

EXHIBIT 17



Redistricting Committee Testimony - Thursday, August 26, 2021

To: Chairman Devlin and members of the Redistricting Committee:

My name is Rick Gion, and I live in Fargo, ND. I'm the director of North Dakota Voters First. We are 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the 2021 North Dakota legislative districting process. Our organization is urging fairness and transparency with this process. We are hopeful that you will be posting draft legislative maps on the legislative website as is alluded to in House Bill 1397 of the 2021 legislative session.

Re-drawing boundaries of legislative districts is one of the most important tasks required to maintain a well-functioning and representative government in our state. It only happens every 10 years. I believe that the goal of districting should be to work as much as we can to ensure that everyone's vote matters. That means districts are compact and contiguous, the number of people in each district is almost identical, existing boundaries are respected, and communities of interest are represented. I'd also suggest taking a look at splitting districts for the state House of Representatives. This would help give better representation in rural areas and with the state's Native American reservations.

One of the major problems to avoid is gerrymandered districts that are designed to produce electoral advantages for incumbents or the political party in power. Biased legislative districts favor powerful special interests instead of voters. Every vote no longer counts, because the system is rigged.

As a proud North Dakotan, I'm urging fairness in the 2021 districting process. Let's avoid gerrymandering and make sure that we have the best and most representational state government in the nation. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Rick Gion (lobbyist #
 Director, North Dakota Voters First
rick@northdakotavotersfirst.org