

Public Comments

Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
Comments received between October 4 and October 10, 2022

Distributed electronically October 11, 2022

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 4, 2022 6:54 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Bruce Hoiland

From: Bruce Hoiland bjhrjh@hotmail.com
Residence: Roundup

Message:

map number one is the best for our community. it gives people of rural areas a voice. Billings has enough seats.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on MDAC (<https://mtredistricting.gov>)

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 6, 2022 5:00 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: David Bedey

From: David Bedey d.f.bedey@gmsil.com
Residence: Hamilton, Montana

Message:

I am a native of Hamilton and represent House District 86 in the Montana Legislature. I thank the commissioners for the hard work they are putting into redrawing legislative districts. Below are some thoughts on the district boundaries initially being proposed for Ravalli County.

I believe that proposals 1 and 3 are the best options for the district surrounding Hamilton (currently HD 86). As the Hamilton area has grown over the past few decades, the urban area extends beyond the city's official boundaries thus creating an extended "community of interest" comprised of residential and business properties. The boundaries shown in proposals 1 and 3 encompass this community and do not divide neighborhoods (as is the case for the other two proposals).

Proposals 2 and 3 each include a geographically large district spanning several counties, of which southern Ravalli County is a part. There is no road connecting the portion of the district in Ravalli County to the rest of the district, so that the district is effectively even more extended than is portrayed on the map. (One would have to travel through Missoula to get from one side of the district to the other, unless going over Skalkaho Pass, which is a slow road that is closed six months of the year.) For this reason, I recommend leaving southern Ravalli County in a compact district that approximates the current HD 85.

Currently, four house districts are wholly and exclusively within Ravalli County. Based on the latest census, it appears that this situation could be maintained although some internal adjustments within the county might be necessary. If it were to be necessary to enlarge HD 86, I would recommend extending it to the east.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on MDAC (<https://mtredistricting.gov>)

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Sunday, October 9, 2022 10:54 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: william berthoud

From: william berthoud wberthoud@msn.com
Residence: Roundup

Message:
Dear marxocrats,
Quit trying to cheat!!
Love, Bill

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on MDAC (<https://mtredistricting.gov>)

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 5, 2022 8:32 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Dan Eakin

From: Dan Eakin daniel.eakin@umontana.edu
Residence: Sidney, MT

Message:

Dear Commission Members,

Thank you for allowing me to submit this second written comment. I appreciate your hard work and commitment to this civic duty.

1. I would like to start by saying that none of the proposed maps (both commission-proposed and publicly-proposed) is perfect or will satisfy every single person in the state. I understand that your decisions are difficult ones. I have viewed the PDFs of the publicly proposed maps, and find it difficult to thoroughly evaluate them since they do not have county and reservation lines included. So I would like to keep this comment submission to the four commission-proposed maps. I would like to offer these comments for the purpose of being as fair and equitable as possible for all voters in the state.

2. I still believe that proposed map 3 is likely the fairest one of the four, and is probably the best compromise for Montana as a whole. It appears to me to have the least risk of unfair and illegal gerrymandering. I think it will prevent an unfair super majority in the legislature, which would endanger several parts of the Montana constitution, including the right to privacy, the right to know and participate, and the independence of the judiciary (all of which are vital to all Montanans). It is the best of the four for meeting your adopted criteria and goals, and it would best meet the one-person, one-vote standard for meaningful representation. See *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533 (1964), where Birmingham city residents successfully asserted an Equal Protection violation by the Alabama legislature and Alabama constitution for only allowing one state senator per county, regardless of population differences. Sims and the other voters successfully argued that this lack of proportionality prevented them from effectively participating in a republican form of government. I think maps 1 and 4, and to a lesser degree map 2, would disproportionately affect voters by reducing the value of votes in districts that are unreasonably skewed to favor a certain party.

3. The one-person, one-vote standard must be followed, and having more competitive/diverse districts can help increase understanding and empathy among Montanans. This is a good thing! The other day, I was watching footage of your September 16 meeting in Billings on the MT PAN channel, and listening to a few speakers (such as the legislator from Stillwater County, the legislator from Lockwood, and the man who didn't approve of any of the four maps). Their comments gave me the impression of an "us against them" mentality. This was shown in the desire to not split counties or to not be included in a larger municipal district. This mentality is harmful to Montana as a whole, and could certainly increase animosity and fear between people. We do not need this, especially right now. I think maps 1, 2, and 4 would reinforce this "us against them" mentality, and further erode public confidence in public service and government. Map 3 appears to be the best option to restore trust in state government and state public servants. As I said above, it would help reduce the chance of an unfair super majority, and would likely have more competitive/diverse districts, which would then be more responsive and reflective of Montanans' views of public issues. That is also a good thing.

4. I recall hearing the man who did not approve of any of the four maps saying things to the effect of how we should be making districts with as many like-minded people and as mono-cultural as possible. I disagree on this. If you try to get as many like-minded people together in a district, wouldn't that make the district less competitive? I think so. It would also

hinder understanding and empathy among voters with different views, which would likely reduce understanding, empathy, and bipartisanship among legislators. That would be a bad thing for Montana.

5. Since I moved to Sidney 3 years ago, I have listened to both Democrats and Republicans who feel strongly that none of the three state government branches care about them out here. People here, of both parties, want to feel listened to, and taken seriously, by government officials in all three branches. I think map 3 likely would best allow that to happen. I do understand that, even if you increase the population deviation to the maximum allowable, you will still likely have larger geographic districts in eastern and north central Montana, simply because less people live in those areas. Since you are trying to keep districts as compact as possible, I think that the proposed HD 51 and 71 of Map 2 are not practicable for driving, with having to travel through other districts just to get to the other side of those districts. Likewise with proposed HD 30 of Map 4, and HD 3 and 8 of Map 1. Map 3 probably is the best compromise on that point. I agree that you should stick to a 1 percent deviation when necessary, keeping in line with the Reynolds v. Sims case. This would help people out here feel heard and taken seriously.

6. I heard some folks at the Billings meeting allude to the stereotypical idea that all tribal members vote Democrat. That is certainly false. One example is that, although the Northern Cheyenne Nation has not extracted its coal reserves, there are Northern Cheyenne tribal members who work at the Rosebud coal mine with the Northern Cheyenne Coal Miners Local 400. They would probably vote for whichever candidate supports keeping the Rosebud coal mine and Colstrip power plant open, even though most of the corporate owners of the power plant have pulled out. Another example is one of my next-door neighbors here in Sidney. She is a Fort Peck tribal member, but also supports Trump and is against COVID vaccinations and masking. I am a non-Indian (a legal term) who can't stand Trump and has gotten as many COVID vaccination shots as I am allowed. I feel that maps 1 and 4 would support this stereotypical and false idea that all tribal members vote Democrat, since maps 1 and 4 appear to do the most carving up of certain reservations and appear to put more reservation lands into randomly larger rural districts.

7. Continuing on this point, I feel that reservation lines must be respected to promote tribal sovereignty and reduce the number of legislators who may have reservation lands in their districts. This could certainly encourage tribal members to run for the legislature, and make it easier for tribes to interact with their local state legislators to advance tribal interests and increase empathy/understanding. This would be a great thing! I think map 3 appears to do the least amount of carving up of reservations in general, although map 2 appears alright, too. This would follow the idea from Williams v. Lee, 358 U.S. 217 (1959), of respecting tribes' sovereignty to create their own laws and be ruled by them. I understand that map 1 does generally keep Fort Peck, Fort Belknap, and Rocky Boy intact, but it really carves up the other reservations unnecessarily and somewhat randomly. Map 4 really carves up Fort Peck, Northern Cheyenne, Crow, and CSKT and puts more reservation lands into randomly larger rural districts. This would not be good for tribes and Montana.

In summation, I again recognize that no single map is perfect, but map 3 appears to be the best and most fair compromise. It would minimize the risk of illegal and unfair gerrymandering, support tribes generally, and help increase understanding and empathy among Montanans. I think we could definitely learn from all these things. Thank you for your attention, and your hard work. I appreciate it. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. Thank you.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on MDAC (<https://mtredistricting.gov>)

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Saturday, October 8, 2022 9:43 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Pelah Hoyt

From: Pelah Hoyt hoyt.pelah@gmail.com
Residence: Missoula, MT

Message:

Please chose maps that create more competitive districts. Competitive districts are more likely to be decided during the general election instead of during the primary which means more Montana citizens will get to participate in electing legislators. Competitive districts also require candidates to listen to views that may differ from their own. Montanans will make better decisions to solve challenges and serve citizens when we consider other people's perspectives. Non-competitive districts encourage extremism and blind allegiance to a small section of Montana voters. I would like to see more districts that are purple and fewer that are deep red or deep blue.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on MDAC (<https://mtredistricting.gov>)

Sherley, Laura

From: cateymoore <cateymoore@proton.me>
Sent: Sunday, October 9, 2022 1:14 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting in northwest Montana

We live in western Sanders County and we wish to comment on redistricting proceedings as proposed by the Districting and Apportionment Commission.

We first downloaded the redistricting criteria as published by the Commission. We note the criteria include:

- Districts must be as equal as practicable with an allowed deviation of +/- 1% of ideal.
- Districts must coincide with political subdivisions to the greatest extent possible.
- Districts must be contiguous
- Districts must be compact.

While we applaud the extent the offered maps have gone to make the population of each proposed district equal, we find that they have lost other community values in the process. We especially find that political subdivisions are being compromised and that districts that look contiguous on a map are far less so when seasonal travel constraints are considered.

The purpose of retaining political subdivisions is to allow a representative to represent people who all live and operate under the same set of rules. Each county and city has its own ordinances and the problems caused by the rules in one county, for instance, may have no affect at all on its neighboring counties.

In this matter of political subdivisions, we believe that tribal reservation land plays an important role. Those residents of Sanders County that live within the Flathead/Salish/Kootenai Reservation are subject to tribal rules as well as county rules and should be grouped with other reservation residents before the west end residents of Sanders County (Noxon and Heron) get split off to become part of a Lincoln County district (Proposal 1 HD 36, Proposal 4, HD 2).

Proposal 2 HD3 and Proposal 3 HD 3 do a better job of grouping the Reservation residents into a single district, but they both still fail to place western Sanders County together with the hub of their community, Thompson Falls/Plains. Instead, western Sanders County is once again grouped with Libby in Lincoln County and the population needed to fill out central Sanders County is drawn from Mineral County. This may look more compact on the map, but it fails to consider winter travel patterns in the practical common-usage boundaries of these communities. Northwestern Montana community boundaries are defined by three major travel corridors: Highway 2 in Lincoln County, Highway 200 in Sanders County and Highway 90 in Mineral County. There are few roads that connect these corridors and travel is often impacted by winter weather, leading to weak community ties between the regions. The Commission would serve all three counties better by respecting these community boundaries.

Please note once again the first requirement of the district boundaries. *"The districts must be as equal as practicable, meaning to the greatest extent possible within a plus or minus 1% relative deviation from the ideal population..."* You do have a plus or minus 1% leeway in your boundary decisions and if that can serve to keep actual communities together, it should be used.

Catherine and Eric Moore
35 Little Bear Ln
Noxon, MT 59853

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

Sherley, Laura

From: Donald Pickering <dspickvt1@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 7, 2022 7:07 PM
To: districting@mt.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] MAPS!

I believe that you must choose Proposal 11, as the alternative is obviously unfair!!

Thank You for encouraging feedback!

Sherley, Laura

From: Jeff Ruffatto <jeffruffatto@icloud.com>
Sent: Thursday, October 6, 2022 6:53 AM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

Please consider this my support for map #1. This option makes the most sense for my area in and around Stillwater County.

Thanks, Jeff Ruffatto, Columbus, MT

Sent from my iPhone