

Public Comments

Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
Comments received between November 8 and November 14, 2022

Distributed electronically November 16, 2022

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Saturday, November 12, 2022 2:42 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: william berthoud

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

Message:
Dearest democrats,
Quit cheating!
Love,
Bill

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

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2022 11:08 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: sally brown

From: sally brown sallybrown6@gmail.com
Residence: missoula MT

Message:
Please consider the entire state when redistricting, not just apportioning individual counties.

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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, November 10, 2022 12:09 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Cynthia Button

From: Cynthia Button cbutton@3rivers.net
Residence: Big Sky

Message:

Dear Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission,
I understand that one of the redistricting options being considered for Big Sky would put us into Madison County. Please keep us in Gallatin County as this is where we have access, live, work, play and shop. It should also be considered keeping West and Big Sky together and include Gardiner and Cooke City, which are all resort areas with the same issues. Thank you.
Sincerely,
Cynthia Button

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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, November 10, 2022 12:09 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Stanley Button

From: Stanley Button sbutton@3rivers.net
Residence: Big Sky

Message:
Hello Mt Districting & Apportionment Commission,

I understand that one of the redistricting options being considered for Big Sky would put us into Madison County. Please keep us in Gallatin County this is where we live, work, play and shop. We would also like to see West Yellowstone, Gardiner and Cooke City be included in our district as we are all resort communities.

Thank You, Stanley Button

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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: Friday, November 11, 2022 5:56 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Elizabeth A Clarke-Hoffman

From: Elizabeth A Clarke-Hoffman beth@bigskybuild.com
Residence: P.O. Box 160192 Big Sky, MT 59716

Message:
Please leave Big Sky in Gallatin County

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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, November 10, 2022 2:27 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Charles J. Cook

From: Charles J. Cook cj@cooklawmt.com
Residence: Bozeman

Message:

Big Sky town center should be considered part of Gallatin County. There is no public road between the town and Madison county. Residents commute from Bozeman and should be considered part of Gallatin County. Geographically speaking, it makes no sense to have Big Sky be part of Madison County.

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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: Friday, November 11, 2022 9:15 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Herb Davis

From: Herb Davis nforktrails@gmail.com
Residence: BIG SKY

Message:

I support any redistricting HD 64 that keeps all of Big Sky, including areas in Madison County, as one district in Gallatin County. It makes sense to keep the areas where our kids go to school, where we shop and the services that support our community together.

Thanks for your consideration.

Herb Davis

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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, November 10, 2022 12:06 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Annie Ferguson

From: Annie Ferguson ferguson.p.annie@gmail.com
Residence: Bozeman, MT

Message:
Please keep Big Sky all in Gallatin County and with West Yellowstone!

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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, November 10, 2022 9:24 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Alanah Griffith

From: Alanah Griffith alanah@bigskymtlaw.com
Residence: Gallatin Gateway

Message:

Thank you all for serving. Well, my campaign is over and I knocked over 5,000 doors in HD64. I also talked to a number of clients and friends that lie just outside of the District and this is what I learned. My clients and friends in the Madison County area of Big Sky feel absolutely unrepresented. They did not see their candidate once, and many did not receive their ballots, again. They have no access to Madison county and desperately want to vote in Gallatin County, where they feel they belong and they have access to their representative. And please know that the area of Big Sky that is in Gallatin County DOES NOT want to be voting in Madison County. Again, the Madison County representative has never shown up in Big Sky.

West Yellowstone, Big Sky, Gardiner and Cooke City (yep, Gardiner and Cooke) all have very similar issues with housing, seasonal employees, resort tax questions, wildlife vs. human issues and other similar issues. I represent people in Gardiner and Cooke and was VERY surprised when they reached out to me stating that they wished I could represent them and they could vote in my race. Their reasoning is simple, they have nothing in common with the rest of their districts, and even if it meant their representative lived 3 hours away, they would rather someone focused on resort issues represented them. Like my friends in Big Sky, they feel unrepresented. So, I humbly state that I was wrong in my testimony. The communities of Gardiner and Cooke want to be represented by the same person advocating for Big Sky and West (well, they just want someone to actually show up for their needs and if that person represents Big Sky and West, then that is okay.)

Gallatin Gateway is also tied to Big Sky as it is becoming the bedroom community for Big Sky. They need someone who can understand the ties between the areas and work towards advocating for better housing solutions.

In my very limited understanding, by combining these area, this would be a very competitive district. And anyone would be lucky to represent it! Thank you so much for reviewing my comment. If you have any questions, please reach out to me at (406) 624-3585 x1

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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, November 10, 2022 3:43 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Mary C. Harlow

From: Mary C. Harlow harlow54@msn.com
Residence: Hekena, Montana

Message:

New voting district boundaries need to accurately reflect the political distribution of Montana voters. Odd shaped proposed districts in communities seemed to be "Gerrymandered " the Commission is charged with drawing a map that represents the entire state, not one community or several counties. Competitive districts strengthen democracy.

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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: Friday, November 11, 2022 9:50 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Rich Harris

From: Rich Harris untamuk@hotmail.com
Residence: Charlo, Montana

Message:

I have one specific comment in response to Maps 1-4, and one general comment that I hope will be considered.

Specifically, Maps 1-3 all have a House district that combines most of the Flathead Reservation with areas in Glacier County, presumably to connect Blackfeet with CSKT voters. However, doing so appears to be an attempt to dilute CKST votes, and these district shapes violate one of the Commission's criteria by having a district encompass most of the Bob Marshall Wilderness (and thus be very difficult for folks to access both parts of). Only Map 4 avoids this problem. Thus, in the Lake County area (and surrounding), Map 4 is far preferable.

More generally, I believe that gerrymandering – for any reason – is corrosive to our democracy. We vote to have representatives of our views. The legislature should generally reflect the the proportion of views expressed by the electorate. Clearly, the Commission has a difficult job, and there is no single map that all would agree is perfect. But I suggest a simple metric that would serve to indicate whether districts have been drawn to favor one political party of another. (I'm guessing this idea is not original with me). Tally up the total votes for Montana legislators (separately for House and Senate elections) in recent years. Then apply the proportion of votes received by both major parties (alas, we are stuck with 2 major parties for the foreseeable future) to the number of districts (100 for House, 50 for Senate). Then compare that with the number of winners in each party. For example, if Republican candidates overall received 60% of the statewide vote, one would expect, on average 60 Republican house members and 30 Republican senate members. Clearly, a few more or less would not necessary be evidence of gerrymandering. But a consistent pattern of the proportion of legislators from a given party deviating from the summed total statewide vote would be evidence of gerrymandering, and thus a fundamental betrayal of the principal that, at a statewide level, each vote counts equally.

Thank you very much for considering my thoughts, and best of luck on a very difficult job.

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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, November 10, 2022 11:19 AM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Richard Heintz

From: Richard Heintz Rick.heintz@gmail.com
Residence: Big Sky, MT

Message:

I would prefer all of Big Sky voting in Gallatin County, where we actually have access, our kids go to school and where we shop.

Thanks 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: Thursday, November 10, 2022 2:16 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Anna Johnson

From: Anna Johnson annajohnsonbigsky@gmail.com
Residence: Gallatin Gateway/Big Sky, Montana

Message:

With redistricting the voting for Big Sky, please consider that as a resident of Big Sky and Gallatin County that I would prefer that all of Big Sky voting be in Gallatin County versus Madison County. We have no direct public road access to Madison County from Big Sky and it would make the most sense to keep all of the town of Big Sky (Mountain, Meadow, and Canyon) in the voting district within Gallatin County. Thank you for your consideration!

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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, November 9, 2022 8:01 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: Clare Kearns

From: Clare Kearns kearns.clare@gmail.com
Residence: Helena, MT

Message:

When deciding our legislative districts please don't obsess about the shape of each district. It is more important to draw districts in such a way that Montanans are represented in proportion to the number of voters who identify as Republican and Democratic. One party should not dominate our legislature. In other words, if there are say 40% democrats and 60%Republicans I Montana, there should be 40% Ds and 60 Rs in our legislature.

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

Sherley, Laura

From: Anna Nugent <annamn2@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 13, 2022 12:00 PM
To: districting@mt.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL] legislative districts

Dear Commissioners-

The legislative districts in Montana currently favor one party significantly more than the advantage that party has earned at the ballot box. This is a violation of the rights of Montanans and needs to be corrected.

Article V, Section 14 of Montana's Constitution does not state that when drawing up the state legislative districts, the redistricting commission and legislature may disregard the rest of the Constitution and the rights it guarantees. The Constitution directs the legislature to ensure the purity of elections and guard against abuses of the electoral process. The citizens of Montana cannot trust that process when the legislative districts give one party 70% of the legislative control even though they average just 57% of the vote. In this situation, some votes count more than others. It's rigged. How can that be justified? Rigged districts are a clear abuse of the electoral process. They ignore the stated intent of the writers of the Constitution to improve equality of opportunity. And they undermine the rights of Montanans, including the rights to self-government and popular sovereignty.

Several comments made by commissioners while defending their proposed district maps are very concerning. These comments make clear that the intent of these commissioners is to use the redistricting guidelines as a gimmick to achieve a level of partisan advantage that Montana voters have not given to any party. These comments include emphasizing that the words "fair" and "proportional representation" aren't in the Constitution. If redistricting isn't a fair process that results in proportional representation, there cannot be equality of opportunity for each Montana citizen to influence their own government. The comments of these commissioners demonstrate their disdain for the Constitution and their proposed district maps indicate that their approach to redistricting includes disregarding the rights of Montanans.

Additional comments made by some commissioners and members of the public range from alarming to absurd. A very large portion of Montanans live in communities that are divided by legislative districts. The best travel routes to parts of many districts don't stay in the district lines. Clearly, such concerns are routinely set aside. Why should some communities get special treatment? Dividing Glendive or Mineral County with district lines does no harm. It's arguably an advantage, they would have two voices advocating for their communities rather than one. Gerrymandering refers to political manipulation to CREATE an unfair advantage. I could not locate a definition of gerrymandering that refers to correcting a partisan advantage. I have seen references to Harvard's resources on gerrymandering to justify furthering one party's unfair advantage. If these resources are being relied upon, I request that the commission consult directly with Harvard's redistricting experts to ensure that their guidance is not being misapplied. The most ridiculous comment was an assertion that Native Americans are over-represented. This is patently false. Reducing the number of majority minority districts violates the law and will do real harm to Montana in more ways than we can even anticipate.

The Montana Constitution does not mention travel routes or define "compact" or "contiguous." There is no mention of shape, nor is there an indication that "compact" means drawing voters with similar voting patterns into as few districts as possible in order to minimize the influence of their votes. The population density map of Montana looks like a spiderweb, it is not logical to strive for a checkerboard district map. What is logical is that the intent of the Constitution's writers and the rights of Montanans should be assured before prioritizing lesser concerns.

The 2022 election results provided further evidence that Montana's current legislative districts and some of the proposed district maps are unconstitutionally rigged for one party. Even in the Eastern Congressional District, Representative Rosendale received less than 57% of the vote. Representative Zinke didn't even get 50%. In the statewide races, voters made choices that went against the wishes of the party currently in power. Yet, our legislative districts allowed that party to gain 70% of the legislative control. It would be an unconstitutional violation of the rights of Montanans to choose new legislative districts that continue this pattern.

These districts are important. One party in Montana has signaled an intent to take rights away from Montanans. Threatened rights include privacy, a clean and healthy environment, stream access, and land access. One party has proposed changes that will fundamentally alter the state and further limit opportunities for those who are not wealthy to build a life here. One party is actively defying court orders as well as pursuing a US Supreme Court case that aims to allow the party in control of the legislature to disregard the voters and choose the winners of elections themselves.

There is so much at risk. Please consider the clearly stated intent of the writers of Montana's Constitution. Please choose a map that allows each Montana voter an equal opportunity to influence their own government, regardless of where they live.

Sincerely,

Anna Nugent

Sherley, Laura

From: Doug Rand <douggmt@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 8, 2022 5:33 PM
To: Districting
Cc: Alanah Griffith
Subject: House district 64

I live in Gallatin Gateway and hope that our future legislative district will be similar to existing hd 64.

It should include that portion of Big Sky/Yellowstone Club that is in Madison County but has no real connection to Madison County. It should include Gallatin Gateway which has become a "dumping ground" for BS/YC, as well as West Yellowstone. This whole area is all about tourism, recreation, wildlife and development.

Please put me on your mailing list.

Doug Rand
14525 Spanish Breaks Trail
Gallatin Gateway MT 59730

914-714-5211
dougedcanoe@gmail.com

Sherley, Laura

From: Robbeye Samardich <RHS@hpmmontana.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2022 12:20 PM
To: Districting
Subject: Big Sky voting district

To whom it may concern,

I recently learned that the area that I live in is being redistricted. I would prefer that all of Big Sky voting in Gallatin County, where we actually have access to vote, our kids go to school and where we shop.

Thank you,

Robbeye

Robbeye Samardich | Office Manager

Hammond Property Management

O: 406-995-7220 F: 406-660-4155

Sherley, Laura

From: MDAC <contact@mtredistricting.gov>
Sent: Saturday, November 12, 2022 1:42 PM
To: Districting
Subject: MDAC Comment from: John Wright

From: John Wright jwright68@hotmail.com
Residence: Lincoln County, Montana

Message:

Dear Chairwoman and Commissioners,

It might be a good idea to write up a Jungle Primary system bill to advocate competitive elections in every Montana district. In the June Primary, voters would choose one candidate from a slate of candidates from all parties and the top two would reach the General Election regardless of party. Both deep red and deep blue districts would be more likely to have two candidates for voters to choose from. This would advocate two Democratic candidates in deep blue districts and two Republican candidates in deep red districts to win votes from Democratic, Republican, and independent voters in the General Election. This would promote candidates reaching across party lines and allow all voters, regardless of party, to have a say in who will represent them in the U.S. Congress and the Montana Legislature.

Thank you,

John Wright
Lincoln County, Montana

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