crucial to our democracy, and yet in recent times politicians have become more and more skilled at using computer models to determine the most likely way for them to remain in power. In other words, gerrymandering has become extremely sophisticated. We see this as more and more states are being taken to court, even as far as the Supreme Court, to contest their precisely-gerrymandered election districts.

Minnesota has a chance to turn that around! I am so proud of our state for being a leader in conducting fair, clean elections—for example, with our use of paper ballots to back up electronic voting, and with our same-day voting registration. But if citizens don't believe their vote counts equally with everyone else's, due to partisan gerrymandering, this is meaningless. We don't have a functioning democracy if citizens don't believe their vote is important. Minnesota often leads the nation in voter turnout—another source of great pride. Let's lead the nation in using the most fair redistricting method as well!

HF 1605 establishes a redistricting advisory commission made up of a range of citizens, chosen from applicants across the state, to reflect our population. The members cannot have political ties—for example, they cannot be lobbyists. The commission would conduct its business in an open and clear manner. I am a member of a state-wide coalition supporting HF 1605, including the Chamber of Commerce. I very much respect the thoughtful work, over the last two years, that went into creating the particulars of this bill establishing a fair redistricting advisory commission.

Plus, as I might point out since this is in the Finance bill, it will save the state money, since we won't have to spend money sending the redistricting process to the courts, as we have had to do in the last many decades. And, it will be ready to go after the 2020 census comes in. We can hit the ground running.

In so many ways, HF 1605 is a win-win for our state and for democracy. I urge you to please keep it moving forward.

Thank you for considering this, and for all you do for our state. Respectfully,

Deb Ellsworth

St. Louis Park, MN

I am writing today to ask for your support of the House version of Redistricting Reform, in Article 6 of the Omnibus State Government Finance bill.

Last fall I door knocked on nearly 600 doors in the west metro and met lots of voters. Many voters wanted me to know that they had tired of our public servants' inability to work together on behalf of the people they represent. That is probably a message you have heard before. The Redistricting Reform, in Article 6 of the Omnibus bill, is your opportunity to advance legislation that puts the people of Minnesota ahead of partisan politics and position our great State to lead in redistricting.

I support Redistricting Reform (Article 6 of the Omnibus bill) because of these important realities:

- For decades, our state legislators have repeatedly failed to pass redistricting maps, relegating this important work to the judicial branch
 - The Courts have tweaked previously gerrymandered maps, perpetuating partisan gerrymandering
- The citizens of Minnesota recognize NOW is the time to take partisanship out of the process and put redistricting into the hands of an advisory commission

- The citizens of Minnesota recognize NOW is the time to produce for the first time a set of truly clean maps that are drawn from the ground up, based on communities, not parties
- After decades of the same old/same old, it is NOW the time to put Minnesota voters first when deciding voting districts

Here's why the Omnibus bill (Article 6) IS THE BEST BILL TO ACCOMPLISH REDISTRICTING REFORM:

- The Omnibus bill has strong redistricting principles (including a prohibition on drawing maps to favor or disfavor an incumbent; it does not allow the use of incumbents' addresses at any point)
- **The Omnibus bill protects the 2021 redistricting cycle (THIS IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL)**
- The Omnibus bill has full and equal participation of public citizens as public commissions, representing the diversity of our great State
- The Omnibus bill has an open and transparent process (open records, open meetings, open communications)

I AM PROUD TO BE A MEMBER OF A STATEWIDE COALITION SUPPORTING HF 1605. I am proud to champion redistricting reform that puts Minnesota voters first. **IT IS THE ONLY REDISTRICTING BILL** that has had strong public/community participation and support throughout the legislative process, from the drafting of the bill to current support by a statewide coalition to include coalition members attending hearings, giving oral testimony, submitting written testimony, publishing Letters to the Editor, contacting legislators, et al.

No other redistricting bill demonstrates this level of citizen participation and support.

Representative Gelbmann, I respectfully request confirmation of receipt, AND I ask that my email to you is submitted as written record of public testimony on the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill, SF 2227.

Representative Gelbmann, please adopt the House version of Redistricting Reform, in Article 6 of the Omnibus bill and protect the 2021 redistricting cycle in Minnesota.

Thank you for your service to our great State.

Michelle Price
Golden Valley, MN

To the Chair and members of the Conference Committee for SF 2777/HF1935, the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill:

I am a member of a statewide coalition supporting thoughtful redistricting reform in Minnesota. This coalition is multipartisan and devoted to the cause of fair representation of all voters in the state. My participation in this coalition has helped me to understand how important it is for citizens to pay attention to redistricting in our state. I am asking you to adopt the House version of redistricting reform (HF 1605/Rep. Ginny Klevorn, as was included in the House Elections Omnibus bill) into final legislation.

In recent redistricting cycles, the legislature has spent enormous amounts of time and money drawing redistricting maps and defending them through the courts. Not only has this been expensive, it also has caused tensions and conflict between and even among the political parties in the legislature. The maps drawn up in recent redistricting cycles have ended up referred to the Supreme Court. The reason the Supreme Court had to take over the task of redistricting is that the maps drawn by the legislature had failed to provide fair electoral districts that would give each voter a chance for his/her vote to matter. As a result of the Supreme Court's efforts at redistricting, we do not have the severe

gerrymandering seen in some states. However, our system is far from perfect, since the Court's maps have merely made slight adjustments to some previously gerrymandered districts. Thus, some districts have peculiar shapes and do not allow for fair representation of all voters.

HF 1605 is a bill that reflects years of thoughtful planning for a way to reform the redistricting process in Minnesota. It incorporates best practices for addressing fair and open redistricting. HF 1605 would provide for an advisory commission that would be bipartisan and that would include full and equal participation of citizens of Minnesota. This redistricting commission would not favor or disfavor incumbents, and would operate in a manner that is transparent and open. If HF 1605 is put into law, it would protect the important 2021 redistricting cycle and at the same time, save the huge amounts time, energy and funds spent in the past on litigation over redistricting. HF 1605 is the only redistricting bill that incorporates best practices and that has generated wide community involvement.

Thank you very much. I appreciate your dedication and work on behalf of Minnesotans.

Sincerely yours,
Signe Dysken, M.D.
Minneapolis, MN
sigmidken@hotmail.com

To the Chair and members of the Conference Committee for SF 2777/HF 1935, the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill:

I hope the Committee will approve redistricting reform as described in Article 6 of the House version of the State Government Finance Omnibus Bill. I am a retired physician who has spent several months learning about redistricting in Minnesota. I am also a politically active member of the statewide coalition that supports the redistricting principles in Article 6.

In the recent past, the legislature's redistricting maps have been vetoed by the governor, and then sent to the Minnesota Supreme Court. Rather than drawing new districts, the Court has adjusted the legislature-drawn maps to make them less unfair.

Minnesota deserves better.

Voters don't like gerrymandering any more than the party out of power does. While most citizens aren't redistricting experts, we know that data-tested, fair redistricting principles exist. We hope that our 2019 legislature will move forward with the best of this session's redistricting bills— the redistricting reform described in HF 1935 Article 6.

This best version involves citizen participation in a bipartisan advisory commission with an open and transparent process. The result is freshly drawn, fair maps after each census that put voters first and are blind to residencies of incumbents.

Please listen to Common Cause MN and the coalition advocating for redistricting reform that protects the 2021-2020 cycle. Let voters know that state legislators put Minnesotans' needs ahead of their own.

Thanks for your consideration,

Susan Cushman
Golden Valley, MN

Dear Conference Committee members of
SF-2227,

What in the world is going on?

On May 1st SF2227/1935 appropriations bill was sent to conference committee after the Senate did not concur with amendments added by the House including dangerous language to add Minnesota to the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. This would fundamentally change our Presidential election process. Our current system ensures that each State has a defined voice that can't be taken away. A candidate must impress upon each State that he or she will represent that State's interests in order to gain its electoral votes. Changing our electoral system to a popular vote would in fact ensure that the voters of Minnesota will lose their voice in presidential elections. Your constituents deserve a voice in the presidential election do not take that from them.

I ask you to vote against adding dangerous NPV language to an appropriations bill. Changing the way we elect the President should not be a decision taken lightly or be made by a minority of States all with a similar political leaning. Even if you support NPV as a concept adding it to the end of an appropriations bill is irresponsible. It should be debated and voted on for its own merits. Better yet changing the way we elect the President of the United States should be debated on a national stage not a series of local stages. NPV supporters should be implored to follow our Constitutional intent and introduce this change through a constitutional amendment.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lanae Fisher

To the Chair and members of the Conference Committee for SF 2227/HF 1935, the Omnibus State Government Finance Bill:

My name is Charlie Quimby. I'm longtime resident of Golden Valley. My activism has been focused on community-level change efforts and advancing good public policy.

Last year, my wife and I joined a coalition of voters working with Common Cause to advance a redistricting reform bill that represents two years of coalition outreach and work on principles and process. It establishes a bipartisan advisory commission to draw clean voter maps through a transparent public process, with safeguards against partisan influence or favoring incumbents.

Yesterday we attended the side-by-side reading of this Omnibus bill. At the very end, we reached Article 6. In the right column, we saw the product of our efforts.

The other column is blank.

I went home, mulling what I would say today. I'd barely eaten all day. And having just returned from a winter in Colorado, we've not yet restocked our pantry.

So there I was, peering at sparse shelves, wondering if I could put something together for dinner.

I spied a box of taboule mix. Great. Then I made out the "best before" date of December '06.

You may remember soon after the '06 election, Walter Mondale and Arne Carlson recommended an independent commission of retired judges to draw Minnesota's redistricting plans. My state senator Ann Rest introduced a bill to implement that recommendation. It went nowhere. A successor bill passed the Senate in 2009 but also went nowhere.

I looked some more. I found a full but slightly gnarly bottle of Mrs. Dash salt-free seasoning blend. I couldn't find any freshness date, but the label said it was distributed by Alberto-Culver, the VO5 conglomerate. Turns out they folded in 2010.

That's when a Republican-drawn redistricting plan pitted 20 incumbents in the House and six in the Senate against each other. All but one of the matchups put a DFLer or two in peril. The courts ended up redrawing the maps—as they had for decades.

I found another jar of very similar product, also from Costco. It bears a “best before 01/2016” stamp. Three years ago, other states began work to end gerrymandering and form public commissions to redraw voting maps in time for the 2021 redistricting cycle. They are ready.

But here we are now, and one shelf is bare. I don’t know how you’ll work this out. But please, don’t do nothing. And don’t toss together something last-minute from old, failed recipes. The Committee has before it a robust set of redistricting principles and a defined process for implementation that puts voters first. It’s a fresh package containing the language and structure you need to move forward.

Otherwise, what kind of maps are we going to make in 2021?

Respectfully,

Charlie Quimby
2415 Vale Crest Road
Golden Valley, MN 55422

Testimony

Minnesota voters of both parties want fair elections. For decades our districts have been drawn by the party in power, then “tweaked” by the panel of judges appointed by the Supreme Court. The Court’s decision making is never revealed. There is a growing recognition that this process needs to be reformed and several redistricting reform bills have been submitted during this session.

I’m a member of a statewide coalition supporting redistricting reform (originally HF 1605/Klevorn), whose language is in Article 6 of the Omnibus State Government Finance bill. This bill has been developed over the a number of years through statewide input and vetting. No other redistricting legislation currently being considered has had such public participation and I believe it is the only redistricting bill up for consideration that accomplishes the desired goal of putting the interests of the voters and local communities over politicians.

This redistricting reform bill establishes an advisory commission to set up districts in a nonpartisan manner through specific and detailed principles based on best practices nationwide, for instance by setting a prohibition on using drawing districts to favor incumbents

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing regarding the Senate State Government Finance Omnibus bill proposal, SF2227. Please retain the redistricting advisory commission and redistricting principles that are in the House version of that bill. Protect the interests of Minnesota voters!

- The language of HF1605/SF2575 has been thoroughly vetted and has buy-in across Minnesota. It was developed with input from many citizens and legislators in both houses from both parties over several years. All other competing bills were created by legislators and consultants only. As a result, at committee hearings, many voters attended to support HF1605/SF2575 but not any of the other bills.
- The proposed redistricting advisory commission contains ample citizen participation and a reasonable sized commission. Some competing plans are characterized by tiny commissions hand picked by legislators.
- It can be in place in time for the upcoming redistricting cycle. By comparison, a referendum for a constitutional amendment is likely to fail simply because not enough voters will mark the question on their ballots. Pursuing a constitutional amendment is an expensive boondoggle.
- The redistricting principles that are included in HF1605/SF2575—and the order in which they are included—will ensure fair maps. Again, they have been thoroughly vetted. The plan for redistricting must put voters, not politicians, first. The proper principles in the proper order will ensure this.

- Now is the time to pass redistricting legislation. Failing to plan is planning to fail. Avoid the expensive, time-wasting need to work it through the courts yet again. If, for any reason, you choose to replace HF1605/SF2575 with another bill, I implore you to at least include the redistricting principles from the bill that is now included in the House version of SF2227.

Please include this testimony in the record of the Committee deliberations.

Thank you for your consideration,

Carol Duling
1337 Prior Ave. South
St. Paul, MN 55116
danielcarol@comcast.net
MN Let People Vote Coalition
