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From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
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To: Senate Redistricting
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input
Attachments: 2020-10-31_D Spraitzar Letter to the Senate Select Redistricting Committee.docx

Date: 2020-10-31
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State: TX
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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Senate

Message:
October 31, 2020

Dear Sir or Madam,

First, I would like to thank the Senate Select Redistricting Committee for offering this opportunity to address the Committee concerning the upcoming redistricting process.

As a voter and resident of New Braunfels, TX, I believe all Texans deserve the right to equal representation and the guaranteed freedom to choose their own elected officials. Therefore, I support passage of legislation, including changes to the state constitution, that creates an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to depoliticize the redrawing of our maps this year.

An Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission would address and correct the legislature's repeated past failures to implement fair maps or use an open, transparent and fair redistricting process. Most importantly, only when it is in law can we know with certainty the redistricting process will be nonpartisan and fair. This particular model has also been shown to work in other states - we know it works.

The 2010 redistricting process was not fair and open. The maps were gerrymandered and resulted in many citizens' votes not counting as much as other citizens' votes and with communities split or combined with other, disparate communities.

In my own Congressional District 21, my Representative doesn't even have an office in New Braunfels (a city of almost 100,000, and the seat of County Government) because only the very northern part of New Braunfels is even in the district.

New Braunfels' voters have been divvied up into 3 congressional districts. How are we to receive adequate and fair representation in Congress? We don't and won't under the current maps.

New Braunfels is one community. We deserve a congressional representative who knows and represents all of us and all of our community's challenges and opportunities, and who lives here. What do we have more in common with Austin and the rural areas of Real, Gillespie, Blanco, Bandera and Kendall Counties than with our own fellow New Braunfelsers?

As an example, development and growth is not happening in only one part of New Braunfels -- it is happening everywhere. One only has to read the New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung October 21, 2020, front-page story to understand that. We are not 3 communities with separate interests and challenges.

If the Committee and State Legislature do not form an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission, I ask that you implement the following common sense measures to ensure a fair, open, and transparent redistricting process in 2021.

- I ask that the Redistricting Committees hold nonpartisan hearings AFTER census apportionment data is received from Congress. Otherwise, we can only speak to how bad the previous redistricting process was (see above) and cannot make informed recommendations on how best to draw maps that represent us for the next 10 years-- especially given new Census data.

- I ask that the Redistricting Committees first follow the law – the Voting Rights Act (VRA) – and give groups representing communities of color a voice in the process.

- I ask that the committees exclude partisan data when drawing VRA compliant districts. There is no fair or valid reason to consider political party affiliation when drawing maps. The temptation to skew voting districts to the party of choice is too strong.

- In other words, I encourage the committees to ensure this year's redistricting process is free of conflicts of interest. I do not believe it is fair for incumbent politicians to choose their voters and not the other way around.

- I ask the committees for an open and transparent redistricting process so that the public can see any deviation from traditional redistricting principles, e.g., county or precinct splits and population deviations.

- I believe the public deserves to have access to all documents, written communications, emails, text messages, and drafts of maps and therefore I ask that those documents not be destroyed by the committees or their employees or contractors.

- Finally, I strongly encourage the committee to publish a report on how the maps were drawn, and why there was any deviation from traditional redistricting principles, including county and precinct splits and population deviations.

Again, I thank you for your time and for the opportunity to address the Committee.

Daphne D. Spraitzar

[REDACTED]
New Braunfels, TX [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]