

Assessing Rural and Urban Territory in Western Missouri

Expert Report for Wise v. State Plaintiffs

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Summary of Findings

I was asked by the Plaintiffs in *Wise v. State* to examine whether the Kansas City area constitutes a closely united territory that is distinct from other parts of western Missouri, and whether the 2025 configuration of Congressional Districts (“CDs”) 4 and 5 does more or less than the 2022 configuration of CDs 4 and 5 to keep alike territory together. Based on my analysis, I conclude the following:

- 1) Kansas City constitutes a closely united territory distinct from other parts of western Missouri.
 - a) At the municipal level, Kansas City—which predominantly sits in Jackson County, but also includes portions of Clay, Cass, and Platte Counties—is by far the largest incorporated city in western Missouri, more than four times larger than the next largest municipality.
 - b) For decades, Jackson and Clay Counties have been the overwhelming demographic magnets of population growth in western Missouri, out-pacing the national average growth rates while the rest of the region experienced either slow growth or, in many areas, chronic population decline.
 - c) The Kansas City area stands in marked contrast to nearby rural areas in its ability to attract newcomers from other parts of the United States (domestic migration), in its role as an immigration hub, and in its growth from natural change (births minus deaths). All of these trends create a much younger population compared with nearby rural counties.
 - d) These differing demographic trends are critical in forming distinct closely united communities because of their impacts on economic and social life. In Kansas City, as elsewhere, population trends help shape job opportunities, industrial structure, education and training, transportation, housing and access to services.
- 2) Taking into account rural-urban differences, contrasting demographic trends, and consequent economic and social conditions, the 2025 configuration of CDs 4 and 5 divides closely united communities, both urban and rural, whereas the 2022 CDs 4 and 5 better kept together alike territory.
 - a) Over 88 percent of 2022 CD 5’s population live in Kansas City’s Metropolitan Core, and the remainder, with the exception of the just under one percent of the district who live in rural areas, live in Kansas City’s Metropolitan Outlying areas.
 - b) The urban/Metro core of Kansas City is now fractured across the reconfigured CDs 4, 5, and 6.
 - c) The populations of the reconfigured CDs 4 and 5 reside across all categories of the rural-urban continuum, tying together downtown Kansas City with remote rural outposts far apart in both distance and makeup.

Background and Qualifications

In September 2025, I retired from my position as Research Geographer at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (USDA-ERS), having served in that position for 35 years. During that time, I was the Department's leader in the development and reporting of policy-relevant analyses of population trends and migration patterns affecting rural United States communities and households. Much of my research focused on rural-urban differences in demographic trends and their comparative impacts on economic growth and community well-being. In addition to being a leading scholar of rural demography, I also served as the leading national expert on defining and interpreting rural and urban definitions at the county and subcounty levels. My research and expertise were essential in myriad research, policy, and program applications both within USDA and across many other Federal agencies. Finally, I was a key expert in the knowledge, use, and dissemination of data sources used in rural analysis.

Research on rural population trends

I received my Ph.D. in Geography from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1990, with a specialization in both Population Geography and Geographic Information Systems. My dissertation, titled "Black Return and Nonreturn Migration to the US South: A Comparison of Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Destinations," uncovered a previously unseen migration trend hidden in the data, showing children and grandchildren of original southern out-migrants moving back to rural "home places," a form of intergenerational return migration.¹

My research at USDA-ERS required the use of theory and methodology from related disciplines, including geography, demography, sociology, and economics. I combined multiple perspectives on rural population change, economic restructuring, aging of the population, net migration and immigration. I was responsible for producing current data and statistics on population and migration used throughout the academic and governmental research community. I was required to use geographic information systems to support and demonstrate rural economic and demographic analysis and data. Based on research results and personal expertise, I produced authoritative technical advice and guidance on Departmental actions and policy decisions aimed at fostering rural prosperity.

Much of my research focused on United States age-specific migration trends. In the 2000s, for instance, members of the baby boom cohort entered a period in their lives when moves to rural destinations increased. Given the potential rural development impacts of these trends, I identified a need for policymakers and regional planners to better understand how migration patterns shift as Americans move through their working-age and retirement years and what

¹ John B. Cromartie and Carol B. Stack, "Reinterpretation of Black Return and Nonreturn Migration to the South, 1975-80." *Geographical Review*, Volume 79 (1989), pp. 297-310.

types of rural areas are likely to be affected by these shifts. Life-cycle perspectives dominated current research on migration, but this analysis was one of the first to use regression models to measure how rural migration destinations shift with age. The publications focused on the declining significance of employment-related factors in explaining baby boomer migration and the emerging geographic shift among this cohort toward more isolated settings, especially those with scenic amenities and lower housing costs.²

In 2013, I became the first scholar to show that rural areas as a whole were losing population for the first time in history.³ While rural areas in some parts of the country have experienced population decline for decades, this was the first time rural areas as a whole had lost population. My analysis showed this to be a signal of structural demographic change emerging over time and thus not likely to be a short-lived trend. This research had a high policy impact by documenting early-on the degree to which new demographic trends in the 2010s broke with long-established population patterns in rural America. Research results were reported in the *Financial Times*, *The Economist*, and the *Washington Post*. I presented findings as part of my invited appearance on CSPAN's weekly show *America by the Numbers*.

The 2017 "Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity," written as a roadmap for the new administration on ways to promote agriculture and rural prosperity, included findings from my research on drivers of rural population change, aging, return migration, and housing affordability.

Research on rural-urban definitions

Population trends over several decades have reconfigured rural-urban distinctions, making it necessary to continually modify federal rural-urban definitions, such as the Census Bureau's Urban Areas and the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) Metropolitan Areas, discussed further below. Beginning in 1991, I served on OMB's Committee on Metropolitan Standards that oversaw a major reconfiguration of these standards in 2000. My research and advocacy influenced the decision at that time to add Micropolitan Areas, bringing federal recognition to the importance of small cities and towns throughout the US.⁴

² John B. Cromartie and Peter M. Nelson, P. *Baby Boom Migration and Its Impact on Rural America*. Economic Research Report, ERR-79, USDA-ERS (August 2009), 30 pp.

³ John B. Cromartie, "Nonmetro Areas as a Whole Experience First Period of Population Loss" *Amber Waves* (May 6, 2013).

⁴ David Brown, John Cromartie, Lazlo Kulcsar, "Micropolitan Areas and the Measurement of American Urbanization." *Population Research and Policy Review*, Volume 23 (2004), pp. 299-418.

Numerous federal departments administer programs to provide support to rural people and communities, including the USDA, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Veterans Administration (VA), and others. These programs require up-to-date definitions of “rural” to determine eligibility tailored to the specific goals of the legislation. Starting in 2009, I served on the USDA Taskforce on Rural Definitions, to assess rural definitions that determine eligibility for over 40 Rural Development programs. The work of the Taskforce resulted in the Secretary’s “Report on the Definition of ‘Rural’” in 2013 that fulfilled a Congressional mandate to simplify rural criteria used in those programs.

During my career, I developed two new rural-urban classifications designed to address specific policy needs: the Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes and the Frontier and Remote Area (FAR) codes. Following the theoretical concepts used by the OMB to define county-level metropolitan and micropolitan areas, the sub-county RUCA codes identify urban cores of varying sizes and adjacent territory that is economically integrated with those cores via commuting. The FAR codes identify U.S. areas with low population and high remoteness, using travel time to urban areas to define levels of increasing remoteness. The more geographically-detailed information provided by RUCA and FAR codes have been widely used to improve rural research and policy. HHS uses both of these classifications to determine eligibility for funding health services in rural areas. The VA adopted RUCA codes to help address unique challenges facing veterans living in small town and remote areas.

In 2015, I helped organize and served as presenter and discussant for a 2-day National Academies of Science workshop on *Rationalizing Rural Area Classifications*. I co-wrote the proposal, served on the Steering Committee and assisted with editing the final report. Participants included leading international experts and the White House Senior Advisor for Rural Affairs. Consensus results were highly supportive of both the RUCA and FAR code classifications as they are used for both academic research and federal policy making.

In 2018, I was invited to the United Nation’s Food and Agricultural Organization headquarters in Rome to participate in the UN’s Expert Group Meeting on Improving Rural Statistics. The meeting was convened to assess a proposed global definition of rural to enhance the comparability of agricultural and rural statistics across all countries.

Methodology

This report employs a comparative spatial framework, descriptive analysis, and mapping approach commonly found in rural demographic research.⁵ The underlying premise, based on widely accepted research and my own decades of research, is that rural communities generally face a diverse set of economic and social challenges that differ from those found in urban areas. These challenges are inextricably linked with population change and its components: births, deaths, and migration. Demographic change is both a cause and consequence of differences in job opportunities, workforce skills, education and training, transportation, housing, access to services, and other factors. In many parts of the U.S., these dynamics lead to significant economic disparities between rural and urban communities, with important implications for federal legislation and policy making aimed at promoting rural prosperity. Comparative demographic analysis helps to articulate both the challenges and possible remedies.

I provide a portrait of the rural-urban divide in western Missouri, highlighting the stark contrast between Kansas City and the rest of the region. I use data on incorporated places and urban areas from the U.S. Census Bureau. I also use the Rural-Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) codes from USDA-ERS, taking advantage of its detailed geography and 10-level classification. The Census Tract geography of the RUCA codes allows a comprehensive assessment of differences in rural-urban diversity within CDs 4 and 5.⁶

I also use data from the U.S. Census Bureau and USDA's Economic Research Service to assess population trends in western Missouri, specifically territory included in the 2022 and 2025 CDs 4 and 5. The comparative analysis of population trends is carried out using county-level population data from the U.S. Census. I compare trends among: 1) the Metro Core counties of the Kansas City Metropolitan Area; 2) the Metro Outlying counties in the study area; and 3) Nonmetro counties in the study area (Figure 1).

⁵ The Rural Population Research Network provides examples of recent publications of leading United States rural demographers: <https://rprn.org/publications/>.

⁶ The alignment is not perfect, because Congressional Districts are built from smaller Census Blocks whereas RUCA codes are assigned by census tract. The differences in populations incorrectly included and excluded are less than 2 percent in any given CD represented, with negligible impact on the rural-urban portrait provided here and no impact on my ultimate conclusions.

Notes on Terminology

Urban and rural definitions

There are several definitions for “urban” and “rural” based on different theoretical concepts and used in different research and policy contexts. As noted in the methodology section, this report relies on two sources of data which each carry their own definitions of “urban” and “rural.” I outline below which subparts I consider “urban” or “rural” for the purposes of assessing the presence of an “urban-rural divide.”

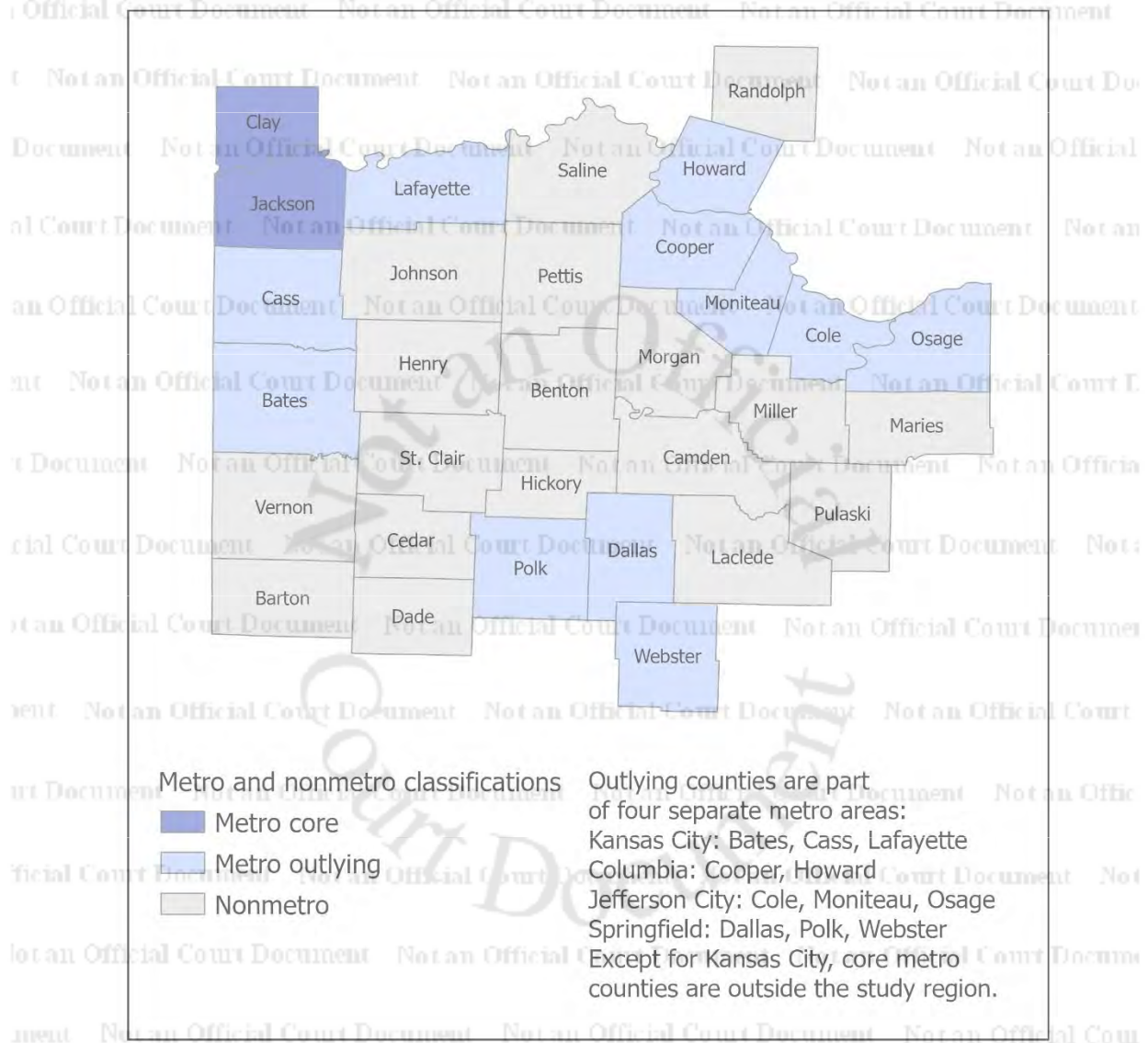
Census Urban and Rural Areas

The Census Bureau’s definition of “urban areas” is based on housing unit density at the block level, and to qualify as urban a census block must have 425 housing units per square mile. In this definition, “rural areas” comprise open country and settlements with fewer than 2,000 housing units and 5,000 residents. Census urban areas consist of both the “urban core,” with the higher density housing, and surrounding areas with lower density housing. The data collected by the Census Bureau in making these categories is one of the factors included in the RUCA codes (discussed below), but I do not use them independently for this report.

Office of Management and Budget Metropolitan and Micropolitan Areas

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines “Metropolitan” and “Micropolitan” areas at the county level. Metropolitan areas include “Metro Core” counties with one or more urban areas of 50,000 people or more, and “Metro Outlying” counties that are economically tied to Metro Core counties as measured by the share of the employed population commuting to and from Core counties. All counties that lie outside of these commuting zones are labelled “Nonmetro” counties. They include “Micro Core” counties and their respective “Micro Outlying” counties as well as counties that are outside Metro or Micro areas. By these definitions, an OMB-defined Metro Area often extends well beyond its built-up urban core. Because of the population growth patterns and attendant attributes typical of Metro counties as compared with those of Nonmetro counties, this report considers Metro and Nonmetro Counties as urban and rural, respectively, when assessing the nature of the urban-rural divide in western Missouri. The report also assesses additional distinctions between Metro Core and Metro Outlying counties that differ from the Nonmetro counties. Figure 1 presents the Metro Core, Metro Outlying, and Nonmetro designations of the counties in the western Missouri study area.

Figure 1. OMB Metropolitan Designations of Western Missouri



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

USDA-ERS Rural-Urban Commuting Areas

The USDA-ERS's RUCA codes provide a census-tract-level breakdown of areas into ten different numbered classes based on core identified areas and commuting flows into those areas. The ten classifications are broken down as follows:

Figure 2. RUCA Code Classification Definitions

1 = Metropolitan core: primary commuting flow is within an urban area of 50,000 or more people (metro UA)
2 = Metropolitan high commuting: primary commuting flow is 30 percent or more to a metro UA
3 = Metropolitan low commuting: primary commuting flow is 10 percent to 30 percent to a metro UA
4 = Micropolitan core: primary flow is within an urban area of 10,000 to 49,999 people (micro UA)
5 = Micropolitan high commuting: primary commuting flow is 30 percent or more to a micro UA
6 = Micropolitan low commuting: primary commuting flow is 10 percent to 30 percent to a micro UA
7 = Small town core: primary commuting flow is within an urban area of 9,999 or fewer people (small town UA)
8 = Small town high commuting: primary commuting flow is 30 percent or more to a small town UA
9 = Small town low commuting: primary commuting flow is 10 percent to 30 percent to a small town UA
10 = Rural areas: primary commuting flow is to a tract outside an UA

Source: USDA-ERS Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes, census tracts, Codebook

While the primary RUCA codes include 10 classification levels, in this report I combine the Metropolitan, Micropolitan, and Small-Town high and low commuting areas into combined Outlying areas for each type, resulting in 7 total classification levels:⁷

- Metro Core (RUCA 1)
- Metro Outlying (RUCA 2 and 3)
- Micro Core (RUCA 4)
- Micro Outlying (RUCA 5 and 6)
- Small Town Core (RUCA 7)
- Small Town Outlying (RUCA 8 and 9)
- Rural (RUCA 10)

This report then considers the Metro Core and Metro Outlying areas as urban/Metro and the remaining five groups as rural/Nonmetro, conceptually corresponding with OMB's county-level Metro Core, Metro Outlying, and Nonmetro areas.

“Western Missouri”

I refer to the area I assess, which covers the areas included in either the 2022 or 2025 CDs 4 and 5, as “western Missouri.” This includes the following counties: Barton, Bates, Benton, Boone, Camden, Cass, Cedar, Clay, Cole, Cooper, Dade, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Howard, Jackson, Johnson, Laclede, Lafayette, Maries, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, Osage, Pettis, Polk, Pulaski, Randolph, Saline, St. Clair, Vernon, and Webster.

By referencing these areas together as “western Missouri,” I do not mean to imply or suggest that these areas are united or that grouping them together is logical. There are various regional

⁷ The combination of the high and low commuting areas for the purposes of assessment is commonly done in various applications of RUCA codes including, for example, in HHS determinations for eligibility for rural-based healthcare programs.

groupings to use in breaking down Missouri which are consistent with my analysis of alike territory, like the Missouri Department of Economic Development's Regional Map which separates out the Kansas City Region—covering Jackson, Cass, Platte, Clay, and Ray counties—from the Central Region,⁸ or the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center which separates out the Kansas City Region—again covering Jackson, Cass, Platte, Clay, and Ray counties—from the West Central and Central Regions.⁹

The Rural-Urban Divide in Western Missouri

Rural and urban areas: distant, disconnected, disadvantaged

Differences in population between urban/Metro and rural/Nonmetro areas will have significant impacts on the distinct needs of those areas.

On average, rural areas exhibit higher poverty rates, higher unemployment, and lower educational attainment. These rural disparities are often associated with long-term population decline, especially from out-migration of young adults, leading to fewer workers and an aging population. Aging itself poses distinct challenges in rural America, reducing workforce capacity and increasing demand for healthcare, housing, and other services geared to the needs of an older population.

Population aging is occurring more rapidly in rural areas than in urban areas. Rural areas are also home to larger shares of older and sicker people, and rural-urban and within-rural disparities in health and mortality are large and growing. Rural areas are also depopulating, raising questions about the implications for the people and places left behind.

Rural areas draw on a distinct store of assets not typically found in urban areas, including abundant land, natural resources, scenic amenities, recreational opportunities, less congestion and a slower pace of life. Rural areas are disproportionately dependent on resource-based industries such as agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. These industries continue to anchor the economies of thousands of rural counties but employ far fewer people than in the past due to significant, long-term productivity gains.

Rural areas remain less connected to reliable high-speed internet, which limits business growth and access to e-commerce, telehealth, tele-legal services, and digital learning.

⁸ Missouri Dep't of Econ. Dev., *About*, <https://ded.mo.gov/about> (last visited Dec. 22, 2025).

⁹ Missouri Econ. Rsch. and Info. Ctr., *Regional Profiles*, <https://meric.mo.gov/regional-profiles> (last visited Dec. 22, 2025).

People in rural areas are employed in industries with some of the highest rates of workplace accidents. Disability rates are disproportionately high in rural areas, problematic in areas with limited access to emergency rooms and legal advice.

These differences are also generally applicable to the assessed urban and rural areas in western Missouri where, for example, urban and rural areas have varying levels of access to healthcare and high-speed internet.

Population change in western Missouri

Massive population shifts since 1950 reshaped the United States in profound ways. People moved to cities in record numbers following the end of World War II and the suburbs of large cities such as Kansas City benefited the most. Expanding Metro regions became the focus of an urban-centric population boom, leaving behind thousands of slow-growing or declining Nonmetro counties. Small towns and rural areas across the country found it difficult to adjust to large-scale out-migration of young people. Nonmetro out-migration left behind a smaller, less-skilled work force and an increasingly aging population. The result is an economic and social landscape strongly differentiated along Metro-Nonmetro boundaries.

For the most part, western Missouri fits this historic demographic pattern. Between 1950 and 2020 nearly three-quarters of all population growth occurred in Metropolitan counties (Table 1). Two-thirds of all growth occurred in just two counties, Jackson and Clay, which make up the 2022 CD 5. Nonmetro counties in this region did not fare quite as badly in terms of overall population growth as in other parts of the country, in part due to the development of a major national transportation corridor (I-70) and the presence of recreation and retirement destinations in the Ozarks. Nonetheless, the emerging demographic divide can be seen in western Missouri in the much lower rate of population growth in Nonmetro counties (64 percent) compared with Metro Outlying counties (99 percent) in the 1950-2020 period.

The demographic divide came into sharp relief during the 2010s, a decade that saw Nonmetro population loss for the first time. While Nonmetro areas in many parts of the country had experienced population decline for decades, this was the first time that Nonmetro areas as a whole had lost population. This shift was a manifestation of long-term declines in fertility rates affecting the country as a whole, together with Nonmetro aging, and thus is not likely reversible in the long run.

Western Missouri took part in this historic shift, with its Nonmetro counties showing a decline in population for the first time in the 2010-2020 period (Table 1). Metro Outlying counties in western Missouri also experienced a downward shift in population, growing at just 2.9 percent, less than half the national growth rate of 7 percent. This too reflected a nationwide shift

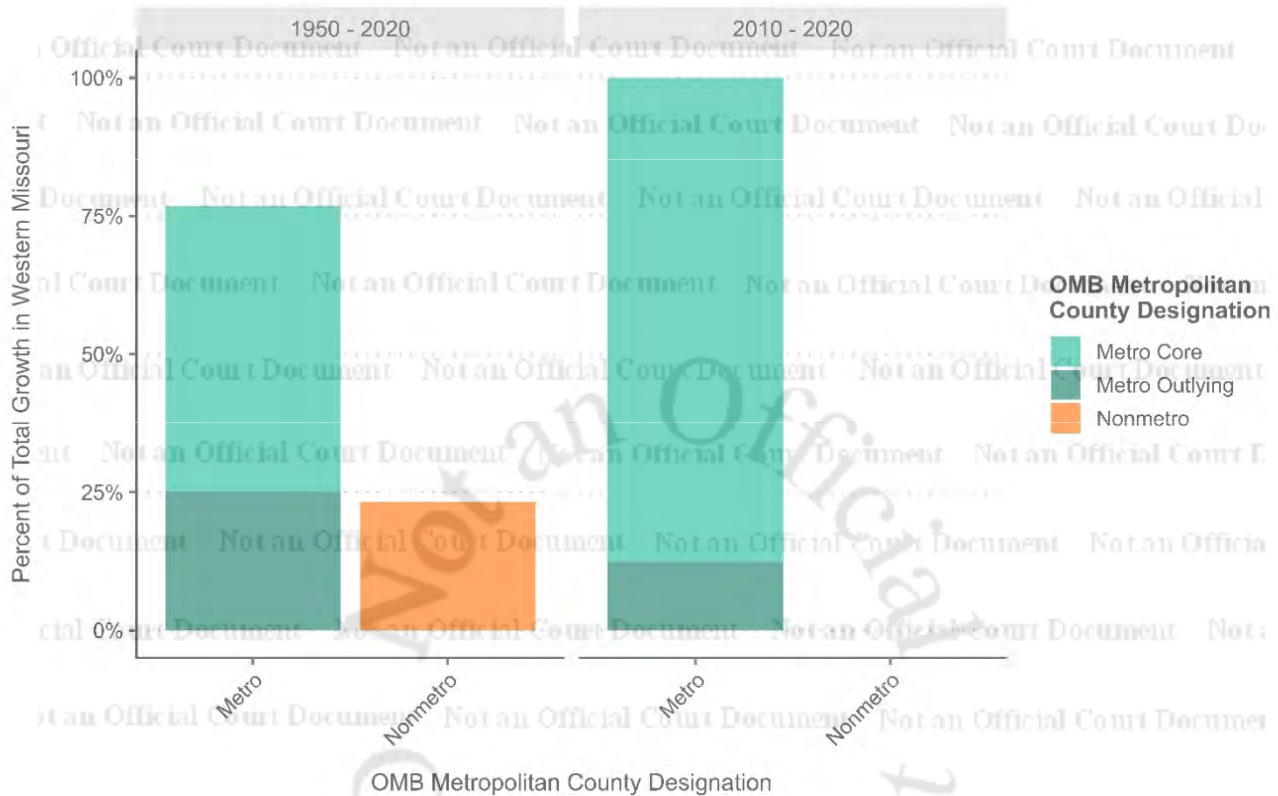
toward slower suburban expansion. As a result, during the 2010s, close to 90 percent of all population growth in western Missouri took place in the Kansas City area's two Metro Core counties and the combined Metro Core and Metro Outlying areas accounting for 100% of the 2010-2020 population growth in western Missouri.

Table 1. Population Change in Western Missouri, 1950-2020 and 2010-2020

	1990 - 2020			2010 - 2020		
	Numeric Population Growth	Percentage Population Growth	Percentage of All Growth in Western Missouri	Numeric Population Growth	Percentage Population Growth	Percentage of All Growth in Western Missouri
Metro	+572,361	+73.8%	76.8%	+85,003	+6.7%	100.0%
Core	+384,283	+65.5%	51.6%	+74,442	+8.3%	87.6%
Outlying	+188,078	+99.1%	25.2%	+10,561	+2.9%	12.4%
Nonmetro	+173,071	+63.9%	23.2%	-2,157	-0.5%	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 3: Percent of Population Change in Western Missouri, 1950-2020 and 2010-2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The rural-urban divide is strongly evident when county population change is divided into its two major components: natural change (births minus deaths) and net migration (in-migrants minus out-migrants). From the 1950s through the 1970s, Nonmetro population loss was driven almost exclusively by net out-migration. Natural increase continued to add population in the vast majority of Nonmetro counties. Lower fertility rates and increasing mortality (due to the aging of the population) has in more recent decades led to a significant jump in the number of Nonmetro counties experiencing natural decrease, a phenomenon that has been labelled “more coffins than cribs.” By 2020, over half of Nonmetro counties in the United States had shifted to natural decrease, and western Missouri followed this trend. Of the 32 counties used in this analysis, 22 had begun to experience more deaths than births by 2020. Six of these were Metro Outlying counties and the remaining 16 were Nonmetro. In contrast, natural increase remained a major contributor to population growth in the Kansas City area’s Metro Core counties.

Differences in rural-urban territory among 2022 and 2025 Congressional Districts 4 and 5

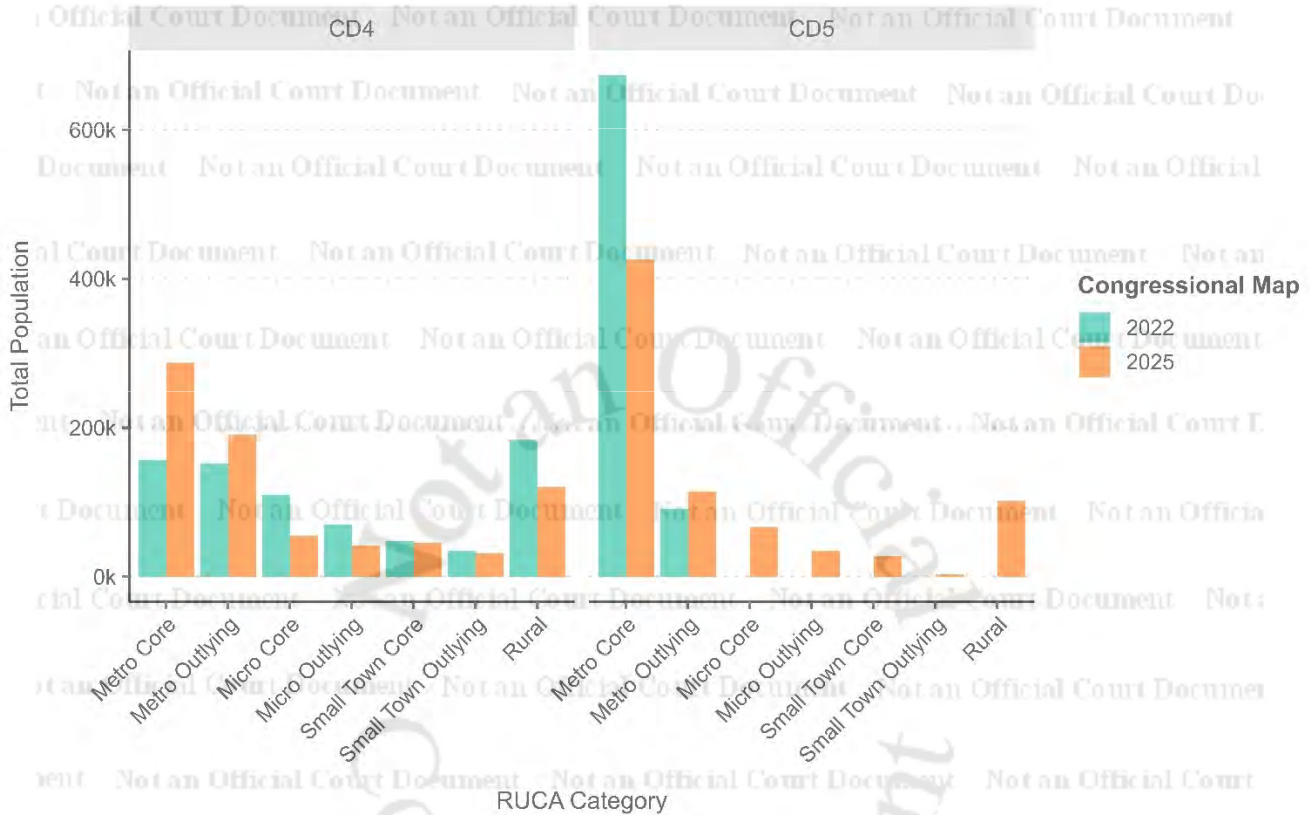
The 2020 RUCA codes provide a detailed portrait of population settlement diversity in western Missouri which I apply here to the 2022 and 2025 CDs 4 and 5. As mentioned above, here I use a 7-level classification ranging from the most densely-settled Metropolitan (Metro) Core regions down to the most sparsely-settled rural areas. The 7-level RUCA classification for the 2022 and 2025 configurations of CDs 4 and 5 is presented below in a table (Table 2), bar graph (Figure 4) and in two maps (Figures 5 and 6).

Table 2. RUCA Code Populations in Congressional Districts 4 and 5 for 2022 and 2025

	Metro Core	Metro Outlying	Micro Core	Micro Outlying	Small Town	Small Town Outlying	Rural
2022 CD 4	157,111	152,517	109,739	70,525	47,443	34,523	183,120
2025 CD 4	287,370	191,153	55,055	42,450	45,803	31,605	120,239
2022 CD 5	673,058	90,926	0	0	0	0	115
2025 CD 5	426,340	114,024	67,042	35,106	27,979	2,918	101,206

Source: 2020 USDA-ERS Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes, census tracts

Figure 4. RUCA Code Populations in Congressional Districts 4 and 5 for 2022 and 2025

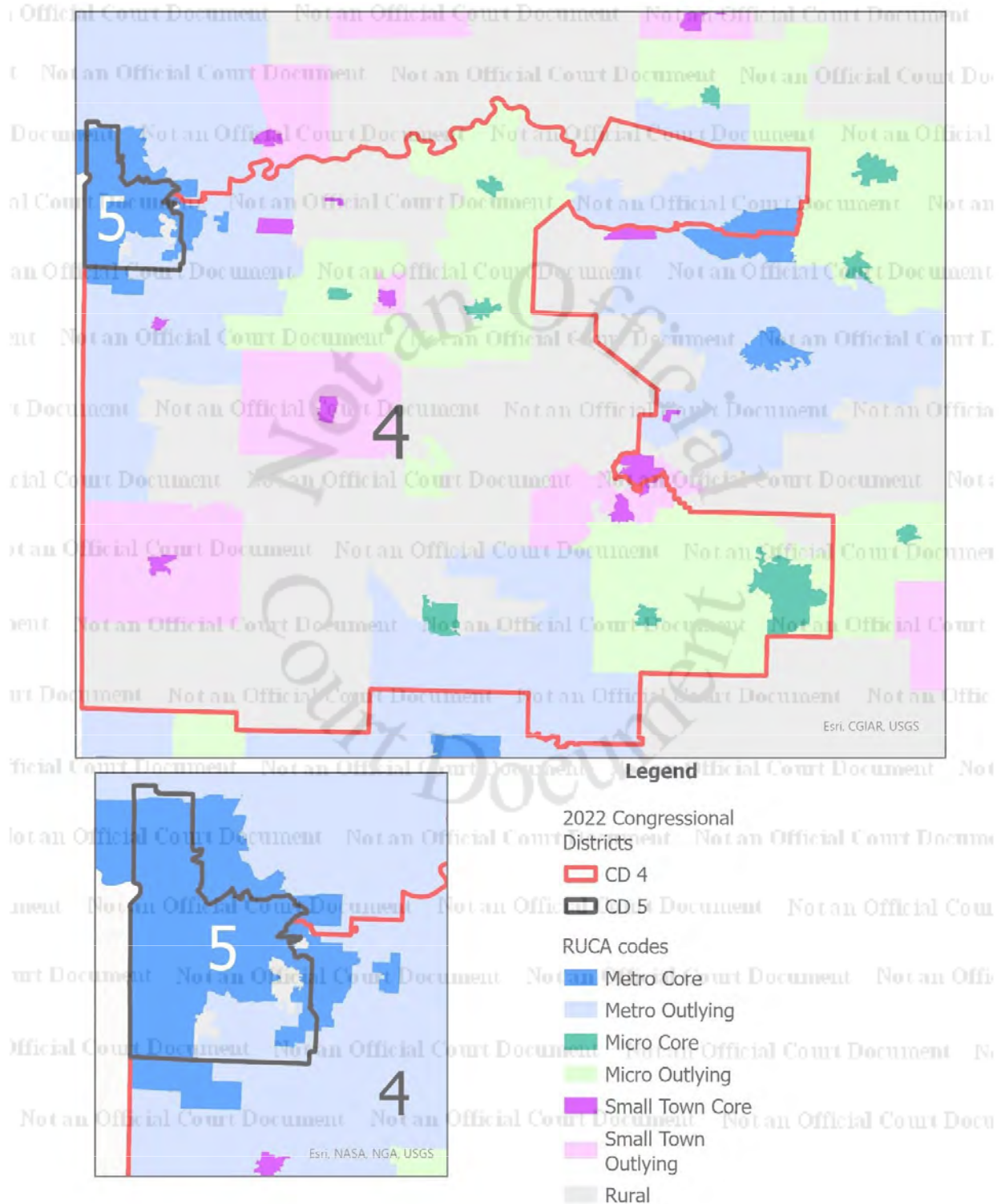


Source: 2020 USDA-ERS Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes, census tracts

2022 District 5 largely coincided with the Metro Core of Kansas City. Eighty-eight percent of District 5's population resided in the Metro Core. The remaining population lived in Metro Suburbs (RUCA level 2) except for 0.02 percent that lived in rural territory. This is an excellent picture of a congressional district built around closely united urban territory (Figure 5).

The 2022 District 4 included population and territory from across the rural-urban spectrum. However, it is primarily made up of people living outside Metro areas, in Nonmetro territory (RUCA levels 4-10). Whereas less than 15 percent of U.S. residents live in Nonmetro areas, the number is just under 60 percent in 2022 District 4. In addition, over 35 percent of the 2022 CD 4 population live in Small Town areas (RUCA levels 7-9) and Rural areas (RUCA level 10), compared with 6 percent in the U.S. as a whole. This was a district made up largely of Nonmetro rural and small-town communities united by shared concerns regarding rural opportunities and challenges.

Figure 5. Rural-Urban Classifications in Missouri's 2022 Congressional Districts 4 and 5

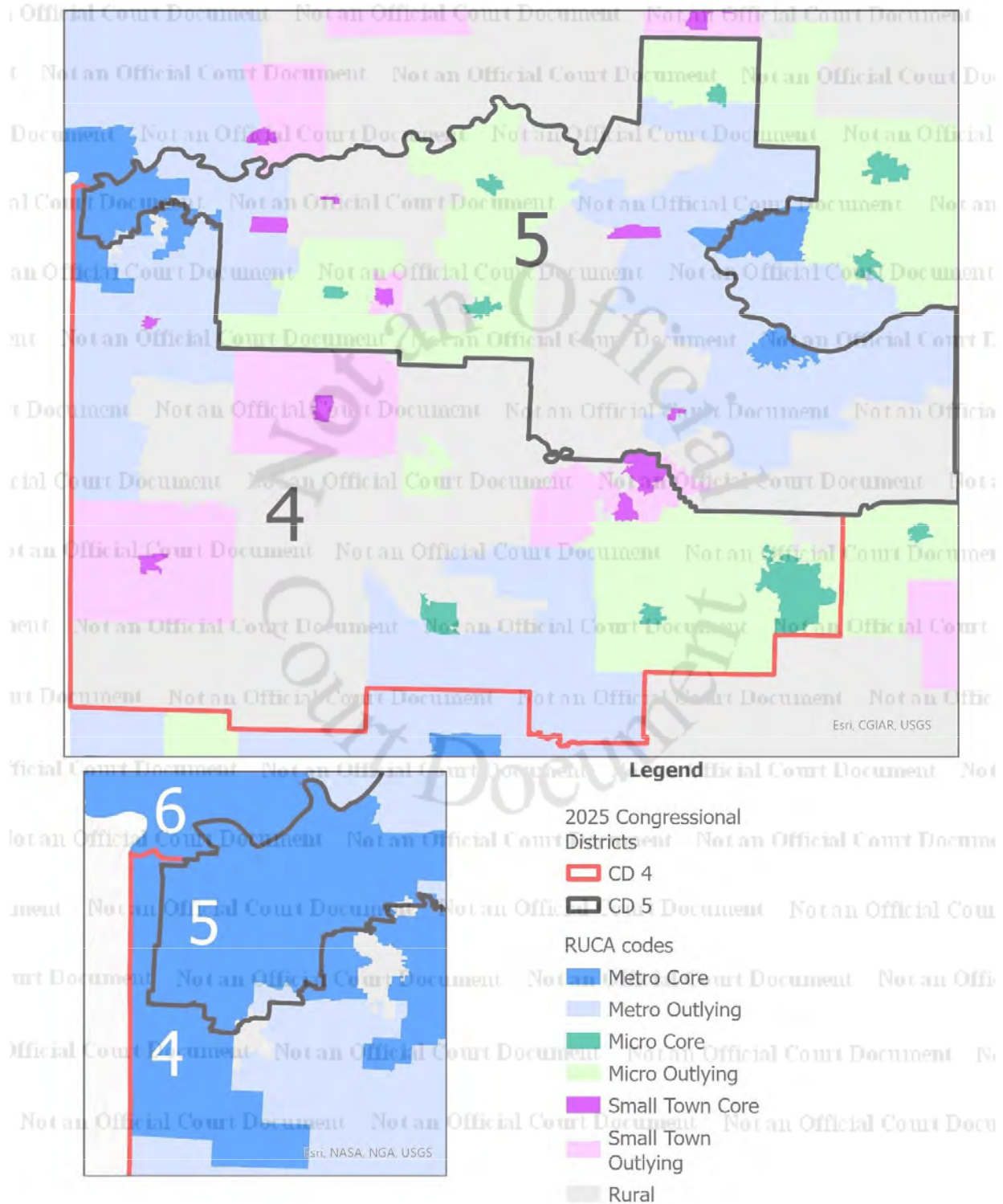


Source: 2020 USDA-ERS Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes, census tracts, Missouri Office of Administration: Division of Budget & Planning

The reconfiguration of Missouri's congressional districts in 2025 caused a major realignment of rural and urban territory in western Missouri (Figure 6). The two districts no longer constitute two united territories, one almost entirely Metro/urban and one mostly Nonmetro/rural, but instead both now include some population living in all 7 RUCA code classes. First and foremost, the Metro Core region of Kansas City was split in three across Districts 4, 5, and 6. District 5 therefore went from having 88 percent of its population in the Kansas City Metro Core down to 55 percent. District 5 previously had no population living in Micropolitan or Small Town communities. Now over 35 percent of its residents reside in these smaller, less-densely settled areas. Inversely, District 4 went from just 21 percent Metro Core up to 37 percent. District 4 is now 62 percent Metropolitan, compared with 40 percent previously, and dropped from 35 to 25 percent living in Small Town and Rural areas.

In sum, the 2025 CD 4 and 5 configuration splits up the almost wholly urban/Metro 2022 CD 5, and the 2025 CD 4 incorporates significantly more urban presence into the predominantly rural/Nonmetro 2022 CD 4. Ultimately, this is impactful because of the continuing and increasing salience of the urban-rural divide. Joining together these rural and urban areas combines communities with deep disparities between them. Those disparities are associated with and arise from the varying patterns of population growth and decline, resulting in differing opportunities and challenges across the urban-rural divide. In addition, fracturing the Kansas City Metro area eliminates a district which encompasses a unified urban community and its own unique features and needs.

Figure 6. Rural-Urban Classifications in Missouri's 2025 Congressional Districts 4 and 5



Source: 2020 USDA-ERS Rural-Urban Commuting Area Codes, census tracts, Missouri Office of Administration: Division of Budget & Planning

Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, I conclude that the Kansas City urban/Metro area is a closely united territory that experiences more domestic migration, immigration, and natural population growth than the rural/Nonmetro parts of western Missouri. Those trends create significant differences in the economic and social lives of western Missouri's urban and rural communities. Where 2022 CD 5 was centered on the Kansas City urban/Metro Core, the reconfigured CDs 4, 5, and 6 fracture that area. Reconfigured CDs 4 and 5 now include populations across all categories of the rural-urban continuum, and tie the urban core of Kansas City with remote rural areas far in both distance and makeup. I find that the 2025 configuration of CDs 4 and 5 does significantly less than the 2022 CDs 4 and 5 to keep alike urban and rural areas of western Missouri together.

Signature: John B Cromartie

Date: 12/22/2025

Appendix A: Additional Briefings, Presentations, Awards, and Academic Experience

Selected briefings and invited presentations

- "Demographic Trends Affecting Rural America." Briefing for the Senate Economic Mobility Caucus, June 2016.
- "Nonmetropolitan outmigration counties: some are poor, many are prosperous." Invited paper presented at the National Academies of Science, Geographical Sciences Committee's planning session on Place-Based Rural Development Policies, Washington, DC, February 9, 2011.
- "New Views of Rural America from the 2010 Census and Beyond." Invited briefing for the Undersecretary for Rural Business at the USDA Rural Business Strategy Meeting, Washington, DC, April 28, 2010.
- "Defining the "Rural" in Rural America." Briefing for the Undersecretary of Research, Education and Extension and other USDA administrators, Washington, DC, August 1, 2009.
- "Exploring Measures in State Allocation Formulas for Rural Business and Community Development Programs." Invited briefing for the Undersecretary of Rural Development and other USDA administrators, March 6, 2009.
- "USDA Research on Rural Poverty: Past Accomplishments and Future Directions." Invited paper presented at the National Academies of Science planning session on Poverty and Spatial Dynamics, Washington, DC, February 28, 2008.
- "Rural Definitions Used for Program Eligibility." Briefing to the House Agriculture Committee, Washington, DC, June 25, 2007.
- "Micropolitan Statistical Areas and What They Mean for Rural Policy." Invited paper presented at the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics, Alexandria, VA, November 4, 2003.
- "The Nature of Rurality in Post Industrial Society." Invited paper presented at the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population's Conference on New Forms of Urbanization in the 21st Century, Bellagio, Italy, March 12, 2002.
- "Definitions of Rural." Invited Presentation to the National Advisory Committee on Rural Health, January 22, 1998.
- "Recent Population Trends in the Western United States." Testimony before the House Committee on Natural Resources, at a hearing on the Changing Needs of the West, April 7, 1994.

Awards

- USDA Secretary's Honor Award for Excellence, for the development of an innovative, science-based measure of "rugged terrain" to improve rural policy and increase more equitable access to rural resources and opportunities, 2025.
- REE Under Secretary's Award, for major contributions to the Report of the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity, which provides a road map for the President's rural economic agenda, 2018.
- USDA Secretary's Honor Award for Superior Service, for outstanding accomplishment and exemplary service in the design and implementation of the Atlas of Rural and Small Town America, 2011.

Academic Experience

- September 2005-June 2014, Visiting Lecturer, Department of Geography, The George Washington University.
- January-May 1996, Visiting Lecturer, Department of Geography, University of Maryland at College Park.

At both universities, I developed a curriculum and taught an advanced undergraduate class in Population Geography.