

October 16, 2021

To: House and Senate Redistricting Committees:

I am interested in and following the redistricting committee hearings and attended the one at the Merrimack County Courthouse. I felt lucky that I was able to make the trip and participate.

I am, however, deeply concerned that many are "barred" from attending as there has been a stubbornness in presenting these hearing on Zoom. During the past legislative season, I was delighted that I was able to attend many hearings remotely and to even cast my preference electronically. I felt like my voice mattered. Legislators are always saying they want to hear from their constituents and yet we are back to barriers, having lost the electronic ability to participate.

Chairman Griffin has said the technology is too difficult. That is a lame excuse as we all know it has worked for many organizations and continues to do so. It worked last winter!! I'm no techy but I could organize and conduct such a meeting. There is surely someone in the employ of the State of New Hampshire who could be pressed into service as was done during the legislative sessions.

Attendance at the Claremont and Coos hearings was sparce as many were concerned with the significant spike in COVID cases. Who can blame them? The lack of notices going out with at least a 2 week window to schedule one's time is the only way to rid this process of the stench of the 2011 process. Open discussion and the willingness to acknowledge that fairer maps are, indeed, possible is vital to our democracy.

I urge you to take a hard look at the practices of the past and of the current practices and dedicate yourselves to encouraging public participation in the process of redistricting following the 2020 census. Gerrymandering can be a thing of the past...Too many communities have been denied fair representation, communities that qualify for their own representative.

We are counting on you to listen to the people who are affected by the work of your committee. We are counting on you all to restore integrity to the process.

Judith Ackerson
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