



**Oklahoma State Senate
Select Committee on Redistricting
58th Legislature**

Public Comments

As of 3/4/21

Oklahoma State Senate



These are from discussions that took place either before the formal meeting started or after the meeting

ADA

- Question about career-tech redistricting and availability/access to the population figures in the software
- Questions about population figures for SD 4, 5, and 7 and the plan for each district because each district is below the population needed and all will need to add population

PRYOR

- Question about SD 1 and what the plan is for making up the population needed

OKC-STATE CAPITOL

- Question about Moore-Norman career tech lines and would the State Senate be able to assist them when the time came for them to look at this

DURANT

- Request from local group to put McCurtain and LeFlore county into one state senate district
- Question about redrawing local city council seats

ENID

- Questions about overall census data and population figures. How to access and view. Demonstrated data.census.gov to answer his questions

CLINTON

- Question about redrawing of precinct lines at the county level

- Comment about the concern of declining rural population and what impact that will have on western Oklahoma state senate seats

These are questions from the recorded question and answer time

Senate Townhalls

(Comments made at Senate townhalls, about Senate Redistricting)

Jim Eldridge, Resident of Pontotoc Co.

- One thing we have observed, working with our local businesses is that it has been incredibly effective to have a house district (and senate) that aligns pretty well with our county boundary, with our trade area boundary, and approximately our technology center boundary.

Resident - Durant, OK

- Based on the current estimates, how do you see the boundaries working out between rural and urban seats?

Resident - Durant, OK

- How are people in jails, university dorms, etc. counted?

Resident of Durant, OK

- How can we ensure that Bryan County is kept together?

Resident – Enid, OK

- Why did the process change from how it used to be in the 60's? Ex.: "One Person, One Vote"

House Townhalls

(Comments made at House Townhalls about Senate Redistricting. If you would like to know the comments about the House districts, contact House Redistricting staff)

Resident of Jones, OK

- I would like all citizens within Jones city limits to be able to vote in Jones and not any other towns (i.e. having to go to Spencer to vote). Jones is currently split by two Senate districts (SD 17 & 48) and two House districts (HD 97 & HD 96) and I request that the community be in one district each. Also, do not split our school district if possible.

Resident of Jenks

- What kind of public information should we expect between the end of the public meetings and the legislation to enact plans for redistricting? I really like the way my House district (68) is shaped.

Staff notes: Follow up comment not on recording. I would be better represented by somebody who also represents a more urban/suburban area rather than somebody that represents a largely exurban/rural area. Please keep precinct 420 in Creek County (Jenks precinct) in a district that has urban/suburban leanings as it currently is. Asked that the same be considered for any Senate plan (i.e SD 37).

Resident of Lawton

- Do you have any specific plans for the Southwest region when it concerns redistricting? Specifically, is there a plan to redraw Senate District 31 to put Lawton in one senate seat, given that Lawton is losing population?

Resident of Muskogee County

- Stop the current cheating! Stop the total gerrymandering of all Oklahoma districts. Redraw lines back where they were prior to the 2010 /2011 gerrymandering. Start over with the pre-cheating lines. Appoint an independent panel of judges to oversee and assure continued fairness. [See attached testimonial for full comments including Senate comments]

Emails to redistricting@oksenate.gov

- Thank you so much for the effort to engage the public ahead of redistricting committee meetings this session. I have a specific question about counts of prison and jail populations. I know you've made the effort in the past to explain that rather than attributing folks to the communities they'll return to, in Oklahoma people who are incarcerated are counted as part of the population for the area in which they're incarcerated.

At several points last year we had some major shifts in carceral populations including jail to prison transport stoppage due to COVID, the shutdown of the Cimarron Correctional Facilities and removal of incarcerated people from Kate Barnard in order to respond to a budget decrease. Can you tell me further when population counts are taken and how/if you accounted for any of the shifts identified above? Further, are federal prison populations counted towards the population for our state if folks are incarcerated at a federal facility located in Oklahoma?

- How are jails, prisons, detention centers, and other criminal justice involved institutions represented or considered in the redistricting efforts? Are they considered in this process of redistricting?
- What is the deadline for submitting a recommended map?
- Please draw the Gatewood neighborhood in Oklahoma City in one Senate district. I believe it meets the "community of interest" standard and should not be split between two

Senate districts like it was after the 2010 Census. The Gatewood neighborhood currently has one state representative (House District 88) and two state senators (Senate District 40 and 46).

- One thing disturbs me. There is created a fairly obvious conflict of interest when the incumbent is allowed to help draw his/her own district. Please explain why this is not apparently not considered unethical.
Is there a Senate Rule that speaks to this issue?

- My question: I wondered if population density is considered while drawing these lines. It seems to me that the concerns of citizens living in more populated areas are often different than in less populated areas. It is easier to illustrate this with US House Districts but the question extends to OK House and Senate. I live in OK US House District 5 and that district currently is much of Oklahoma County and all of Pottawatomie and Seminole counties. This effectively cuts the metropolitan area of Oklahoma City in half with the southern half of the metro in US House District 4. The concerns and needs of the citizens in the metro are vastly different than the concerns of those living in rural areas. Considering that US House District 1 is all of the Tulsa Metro area, shouldn't the same apply to the Oklahoma City Metro. It would seem to me that US OK 5 should be Norman, Moore, OKC, and Edmond thus allowing the people with similar concerns and needs to be accurately represented. In either case it would seem to me that the Representatives from OK House 4 and 5 would both be split in their focus between their urban, suburban, and rural constituents.

On the districting of the Oklahoma House and Senate, the same question applies. The current boundaries are harder to describe in an email, but it would seem that similar economic households should be grouped to ensure that citizens are fairly represented in government. I live in Senate District 40 and House District 87 and it seems that those boundaries appear to be more appropriate in general. I guess my question there is to what degree are household income, education, age, race and other demographics considered when drawing these lines? I would hope that party registration would not be a factor. Finally, I wonder if expected future shifts are considered at all. It is probable that Oklahoma City may continue to grow during the next decade while some rural areas are anticipated to decline in population. Does that factor?

- Hoping to see Beckham County House and Senate district lines returned to a more traditional format. Specifically as they pertain to Elk City!
- As someone who has lived in Osage county pretty well my entire life I feel that district 10 should focus more on the smaller more rural communities it previously represented. With the addition of Ponca City and other parts of Kay County we have been redistricted to the point of being represented by senators who are primarily from Ponca City.

What we have experienced in the smaller communities of district 10 is representation that doesn't always fully consider what is best for our small schools, rural businesses, and communities. I understand and am not even upset by this. They represent roughly 25,000 people in the Ponca City area with a large school and sadly probably a majority of people who vote. It would be easier to consider what the Ponca City Public Schools superintendent says or believes simply for that fact.

The district used to focus more on the rural counties such as Pawnee, Osage, and even parts of northern Payne with a little bit of Noble. These counties and communities were more similar and made more sense to be represented by the same district.

My fear is we as the rural part of the state with deep roots in agriculture and communities with small schools will be considered as an afterthought when someone from a larger micropolitan is elected to serve us. I think our current senator is a good man and has done a good job for the district. I just fear what may happen when someone who doesn't worry about the rural parts of the district is elected.

- As the Executive Director of the Chandler Area Chamber of Commerce, I feel that it is important for Lincoln County to remain whole for Senate District 28.

Thank you for your consideration.

- I am sorry that I missed the public hearing on redistricting. It is my opinion that it is very important that Lawton have two senators representing. It has been this way for years and I support keeping two senators for Lawton
- Hello, my name is Carol Goodwin and I'm the President/CEO for the Choctaw Area Chamber of Commerce. I represent the business community in Eastern Oklahoma County (EOC), mainly the areas surrounding Choctaw, Nicoma Park, and Jones. I would like to formally request that this committee consider centralizing district boundaries in EOC.

As you move through the redistricting process this year, I ask that on behalf of the residents and leaders of Eastern Oklahoma County that you consider centralizing the legislative districts together in our area. Historically, our communities have been rural, slowly moving suburban over the last few decades. As such, our sparse population has caused us to become the natural dividing lines between districts. Now that our area has seen tremendous growth, and will continue to see growth with the opening of the Kickapoo Turnpike, I would ask that you reconsider how district lines are drawn Eastern Oklahoma County (EOC) on a state and national level.

The specific concern with the current district boundaries is that our communities tend to be on the outskirts of several districts. As such, it creates a more difficult barrier to entry when trying to access support from elected officials. The other major concern with the current district lines are the fact that they do not adhere to the organic regions of the

communities. For instance, our local technology center services Choctaw, Nicoma Park, Jones, Luther and Harrah. With Tinker Air Force Base being the largest employer in the area, it helps link us more with Midwest City, as well. As such, it makes more sense that our legislative boundaries be more closely associated within those areas.

There are a lot of delicate pieces that need to be weighed while drawing new district lines, as we also factor in the population growth from the last map. While making those decisions, I ask that you consider this request to centralize EOC's legislative boundaries.

I would love to help explain in further detail which areas we would like to centralize, and I have been working to communicate this with all of our elected officials (including Congressman Cole and Congresswoman Bice's office). We wish to work in concert with them on this project. Please contact me for any questions or more information.

Thanks!

Letters to the editor

(Comments made to local newspapers)

One of the things I love most about where I live is the diverse group of people who all call the Gatewood district home — young couples new to the area and older residents who have lived in our neighborhood for decades. We have all worked together to improve our neighborhood, the nearby Plaza District and urban Oklahoma City as a whole. And there is a lot to be collectively excited about.

Despite a lot of the common values I share with my neighbors, regardless of how we cast our votes, there are multiple legislative districts that all converge near the Plaza District. Even in Gatewood, the neighborhood is nearly split in half between two state Senate districts.

This gerrymandering, when politicians manipulate their voting districts to give themselves an advantage, focuses on what's good for politicians, not the people and not our community. My neighborhood is direct evidence of this, and that is why I am supporting a ballot initiative led by People Not Politicians.

