

**MINUTES OF THE
REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE**

Thursday, June 15, 2011 – 6:00 p.m. – Salt Lake Library

Members Present:

Sen. Ralph Okerlund, Senate Chair
Rep. Kenneth W. Sumsion, House Chair
Sen. Gene Davis
Sen. Benjamin M. McAdams
Sen. Stuart C. Reid
Sen. Kevin T. Van Tassell
President Michael G. Waddoups
Rep. Roger E. Barrus
Rep. Gage Froerer
Rep. Neal B. Hendrickson
Rep. Don L. Ipson
Rep. Brian S. King
Rep. Todd E. Kiser
Speaker Rebecca D. Lockhart

Rep. Merlynn T. Newbold
Rep. Christine F. Watkins
Rep. R. Curt Webb

Members Absent:

Rep. Melvin R. Brown
Rep. Francis D. Gibson

Staff Present:

Mr. Leif G. Elder, Policy Analyst
Mr. J Brian Allred, Policy Analyst
Mr. Phil Dean, Policy Analyst
Mr. John L. Fellows, General Counsel
Ms. Kimberly A. Heiner, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Sumsion called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Members of the Committee introduced themselves and indicated the areas of the state that they represent.

2. Overview of Redistricting

Mr. Elder gave a presentation on what redistricting is, why it is done, and the redistricting principles that were adopted at the May 4, 2011 meeting. He then gave an overview of the redistricting public website RedistrictUtah.com and demonstrated the section on this site that allows the public to create and share redistricting plans.

3. Public Comment and Committee Discussion About Redistricting

Rep. Cox presented "House - Cox Online Plan Statewide & Salt Lake County" and explained his rationale. He responded to questions from the Committee and the public.

President Waddoups presented "Congressional Plan D - Doughnut Hole" and explained his rationale. He responded to questions from the Committee.

Mr. Robert Hale, Midvale City Council, said that Midvale City currently has three state senators, and four representatives representing them. He said that because they are divided it is hard to get a focus from one of them. He asked the Committee to keep as much of the city as possible in one district.

Mr. Larry Shumway, State Board of Education Superintendent, asked that the Committee try not to split up the school districts to ensure that school districts can be appropriately represented. He also requested that the State Board of Education be able to provide input in the process of drawing School Board Plans.

Chair Sumsion said the Committee welcomes input from the School Board and said he would schedule a time for the School Board to present a plan to the Committee.

Speaker Lockhart asked Mr. Shumway if the School Board would like to increase or decrease the size of the board. Mr. Shumway said he would ask the Board.

Mr. Mark Poulson, citizen, said he does not support President Waddoups' Congressional Map because it blends urban and rural areas. He said there was a map generated by the Utah Citizens Council and asked the Committee to look at that map.

Mr. Chase Peterson, Utah Citizens Counsel, asked the Committee to not let short term party self interest guide the redistricting process. He said that people in the state have lost interest in the democratic process because they do not think that their vote counts. He said that if lines are drawn to dilute or concentrate votes, it does not give the people the opportunity to have an essential vote.

Ms. Jenny Pathack, Represent Me Utah, said Represent Me Utah is dedicated to monitoring this redistricting process to make sure the public's voice is heard. She said she wants communities to be kept together.

Mr. Jim Dabakis, citizen, asked the Committee to put aside political interests and bring people of common interests together.

Ms. Mary Bishop, citizen, said that part of the reason for the low voter turnout in Utah is that the districts are drawn so that people feel that they have no voice. She asked the Committee to keep the boundaries competitive.

Mr. Joe Andrade, citizen, said he likes Rep. Cox's approach of providing a clean slate. He also recommended that the Legislature have a professionally trained non-partisan organization draw the boundaries.

Mr. John J. O'Donnel, Tooele Democratic Party Chair, said Tooele County was not dealt fairly with in the redistricting process ten years ago. He said that it is difficult for his community to feel like they can make a difference because their current representatives are geographically so far away.

Mr. Ken Froehle, citizen, said he wants citizens to be heard and not be divided up.

Mr. Jesse M. Nix, citizen, asked the Committee to exemplify the quality of self sacrifice in drawing the district boundaries.

Mr. Will Carlson, citizen, said that because the population is gathered in the Wasatch front, there should be a congressional district in that area. He said that incumbents should not feel entitled to their elected seat and supports Rep. Cox's proposal to start with a clean slate. He also said that the Redistricting Committee has an opportunity to include the younger population by drawing districts around Universities.

Mr. Ernie Gamonal, Utah State Hispanic Democratic Caucus & Salt Lake County Democratic Caucus, asked the Committee to consider the Latino and minority population when drawing lines. He said "you have a large concentration of Latino population who lives on the west side of Salt Lake City in the Glendale neighborhoods and the Rosepark neighborhoods. We are very proud of our representation on the Hill in those neighborhoods. Rep. Chavez-Houck, Rep. Seelig, Rep. Litvack, and Sen. Luz Robles, have done an outstanding job bringing our voice and our concerns to the peoples house."

Mr. Manoli Sargetakis, citizen, said that it does not make sense for people who do not share the same schools, roads, & weather, to share the same representative. He said he's seen a trend of splitting up communities.

Mr. Gary Eccles, citizen, said he does not feel like the redistricting process was fair ten years ago, but asked the Committee to make it fair this time.

Ms. Gabriella Huggins, citizen, said she attends a public high school and sees that her peers are not excited about voting and being involved in the democratic process. She asked the Committee to listen to the comments spoken today and to make the process fair.

Ms. Judy Steiger, citizen, asked the Committee to be fair in drawing district lines.

Mr. Brandon Mark, citizen, recommended that the Committee adopt a principle of avoiding political gerrymandering if the state wants to avoid a lawsuit.

Mr. Alexander Huggins, citizen, said that the Rosepark & Glendale areas need to stay in the same political district to remain unified and have a political voice.

Mr. Merlyn Hanks, citizen, said that there should not be any lines drawn based on color or ethnic background and considers this to be gerrymandering.

Mr. John Merrick, citizen, asked the Committee to not keep part of their Senate district in Davis County.

Mr. Nathan Basset, citizen, said that it is important to increase voter participation and asked the Committee to keep that in mind in drawing maps.

Ms. Dorothy Owen, citizen, spoke against the Senate 1 % Plan President Waddoups introduced today and said she hoped the Committee would reconsider the plan because it is not as compact and contiguous as it should be.

Mr. Steve Erickson, citizen, asked the Committee to keep the Avenues in the same congressional district.

Mr. David Van Langeveld, citizen, asked the Committee to create conditions where there can be competition in political races.

Ms. Deb Henry, citizen, said that many people do not vote because they do not feel like their vote counts. She asked the Committee to keep unity in communities and believes that unity will increase voter turnout.

Mr. Jim Cassidy, citizen, said he does not support Pres. Waddoups plan because it mixes rural and urban districts.

Ms. Grace Sperry, citizen, asked the community to keep in mind small precincts and people who feel like they have no representation.

Sen. McAdams mentioned that the online redistricting software can help the citizens propose changes to plans brought forward by Committee members.

Mr. Kyle Daniels, citizen, asked President Waddoups what his rationale was for putting rural areas with other urban areas on the map he presented tonight. President Waddoups said it was for population. Mr. Daniels said that, if gerrymandering occurs in Utah, it will send a negative message to the public and to future generations.

Mr. Christian Harrison, citizen, said that the boundaries should be drawn using natural borders. He said that trying to match boundaries with population is a myth, because as soon as the census numbers are out, the population is outdated.

Ms. June Olsen, citizen, said she wants Salt Lake City to be kept as much as possible in one district.

Mr. John Jackson, citizen, said it is inherently wrong for a body to draw their own districts and said he hopes that the Committee can put aside personal gain and do what is best for the state. He said he liked Rep. Cox's proposal that tried to keep communities together.

Mr. Erin Youngberg, citizen, recommended, for the senate boundaries, that the Committee connect the northwest portion of Salt Lake City with areas adjacent to Salt Lake City.

Ms. Kim Higginson, Represent Me Utah, said that she believes that voter participation is low because people do not feel like it is worth the effort.

Mr. Taylor Maryon, Salt Lake County Veterans Caucus Chairman, said he believes it is important to address the low voter turnout issue through redistricting. He said that he believes that the state has a low voter turnout rate because people do not feel like they are being represented. He said that we can create a level playing field through redistricting.

4. Adjourn

MOTION: Rep. Newbold moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Sumsion adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m.