

Commissioner of Securities and Insurance

Troy Downing
Commissioner



Office of the
Montana State Auditor

September 7, 2021

Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
PO Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620-1706

Re: Congressional Redistricting

Dear Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission:

Montana has the opportunity this year to take center stage in the fight against the gerrymandering and corruption that has become so prevalent in Washington DC and across the Nation. Montana has always done things differently and that is why Montana continues to be the “Last Best Place.”

This rapid population growth has earned Montana a second seat in the United States House of Representatives. However, even before this additional seat was announced, there was a concerted effort to gerrymander these districts to strengthen or weaken political parties.

This additional seat is too consequential in protecting our way of life and our representative democracy to allow it to devolve into a political tug of war. The Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission has a duty, under Article 1, Section 2 of the United States Constitution, to create two districts of equal population size — doing so in a way that is fair and without partisanship factoring into the decision. The inclination of many to design districts that will support one party over another is antithetical to the intent of the Founding Fathers and contrary to the values Montanans hold dear.

The Montana Constitution is also clear the districts must be compact and contiguous, meaning a district cannot be separated, and natural or artificial barriers cannot inhibit transportation from one piece of the district to another. The Commission should also make attempts not to divide towns, cities, and counties into separate districts. Neighbors should not be represented in Washington DC by different individuals. The splitting of towns and neighborhoods must be considered a direct attempt to gerrymander districts and quickly repudiated. While I firmly believe the current Commission is committed to nonpartisan decision-making, dividing towns and neighborhoods creates a dangerous precedent that will make gerrymandering easier and more common in the future.

We have an opportunity to show the rest of the country that Montana understands the constitutional intent of our forefathers and can draw new districts without political posturing. Any attempt to draw politically “fair” districts is simply an abandonment of the intent of the constitution and, at most, a feeble attempt to appease political cronies by gerrymandering congressional districts.

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Allowing gerrymandering and insider deals to determine congressional lines is in direct conflict to the way the rest of the country correctly sees Montana as the "Last Best Place." I strongly urge the Districting Commission to follow both the Montana and US Constitution in determining boundaries for Montana's two House districts.

Sincerely,



Troy Downing
Montana State Auditor
Commissioner of Securities and Insurance

CC:

Commissioner Jeff Essmann
Commissioner Joe Lamson
Commissioner Kendra Miller
Commissioner Maylinn Smith
Commissioner Dan Stusek