

Public Comments

Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
Comments between 8 a.m. on November 29 and 8 a.m. on November 30, 2022

Distributed electronically November 30, 2022

Sherley, Laura

From: Barbara Calahan <barbaracalahan7@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2022 7:21 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting

Greetings,

Thank you for all the time and effort put into this task of redistricting.

I assume it is a given that you have studied this statute https://leg.mt.gov/bills/mca/title_0050/chapter_0010/part_0010/section_0150/0050-0010-0010-0150.html front, back, and inside out. Given my assumption is correct then you already know that Maps 2 & 3 violate the law.

LEGAL OBJECTIONS

1. The law states to avoid dividing political subdivisions. Maps 1 and 4 show that you can avoid dividing political subdivisions to a great extent.

Violation - Maps 2 and 3 divide Bozeman and Missoula up much more than necessary.

- political subdivision is "any division of any local governmental unit."

2. Compact. This law was created to avoid wagon wheel and spoke type districts. Maps 1 and 4 are very compact districts and adhere to law requirements.

Violation - Maps 2 and 3 have elongated districts that do not adhere to state law. They are longer than three times the average width.

3. Contiguous.

Violation - Maps 2 & 3 have districts that violate this. Example: The lowest district that takes in Big Sky and Red Lodge and Cooke City. At least 3 mountain ranges, must leave the state to travel from one end to another, or Drive 6 hours through Montana.

4. Areas of interest.

By drawing districts to carve up rural areas and outnumber rural voters and rural communities by city center populations is not fair to areas of interest. Gallatin Gateway doesn't have anything in common with College. Different communities attend different schools, etc.

Violation- Maps 2 and 3 disenfranchise rural voters and smaller communities. The University area should be its own district.

5. Keep political subdivisions intact. State law says that maps should not favor one party over another. This needs to be taken into consideration at the county level because if you target one county to give one particular party more seats, it is gerrymandering. It is not fair to Gallatin to take a roughly 50/50 District and give Democrats 80% of the legislative House seats.

Borrowed from a friend:

"SUMMARY OF LAWS BROKEN by Maps #2 & 3:

- The districts must be as equal as practicable. FAIL
- Keep political subdivisions intact. EPIC FAIL
- The number of cities divided among more than one district must be as small as possible. FAIL
- District boundaries must coincide with the boundaries of political subdivisions of the state to the greatest extent possible. EPIC FAIL
- The districts must be contiguous, meaning that the district must be in one piece. EPIC FAIL”

I strongly urge you to follow the law on selecting the LEGAL maps! With this in mind Map 4 is the closest map that follows the law. Map 1 would also pass the legal test.

There are a number of examples of these violations with Maps 2 & 3.

Part of Bozeman being lumped in with Fours Corners, Belgrade and other rural or golf course mansion millionaires. In Helena - HD 85 splits East Helena up and puts the Helena's high income upper eastside and southeast hills with a working class, compact city. East Helena is its own community and should not be combined with any part of Helena.

Map 4 is truthfully the ONLY map that adheres to the law. I urge all of you to vote Map 4.

Sincerely,
Barbara Calahan
Helena, MT 59602

Sherley, Laura

From: Jacob Corcoran <jacob.helena@live.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2022 4:27 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Redistricting consideration

ATTN:
Redistricting Commission,

My name is Jacob Corcoran and I am a resident of the Helena Valley. The Helena Valley is VERY distinct community in itself. The vast majority of people in the Helena Valley specifically moved OUT OF the city limits to escape the more urban atmosphere of Helena. Overall, those in the Helena Valley share commonalities with those of us in the North Hills of Helena, Marysville, Canyon Creek and Birdseye.

Marysville, Canyon Creek and Birdseye have more in common with the Helena Valley than the people of York, Wolf Creek, and Lincoln. The people of Marysville, Canyon Creek and Birdseye share a K-5 elementary school district "Trinity Elementary School District" and after the 5th grade, their children join the Helena Public School District.

Both MAP 2 and MAP 3 inexplicably cut the upper westside of Helena in half and lump it with Birdseye and Rimini. HORRIBLE. There is a group and effort called SAVE HELENA WESTSIDE. This group is composed of neighbors and homeowners of the entire UPPER WESTSIDE of Helena from the NW border of Benton Ave/Park Ave all the way to the western reaches of LeGrande Cannon Blvd which parallels Williams St. This group and neighborhood have successfully DELAYED AND BLOCKED a proposed upper westside subdivision of a wealthy and powerful contractor and his wealthy and powerful realtor friends. The entire upper westside and mansion district is VERY MUCH a compact, contiguous community and very much has common interest, as evident by their successful lobbying, signature gathering and grassroots advocacy. To split the upper westside in half is irresponsible and outrageous at best.

Maps 1 and 4 do a better job with the Helena Valley and they both keep the entire Helena upper westside together, which would be the best thing for that district. I would like the commission to prioritize map 4 and then followed by map 1. I strongly oppose maps 2 and 3, they are atrocious. Thank you for your consideration.

Jacob Corcoran

Sherley, Laura

From: Aleks Kajstura <akajstura@prisonpolicy.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2022 4:25 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Bill Draft LC 1068 - Written comments of Prison Policy Initiative
Attachments: PPI_mt_testimony-Redistricting-Commission-Nov 30 2022.pdf

Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission,

Please find attached comments of the Prison Policy Initiative regarding the draft bill ending prison gerrymandering in Montana.

Sincerely,
Aleks Kajstura

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Aleks Kajstura
Legal Director
Prison Policy Initiative
www.prisonpolicy.org
www.prisonersofthecensus.org/

Public Comment of

Aleks Kajstura
Legal Director
Prison Policy Initiative

Submitted to the
Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
regarding
Draft bill to end prison gerrymandering

November 30, 2022

Thank you, Presiding Officer Smith and members of the Commission for providing the opportunity to submit public comment on the draft bill ending prison gerrymandering in Montana (LC 1068). The Prison Policy Initiative supports this bill language and commends the Commission for recognizing the timeliness of addressing the problem now, despite being a decade away from the next redistricting cycle.

I am the Legal Director of the Massachusetts-based Prison Policy Initiative. For nearly two decades, our organization has been leading the national effort to urge the Census Bureau to count incarcerated people as residents of their legal home addresses, rather than as residents of the correctional facilities where they are detained. At the same time, we work closely with state and local governments to develop interim solutions to the harmful distortion of democracy caused by the Census Bureau's current approach to counting incarcerated people.

This bill draft specifies data necessary for fair redistricting

Under the leadership of the Commission, Montana joined 12 other states in counting incarcerated people at home when drawing new districts. The Commission's work, as you know, was made more difficult by the lack of available address data for Montana residents who were incarcerated on Census day.

The Commission recognized that the data's shortcomings meant that it would, at best, reallocate about half of the people incarcerated in the state's prisons. But even so, it was important to count incarcerated people at home to the extent possible; a partial solution was better than none.

In going through the process for the first time, the Commission identified deficiencies in the data maintained by the state, and those gaps would be filled by this bill. This draft specifies the required data to be collected and processed in time for the 2030 redistricting cycle, ensuring that the next commission has the data it needs to complete the important work you all have started.

The bill draft proposes to collect home addresses, but also other demographic data such as race and age. This additional data would make it more compatible with the Census' PL 94-171 redistricting data. Including race, ethnicity, and age will allow the state to create a more complete adjustment of the redistricting dataset when counting incarcerated people at home.

Now is the right time to pursue this legislation

The earlier the data collection begins, the more complete the dataset will be by the time it is needed in 2030. Gathering address data on intake means that if the state starts the process soon, the state can slowly create a complete record of home address data for people it incarcerates. And by 2030, the state can expect to have a home address on record for most incarcerated people.

Early preparation has been key for successfully counting incarcerated people at home. The states that had collection procedures in place for a decade (California, Maryland, and New York) were able to count nearly everyone at home this time. And conversely, the Commission is well familiar with undertaking this task when the state made no advance plans.

2030 may seem far away, but that is exactly why putting the preparations in place now will make the process most efficient and effective.

Conclusion

I hope that the Commission continues to support the prompt consideration and passage of the bill and continues to pursue this important preparatory work for the 2030 redistricting cycle. Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can answer any questions. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Sincerely,



Aleks Kajstura
Legal Director
Prison Policy Initiative
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413-203-9790
akajstura@prisonpolicy.org

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2022 7:10 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Donna Lee Martin

From: Donna Lee Martin donnalee6259@gmail.com
Residence: Libby, Montana

Message:

I am the Democratic Central Committee Chair. I realize that this is coming very late in a very delicate, complicated game, and that the 4 original maps are no longer in play. But I only figured out this morning that none of the original maps make any sense given the communities of interest, population centers or traffic patterns in LINCOLN COUNTY. I watched a couple sessions in August, but found it difficult to compare the maps, and assumed, incorrectly that the only apparent difference was that the northwestern part of SANDERS COUNTY was attached to southwestern LINCOLN COUNTY. I hope I'm mistaken, but I doubt that the maps you are currently working on made many changes to LINCOLN COUNTY.

It makes absolutely NO SENSE to pair Eureka and Troy in the same District. It would be much better to make the split in Libby. One has to go through Libby to get from Eureka to Troy or the Yaak, unless it's the far end of what we call the Yaak and it's summer when the road to the upper bridge over Lake Koocanusa is open.

Nor does it make sense to pair Happy's Inn with Bull Lake. And, it would make more sense to take the roughly 2000 people needed to make 2 districts in LINCOLN COUNTY from western FLATHEAD COUNTY along Hwys 93 and/or 2. People from both ends of LINCOLN COUNTY go to the Flathead for medical and shopping. People from SANDERS COUNTY go to Idaho, Missoula, or Kalispell. There is very little traffic for any purpose between SANDERS and LINCOLN counties. The Cabinet Mountain Range separates the 2 counties.

Lake Koocanusa divides LINCOLN COUNTY from North to South. The only East-West through-county road is US 2 through Libby. Eureka is as close or closer to Whitefish than Libby and US 93 is a better road than MT 37. Both MT 56 and 37 are narrow, winding roads along lakes which tend to be icy in the winter. The Happy's Inn area is less than 20 miles from the FLATHEAD COUNTY line.

The current HD2 (HD1 on new maps) is unweildly, but HD 1 (now 2) kept the Libby-Troy area mostly in tact. The Bull Lake area also belongs with Troy and ideally so does the Yaak. There is no way to keep the whole of the Libby area in tact, and it is already divided. No one considers just the city limits as Libby.

There is NO GOOD way to split LINCOLN COUNTY, but I'd suggest an East (+ a little along the FLATHEAD boundary) and a West district would be best. And maybe than SANDERS COUNTY would only have to be in split once, not twice.

Since I only discovered the City/Town by District list this morning, I haven't had time to try and give you guidelines as to where that north-south line might be drawn with as little disruption to your process as possible. Nor have I had time to alert folks in Troy that apparently now they would be paired with Eureka and not Libby, except for 93 people in original map 1.

My previous primary concern as a Democrat was that you listen to Ms. Miller and try to balance districts so as to reflect the overall percentage of Montana voters. As with our towns and surrounding areas, Montana in essence is one big Whole. We all love Montana; and though we are in the minority, we'd like to at least have a proportionate # of voices at the table in the Legislative process. Fairness does count. I also think with such a large geographic area and such diverse population centers that the 1% deviation is too strict a norm.

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2022 7:57 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Donna Lee Martin

From: Donna Lee Martin donnalee6259@gmail.com
Residence: Libby, Montana

Message:
P.S. Re: Lincoln County Districts

Even with a North-South dividing line, the West Kootenai is a "community of interest" with the Eureka/Tobacco Valley area. The southern Yaak area is closer to Troy or Libby.

Again, I apologize for suggesting what I imagine to be a rather major change unless the Troy-Eureka pairing (Yaak is currently paired even though it really doesn't make a lot of sense) was addressed since August.

Sincerely,
Donna Martin
406-291-1187

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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: Tuesday, November 29, 2022 9:48 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Steve D McArthur

From: Steve D McArthur stevemcarthur@aol.com
Residence: Missoula, Montana

Message:

I believe in one person one vote and the necessity to have the districts represent as closely as possible the reality of our diverse state. Please see that the minority representation on the proposed redistricting are fair to the native population and minority members of our great state. For us to move forward as a people in this great state we have to have maps that are fair to all parties and represent the true values of the people on the state. any district that prevents the will of the people from being heard is a poor excuse for a map and must represent fairly the way people feel and vote without distortion from the two party system we have here in Montana. percentages do matter ! They need to be an honest representation of the way we are not for political gain but represent the ways we have voted in the most recent election so that no dominant party can dilute the votes and power of the minority. Fairness and honest representation are the north star of your charge . So, maps that give one party more favored status over the other party is not the way to go . shoot for a close as possible to the true voting patterns we have . Not the political way some would have you decide! Representation does matter . and diluting one view to the advantage of another is not what is needed to enable our state to thrive in the future.

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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: Tuesday, November 29, 2022 9:55 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Jill Sark

From: Jill Sark jjsark@msn.com
Residence: Helena MT

Message:

I was a Republican candidate for House District 81. I heard over and over that the voters in this district in precincts 24, 4 and 1—basically the valley—were disappointed that HD81 was connected with Helena city limits. The vast majority of people I talked with while campaigning said they have different needs and issues they would like addressed as opposed what the needs and issues are for people residing in town. They also stated they would like to be represented by someone from the valley rather than someone from town. I would like to point out that all seven districts (HD79, HD81, HD82, HD83, HD84, SD41, SD42) are not competitive for a Republican candidate and have not been for several years. The Lewis & Clark County districts had been set up East to West which is a more fair and competitive approach and would address what the people of the valley suburban/rural areas desire. I hope the Commissioners will consider making changes to our districts. Thank you for your time and the work you are doing with this huge project! Jill

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