



Phil King
Chair

Chris Turner
Vice-Chair

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING
TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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December 15, 2020

Ms. Stephanie Swanson
Issues Chair of Redistricting & Census
League of Women Voters of Texas
Via email: steph.swanson.lwvtx@gmail.com

Ms. Swanson:

Thank you for your letter to the House Committee on Redistricting. You wrote on behalf of the League of Women Voters and many other civil rights and community organizations regarding public input in the Texas redistricting process. We certainly appreciate your continued interest and desire to engage with us regarding this critical function.

The House Committee on Redistricting set out this interim to hold 28 field hearings across the state to gather public input. After successfully conducting 13 field hearings, the COVID-19 pandemic put a stop to large public gatherings. Since then, our committee has been working hard to identify and work toward alternative methods to solicit public input as in-person public hearings have not been safe or feasible. As you have acknowledged, the committee has continued to accept written, public input throughout the entire interim.

When conducting hearings, we do have to follow House Rules for the 86th Legislature that were adopted unanimously in January 2019. Per written guidance from the House Parliamentarians on July 16, 2020, notice was given to all committee chairs that the House Rules “do not authorize committee meetings to be conducted by videoconference, except for the limited purpose of receiving testimony by videoconference from an invited witness.”

As Chair, my intent remains to provide all Texans (not just by invitation only) with an equal opportunity to participate in the redistricting process by collecting and soliciting input from any interested parties, regardless of the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. We share your desire to maximize public participation in whatever form proves to be effective and safe for both the committee members and the public.

Members:

Sheryl Cole, Matt Krause, Lyle Larson, Jeff Leach, Ben Leman, Ina Minjarez, Joe Moody, Chris Paddic,
Four Price, Toni Rose, Senfronia Thompson, Armando Walle, James White

As stated in our previous response, our goal is to ensure that the methods the committee ultimately implements to solicit public input will be accessible, productive, reliable, secure and helpful to the legislators charged with drawing maps.

The House has appointed a House Rules Workgroup that solicits rule proposals for the 87th Legislative Session. I have submitted proposals for review which will provide needed flexibility for the Redistricting committee to be able to create a plan for conducting field hearings during session. If approved, this flexibility will allow for the continuation of robust public participation while ensuring that the health and safety of the legislators and the public wishing to participate, and will be in accordance with the rules and procedures that govern House proceedings.

At this time, we do not know what rule changes will ultimately be adopted. As soon as the Legislature convenes and the new rules are adopted, this committee will consult with House leadership, committee members, public health experts and legislative support staff to adopt a plan. The committee will share logistical details with the public as soon as possible once those plans are approved and finalized.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to a transparent and inclusive redistricting process. The public's involvement is vital in ensuring a robust, open and constructive discussion among Texans.

I am confident that although COVID-19 has forced change upon legislative committees and operations that we will be successful in implementing a plan that ensures all Texans are heard. Please do not hesitate to contact my Committee office at 512-463-9948 if you have any other input or questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil King". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Phil King
Chair, House Committee on Redistricting

CC: Representative Dade Phelan