

Testimony
House Redistricting Committee
Wednesday, March 7, 2012
Congressional Redistricting Map
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Chairman O'Neal and Members of the Committee:

I am here today to express the views of the Topeka business community regarding future representation of our community in Congress. Over the years, deliberations to redraw representative maps have not been an issue for the Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce. To the best of my knowledge, Topeka/Shawnee County has not been considered by former redistricting committees as a candidate for splitting between two congressional districts or moving into the 1st District. This year the redistricting debate has grabbed our attention as maps are being proposed which significantly impact the Topeka/Shawnee County community. We believe it is imperative we communicate to you our concerns regarding proposed congressional maps now being evaluated by this committee.

The Topeka Chamber is very troubled by maps being drawn that split our community between the two districts or move Shawnee County entirely into the 1st District. Although we realize population growth has been occurring at a greater rate in counties east of Shawnee County, Topeka remains the third largest city in Kansas and is the capital city of our state. As the 1st District must stretch further east to equalize its representative population, we believe there are counties with more closely aligned demographics that could be considered for inclusion in the 1st District. Topeka/Shawnee County is an urban community comfortable with 2nd District Congressional representation. Our current 2nd District representative, Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins resides in Topeka. The proposition of moving this county, either partially or fully into the 1st District with its strong agricultural/natural resources/rural concerns does not match the issues we deal with in our county.

The Topeka Chamber requires effective representation of an urban area with metropolitan issues and corresponding influence from our member of Congress. Our interests tend to be more industrial, commercial, medical and regional retail. We also have community issues that are less prevalent in smaller communities and rural areas dealing with disadvantaged and individuals with special needs. Splitting this county dilutes influence and complicates representation. Topeka's effectiveness in Congress diminishes with this action; the capital city's opportunities and fair representation are weakened.

The Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce strongly opposes actions to split this community between two districts or move representation entirely into the 1st District. We understand the House Committee may develop a different congressional map than what was approved by the Senate. We respectfully ask for your consideration of our point of view and our needs. We request the House congressional map maintain Topeka/Shawnee County entirely in the 2nd District.

Thank you for your time in allowing the Topeka Chamber to express our views on this very important decision.