



Idaho Commission for Reapportionment

November 10, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Winder
The Honorable Michelle Stennett
The Honorable Scott Bedke
The Honorable Ilana Rubel
Chairman Fred Cornforth
Chairman Tom Luna

RE: Constituent Redistricting Concerns

Dear Appointing Authorities:

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Idaho Commission for Reapportionment. It has been our honor and privilege to fulfill this important function.

As a Commission, we held 18 hearings around the state to take public testimony on redistricting. In the testimony, certain concerns emerged as recurring themes. We wish to emphasize that, in describing these concerns, we are not recommending any specific action. Rather, our purpose is to bring the concerns to the attention of you, your parties, and your caucuses.

First, there is interest among some constituents for communities of interest, such as cities and tribal reservations, to be afforded greater protection than that currently allowed by law. Although I.C. § 72-1506(2) lists preserving communities of interest as a redistricting criterion, this statutory provision is subordinate to the mandate in the Idaho Constitution to keep counties whole. Thus, it is common for communities that cross county boundaries, such as the Fort Hall Reservation, to be divided between legislative districts. Greater legal protection for Idaho's communities of interest would likely require an amendment to Article III, Section 5, of the Idaho Constitution.

Second, some constituents reported feeling disenfranchised in their current districts. They testified that their legislators ignored parts of the district with less population. This feeling of disenfranchisement seemed most common among rural voters. It was suggested by Dr. Gary Moncrief and others that creating 70 representative districts — or two House districts for every Senate district — might help to alleviate this feeling of disenfranchisement, because House members would then be more geographically dispersed throughout the state. But creating 70 House districts would likely require a change to Article III, Section 4, of the Idaho Constitution, which requires 35 *legislative* districts, failing to

distinguish between Senate and House districts.

Again, our purpose in this letter is not to provide specific recommendations on these matters but to bring them to your attention.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve.

Sincerely,

Bart Davis, Cochair

Dan Schmidt, Cochair

Tom Dayley, Commissioner

Nels Mitchell, Commissioner

Amber Pence, Commissioner

Eric Redman, Commissioner