

Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee hearing, April 1, 2021, 5 pm

Position: Neutral

Name of Organization: League of Women Voters of Jackson County

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TESTIMONY OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF JACKSON COUNTY ILLINOIS

APRIL 1, 2021

BEFORE THE ILLINOIS SENATE REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Presented by Suzanne Schmitz, past President

The League of Women Voters of Jackson County IL appreciates the opportunity to address the issue of redistricting. The League of Women Voters of Jackson County, part of 41 Leagues throughout Illinois, is a civic organization of men and women, dedicated to voter education and civic engagement. The League of Women Voters of Illinois is a long-time supporter of a fair and open process of redistricting.

Jackson County is in southern Illinois, approximately three hours south of Springfield, the area generally bounded by U. S. 50 on the north to the Ohio River on the south. U.S. 50 crosses the state from St. Louis Mo on the west to Vincennes IN on the east. Interstate 70 forms the northern boundary of most of southern Illinois.

The League of Women Voters of Jackson County, as part of the League of Illinois, supports an Independent Redistricting Commission to draw legislative and Congressional maps. In drawing the boundaries, the following guidelines should be followed. Legislative districts should

comply with the United States Voting Rights Act of 1965 and subsequent amendments;

be compact and contiguous;

follow existing political boundaries and, when possible, follow permanent and easily recognized features, such as expressways, highways, rivers, and clear geographical features;

and when practical, coincide with census tract boundaries.

These criteria will promote informed citizens who are easily able to identify the districts of their representatives, name their representatives, feel some identity with their representatives, believe their representatives know their districts and their voters, and can access their representatives.

More specific recommendations appear in Italics below.

U. S. Congressional Districts 12, 13, and 15.

Southern Illinois is divided into three Congressional Districts: 12, 13, and 15. Two counties, Madison and St. Clair, comprise the larger area immediately east of St. Louis, generally referred to Metro East. These two counties, part of the St. Louis metropolitan statistical area, are divided among these three districts.

A better map would place the Illinois counties that are part of the St. Louis metropolitan area in one district.

The remainder of Southern Illinois, along with significant portions of central Illinois, is divided into two districts, a western third and an eastern two thirds.

District 15 consists of 29 counties in the entirety and portions of four more counties. It extends from a point north of Champaign and continues along the easternmost portion of the state, to the state's southernmost boundary, the Ohio River, over 230 miles or a one-way drive of well over four hours. It also extends into the central portion, a width of about 150 miles, or a one-way drive of two and half hours.

District 12 consists of 10 counties plus a portion of one more. It extends from Alton on the west to the Ohio River, the southernmost point on the west. The length of the district is about 180 miles, or a one-way drive of over three hours. The width is over 90 miles from west to east.

In re-drawing boundaries of Districts 12 and 15, the General Assembly should draw lines that recognize the shared interests, census data, other political boundaries, and geography of the area and make these districts more compact and contiguous. The General Assembly should also seek to place state legislative districts within the same U.S. Congressional to aid voters in knowing their representatives and being informed voters. The legislature should not split counties when drawing these boundaries.

In particular, District 15 should be redrawn to be a more compact and contiguous district.

State Legislative Districts

Illinois Senate District 58

Part of Jackson County lies within Illinois Senate District 58, which consists of eight counties and splits four of those: St. Clair, Washington, Jackson, and Union. Particularly egregious is the

division of the city of Carbondale and its surrounding area into two Senate Districts – 58 and 59. District 58 lies within two U.S. Congressional Districts, 12 and 15.

Illinois Senate District 59

The remainder of Jackson County is in Illinois Senate District 59, which consists of 13 counties, splitting two of them – Jackson and Union. Particularly egregious is the division of the city of Carbondale and its surrounding area into two Senate Districts – 58 and 59. District 59 also lies within the two U.S. Congressional Districts, 12 and 15.

Illinois House of Representative District 115

District 115 includes all of Jefferson County and parts of Jackson, Union, Perry, and Washington counties. It lies within two U.S. Congressional Districts – 12 and 15.

Illinois House of Representatives District 118

The remainder of Jackson and Unions counties lie within District 118, which consists of a total of 11 counties in part or in total and is represented by two Members from U.S. Congress Districts 12 and 15.

In re-drawing the districts of Illinois House and Senate districts in southern Illinois, the General Assembly should use the census tract data and should keep cities and counties in the same districts, and place Illinois legislative districts within the same U.S. Congressional districts. It should draw lines that make districts compact and contiguous.

One final recommendation: the General Assembly should post on its website maps and descriptions of the Senate and House districts. Neither the General Assembly website, the state website nor the Illinois Board of Election has posted readily accessible district maps.

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