



Joint Redistricting Committee written testimony
2021 special session of the Legislature
November 8, 2021

Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Rick Gion, speaking on behalf of the North Dakota Voters First board of directors. I live in Fargo, ND.

North Dakota Voters First is a non-partisan, grassroots organization dedicated to strengthening democracy. Our organization focuses on educating and engaging North Dakota citizens to make elections and public policy more accountable, ethical, and transparent.

We commend the 2021 Redistricting Committee for their hard work and prudent decision to comply with the U.S. Voting Rights Act of 1965 by creating two House subdistricts. We are aware that this provision may be separated from the current redistricting bill, so please continue to advocate for these split districts if that's how a floor vote transpires.

As you know, North Dakota Voters First remains committed to House subdistricts throughout the whole state to bring elected officials closer to their voters. This isn't a new idea. It was discussed at length during the 2001 North Dakota redistricting process. Our neighbor to the east, Minnesota, uses this system. It was also recently endorsed by the Bismarck Tribune.

Throughout the redistricting process, leaders from our organization and other local voting rights groups have had concerns with the 2021 redistricting process. Our concerns include incumbent protection, scheduled time periods for public comment not being adhered to, agendas not being posted in a timely fashion, and draft maps not being posted prior to most meetings. This was unfortunate and disappointing. For these reasons and more, we feel that an independent redistricting commission would benefit the state and its citizens in future legislative redistricting.

Thank you for your time and hard work.

Sincerely,

Rick Gion
Fargo, ND
Lobbyist #1086

