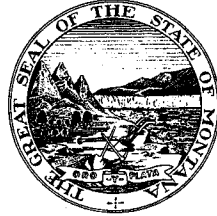


Montana State Senate



SENATOR TAYLOR BROWN
SENATE DISTRICT 22

HELENA ADDRESS:
PO BOX 200500
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0500
CAPITOL, RM 328
PHONE: (406) 444-4800

HOME ADDRESS:
775 SQUAW CREEK ROAD
HUNTLEY, MT 59037
PHONE: (406) 252-6661 EXT. 21

The Big Sky Country

May 15, 2012

TO: Members of the Montana Districting and Apportionment Committee

FR: Senator Taylor Brown, SD 22

RE: Public Comment on the Redistricting Criteria

Almost exactly one year ago you came here to Billings and listened to our input as you began this process. Thank you for the work you have done since then on this huge project. It is very obvious that you and the Legislative Services staff have put a lot of effort into this undertaking. Here are my own comments on the Redistricting proposals before us.

"Existing Map" ignores Compactness and Communities of Interest

The current map of Legislative Districts was inappropriate when it was designed ten years ago, and the alternative today known as the "Existing Districts" map needs to be discarded. As you heard from many in your public testimony, my district is a good example of one where "Compactness" has been totally ignored, and "Communities of Interest" have been ripped apart. Senate District 22 is 140 miles long, and at a point near the center of it's population is it only about 10 miles wide!

Clearly, the affluent urban country-club estates along the private Briarwood Golf Course south of Billings, have very little in common with the remote rural cow ranches along the Tongue River... 140 miles away. There is one thing these far-flung residents do agree on though. They both know that the interests of their respective communities have been purposefully ignored by the Montana Districting and Apportionment Committee.

"Urban-Rural" Plan preserves Geographic and Jurisdictional Boundaries

There are a myriad of reasons why it is important that, for the societal good, the legislative districts be drawn along existing recognized jurisdictional and geographic boundaries. The people of Montana are not well-served when the representation of small towns is split in two, for no other reason than just so that one political party has an advantage over the other.

As an example of why current plan is unworkable, I call your attention to the way the towns of Hardin, or Havre, or Butte, or Missoula have been splintered, purposefully ignoring normally accepted boundaries that for decades have efficiently and fairly served voters who share similar issues. It is easy to understand why the residents there now feel disenfranchised from their elected leaders. You have heard their stories of frustration, time and time again, in these Public Meetings.

It appears to me that the map know as the "Urban-Rural" plan does the best job of preserving traditional neighborhoods, following subdivisions like schools districts, and has compact and contiguous districts.

Reject the Highly-Partisan "Communities" Plan

Again, I strongly oppose both the "Existing District" map and the Lamson-Smith Democrat plan, the so-called "Communities Plan. Those both have very non-compact districts that cut through and across neighborhoods and communities within the city. Both were developed at one point in time by the Montana Democratic party as a way of bolstering their chances in legislative elections. I urge the commission to reject these two maps as bad starting points.

You now have a chance to set things right

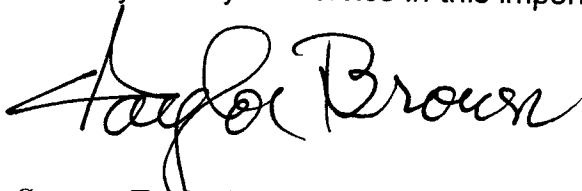
Frankly, under the travesty of this process six years ago, the system here in Montana was grossly abused, and the law was inappropriately twisted, for selfish political gain.

You can choose to either allow that unfairness and inequity to continue, or you can decide to do something about it. The people of Montana have empowered you with many tools, and placed significant resources at your disposal, just to allow you to do this correctly.

The eyes of Montana's citizens are upon you, and they are going to closely watch this process. What will you do to make sure they are treated fairly and equitably? The people that I represent do not want you to allow unfair political advantage, and sweetheart deals for partisan gain.

They just want you to do what is right.

Thank you for your service in this important work for the people of Montana.



Senator Taylor Brown
SD22

775 Squaw Creek Road

Huntley, MT 59037

ph: (406) 252-6661

fax: (406) 245-9755

taylor@northernbroadcasting.com

Legislative Redistricting Public Meeting Comments
Billings 5/15/2012

I wanted to start out by stating my opposition to the only plan drawn in conjunction with the use of political data and voting preferences – the Democrat's so-called Communities Plan.

My main objection to it is that it doesn't follow your mandatory criteria of population equality. Districts may deviate from the ideal district size by 3%, but ANY deviation must be tied back to one of the other criteria. The Communities Map used political data and election results to put fewer people into Democrat leaning districts and more people into Republican leaning districts. Based on my estimates, 80% of what appeared to be Republican districts had more than the ideal district size, and 82 percent of what seemed to be Democrat districts had less than the ideal district size. That did not happen by accident. It was also noticed by the Gazette editorial board, which put it in their op-ed this last Sunday.

The Democrats did this ten years ago, using the 5% deviation to the maximum. Following the last redistricting cycle, a Georgia redistricting plan was thrown out due to similar circumstances in federal court because the court found that deviations were used for political purposes. That case is *Larios v. Cox*. Montana's plan was never challenged on this point. The current plan from the Montana Democratic Party also uses deviation for political purposes in an effort to spread their influence more broadly. This blatantly goes against your mandatory criteria, and it goes against federal case law.

You will find that the other plans don't follow some methodical manipulation of population deviation for political gain because non-partisan staff drew up those plans. They didn't, to my knowledge, use one shred of political data and election results as they drew their plans. That is how it should be.

I would also like to point out that the Democrat plan routinely violates one of your other mandatory criteria. There are several districts that are not compact under any stretch of the imagination. Just look here in Billings at HD 51 and 52, which at some points are only three blocks tall, but several miles wide. This pattern continues in cities like Great Falls, Bozeman, and Helena. They fail the general appearance test, and probably every mathematical formula

Mr. Chairman, do not reward cheating. Stick to your criteria, listen to public comment, and rely on your non-partisan staff.

Respectfully,

Representative Cary Smith

House District 55

Montana State House of Representatives

Majority Whip

Dear Chairman Regnier,

I strongly urge you to reject maps that use political data and election results in the development of district lines for the legislature. Political parties should not manipulate boundaries to maximize the number of seats they think they can win in elections. That defeats the purpose of redistricting, which is to equalize the number of people in districts, protect minority voting rights, following existing political subdivisions and communities of interest.

The last map in Montana was developed through a heavy reliance on political data and election results. There is no other way to explain how many communities were divided, other than it served a political purpose for the Montana Democratic Party. The new map should have no resemblance to the current map, because it inconsistently ignores existing political subdivisions, communities of interest, lacks the compactness requirement and all of the other official redistricting criteria.

The commission should use the three maps developed by non-partisan legislative staff as starting points for the new map: the urban-rural, deviation and subdivision maps. The fourth map is just a slightly modified version of the map the Democrats put forward in 2000 using political data and election results. Many local communities are putting forward suggestions for their areas – please pay special attention to those.

Thank you for your work on building consensus throughout this process. We encourage you to reject partisan politics in the redistricting effort.

Sincerely,

NAME: Doug & Joan Judkins

ADDRESS: PO Box 190
Bridger, MT 59014

EMAIL: _____

Dear Chairman Regnier,

I strongly urge you to reject maps that use political data and election results in the development of district lines for the legislature. Political parties should not manipulate boundaries to maximize the number of seats they think they can win in elections. That defeats the purpose of redistricting, which is to equalize the number of people in districts, protect minority voting rights, following existing political subdivisions and communities of interest.

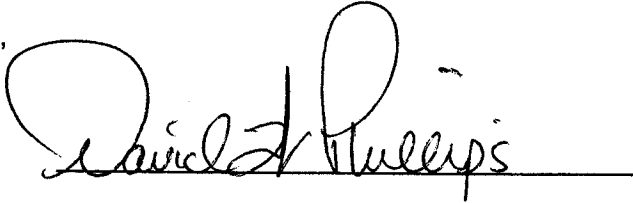
The last map in Montana was developed through a heavy reliance on political data and election results. There is no other way to explain how many communities were divided, other than it served a political purpose for the Montana Democratic Party. The new map should have no resemblance to the current map, because it inconsistently ignores existing political subdivisions, communities of interest, lacks the compactness requirement and all of the other official redistricting criteria.

The commission should use the three maps developed by non-partisan legislative staff as starting points for the new map: the urban-rural, deviation and subdivision maps. The fourth map is just a slightly modified version of the map the Democrats put forward in 2000 using political data and election results. Many local communities are putting forward suggestions for their areas – please pay special attention to those.

Thank you for your work on building consensus throughout this process. We encourage you to reject partisan politics in the redistricting effort.

Sincerely,

NAME:



ADDRESS:

15 SAGE DRIVE FROMBORG MT
59029

EMAIL:

Dear Chairman Regnier,

I strongly urge you to reject maps that use political data and election results in the development of district lines for the legislature. Political parties should not manipulate boundaries to maximize the number of seats they think they can win in elections. That defeats the purpose of redistricting, which is to equalize the number of people in districts, protect minority voting rights, following existing political subdivisions and communities of interest.

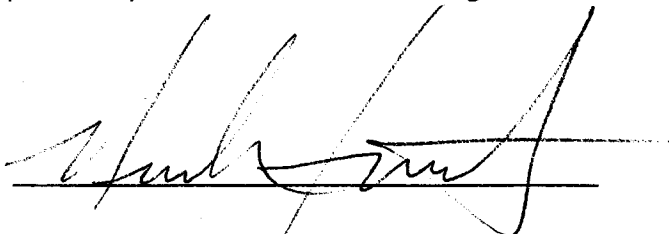
The last map in Montana was developed through a heavy reliance on political data and election results. There is no other way to explain how many communities were divided, other than it served a political purpose for the Montana Democratic Party. The new map should have no resemblance to the current map, because it inconsistently ignores existing political subdivisions, communities of interest, lacks the compactness requirement and all of the other official redistricting criteria.

The commission should use the three maps developed by non-partisan legislative staff as starting points for the new map: the urban-rural, deviation and subdivision maps. The fourth map is just a slightly modified version of the map the Democrats put forward in 2000 using political data and election results. Many local communities are putting forward suggestions for their areas – please pay special attention to those.

Thank you for your work on building consensus throughout this process. We encourage you to reject partisan politics in the redistricting effort.

Sincerely,

NAME:



ADDRESS:

PO BOX 132

BRIDGER, MT, 59014

EMAIL: _____

Dear Chairman Regnier,

I strongly urge you to reject maps that use political data and election results in the development of district lines for the legislature. Political parties should not manipulate boundaries to maximize the number of seats they think they can win in elections. That defeats the purpose of redistricting, which is to equalize the number of people in districts, protect minority voting rights, following existing political subdivisions and communities of interest.

The last map in Montana was developed through a heavy reliance on political data and election results. There is no other way to explain how many communities were divided, other than it served a political purpose for the Montana Democratic Party. The new map should have no resemblance to the current map, because it inconsistently ignores existing political subdivisions, communities of interest, lacks the compactness requirement and all of the other official redistricting criteria.

The commission should use the three maps developed by non-partisan legislative staff as starting points for the new map: the urban-rural, deviation and subdivision maps. The fourth map is just a slightly modified version of the map the Democrats put forward in 2000 using political data and election results. Many local communities are putting forward suggestions for their areas – please pay special attention to those.

Thank you for your work on building consensus throughout this process. We encourage you to reject partisan politics in the redistricting effort.

Sincerely,

NAME:

Lula Price

ADDRESS:

Box 275
Fronzberg, mt
59029

EMAIL:

lula price@g.com

Dear Chairman Regnier,

I strongly urge you to reject maps that use political data and election results in the development of district lines for the legislature. Political parties should not manipulate boundaries to maximize the number of seats they think they can win in elections. That defeats the purpose of redistricting, which is to equalize the number of people in districts, protect minority voting rights, following existing political subdivisions and communities of interest.

The last map in Montana was developed through a heavy reliance on political data and election results. There is no other way to explain how many communities were divided, other than it served a political purpose for the Montana Democratic Party. The new map should have no resemblance to the current map, because it inconsistently ignores existing political subdivisions, communities of interest, lacks the compactness requirement and all of the other official redistricting criteria.

The commission should use the three maps developed by non-partisan legislative staff as starting points for the new map: the urban-rural, deviation and subdivision maps. The fourth map is just a slightly modified version of the map the Democrats put forward in 2000 using political data and election results. Many local communities are putting forward suggestions for their areas – please pay special attention to those.

Thank you for your work on building consensus throughout this process. We encourage you to reject partisan politics in the redistricting effort.

Sincerely,

NAME:

Scott J Boggio

ADDRESS:

1315 Hwy 78
Red Lodge, MT, 59068

EMAIL:

sboggio@aol.com

Dear Chairman Regnier,

I strongly urge you to reject maps that use political data and election results in the development of district lines for the legislature. Political parties should not manipulate boundaries to maximize the number of seats they think they can win in elections. That defeats the purpose of redistricting, which is to equalize the number of people in districts, protect minority voting rights, following existing political subdivisions and communities of interest.

The last map in Montana was developed through a heavy reliance on political data and election results. There is no other way to explain how many communities were divided, other than it served a political purpose for the Montana Democratic Party. The new map should have no resemblance to the current map, because it inconsistently ignores existing political subdivisions, communities of interest, lacks the compactness requirement and all of the other official redistricting criteria.

The commission should use the three maps developed by non-partisan legislative staff as starting points for the new map: the urban-rural, deviation and subdivision maps. The fourth map is just a slightly modified version of the map the Democrats put forward in 2000 using political data and election results. Many local communities are putting forward suggestions for their areas – please pay special attention to those.

Thank you for your work on building consensus throughout this process. We encourage you to reject partisan politics in the redistricting effort.

Sincerely,

NAME:

Annette Anderson

ADDRESS:

Box 103
Fromberg MT 59029

EMAIL:

MT Anderson89@yahoo.com

Name?

Shirley
McComas

Hello from Fox Montana.

Looking from Billings to the mountains we see the pattern of the ski runs still snow covered, the promise of enough water from the snow pack to keep our land alive and growing. Below and to the South of the Ski Run is the tiny site of the Spring Creek watershed whose water begins the process of recharging the watershed with water for our wells, irrigation, stock water, trout streams down to Cooney Dam.

Right now Spring Creek Spring itself has not started flowing, our irrigation ditches are empty. Sunday, Mother's Day, our neighbor's stock water well went dry. He was forced to move his cattle to new pasture, where the "everflowing" irrigation water had been shut off except for water rights dating back to 1893. His neighbor sacrificed his 1893 irrigation water rights to the cattle. The flow of the '93 water was not strong or large enough to irrigate, but the cattle can now survive. The same day our neighbor's, household well went dry. Depending on the weather our well could be dry next.

In April three generations of our family did the yearly ritual of testing the depth in the well head before we reached water. We had to drop the measure 47 feet, and that measurement equaled the 8 year drought measurement. Last year, with excellent spring rain, we hit water well water 35 feet down. Our day to day problems differ from urban problems, but no parts of our state population can thrive independently. With careful consideration and action

Communities Plan is a part of the solution to keep the whole state working well. The more rural community provides food and recreation, and the urban population is supported (think of Costco for instance) by the rural folks. The Communities Plan provides a good tool to deal with needs of our diverse population.

Communities plan recognizes and addresses the importance of the local economy. Further it supports the regional recreational and cultural centers so necessary to satisfy our current residents, and court future residents to our state. One can live where the nearest neighbor is half-mile away (or more), and still attend cultural events like the Billings Symphony, or Chamber Music recitals at MSUB or Rocky Mountain College. How about Jazz at Walkers, or at the Pollard Pub in Red Lodge? Listening to the varied programming from Yellowstone Public Radio? Supporting these events at the local economy level compliments living in Montana

One person - one vote - is there any question that this is fundamental to our democracy in Montana? The Communities plan strengthens our one person - one vote ideal: creating district sizes nearest to the ideal district size. (The actual figure is only 117 people over or under the ideal district size as we now know it.)

The Communities plan spares my small town of Red Lodge and the others like it from being carved into small pieces to satisfy the particular hunger of whichever political party currently in power.

While we are districting we must use our opportunities to make it better for all of Montana's population. Let us specially remember our first American Families now living on our many reservations.

As they say on Public Radio, by way of disclosure to you: my father's mother, my grandmother, was half Cherokee. Grandpa delivered water to the miners in the mine camp. Grandma contributed to the family income (one of the early 2 income families), by selling her fresh baked bread each day. Simple right? In winter, the tent they lived in was so cold she had to take the starter dough into bed with her so it would not freeze and kill the yeast.) My Dad became his first family member to graduate from U of Wyoming. I strongly support the Communities Plan process to protect American Indian vote by creating the strongest minority-majority districts with the highest overall Indian voting age population of any of the districting plans. And for our neighbor Crow and Northern Cheyenne Tribes it creates the strongest senate district.

And while I'm here: REMEMBER TO VOTE YOUR ONE VOTE!
IT IS FREE! AND KEEPS US FREE!