



Phil King
Chair

Chris Turner
Vice-Chair

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING
TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ext. E2.158
Post Office Box 2910
Austin, Texas 78768-2910
(512) 463-9948

July 29, 2019

Joaquin Gonzalez *via email*: joaquin@texascivilrightsproject.org

Stephanie Swanson *via email*: steph.swanson.lwvtx@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Gonzalez and Mrs. Swanson:

I have received your letters dated June 13 and July 8 providing additional comments on the interim field hearings that the House Redistricting Committee is planning. Thank you for taking the time to write and provide your suggestions.

Enclosed is a copy of a letter that I sent to the Committee members on June 28. The letter gives some details about our plans for the hearings and contains a tentative schedule. The letter was intended to provide members with information about our plans so that they could coordinate their schedules, brainstorm venues, and make plans to publicize final information about the hearings once dates, times, and venues are confirmed. I am providing this correspondence to you because—as I think you will be pleased to see—it addresses many of the points you raised in your letters to me.

As noted in the July 8 letter from Mr. Gonzalez, we have expanded the scope of locations and incorporated a range of start times to accommodate various work and school schedules. Committee staff is dedicated to giving public notice of the hearings as early as possible and—though logistical issues or unforeseen circumstances might not make it feasible in every case—will aim to do so at least two weeks before each hearing. Committee staff will also work with member offices to develop and publicize shareable infographics to raise awareness about the hearings, and work with local officials and media to further spread the word. And, of course, member and committee staff are hard at work vetting potential hearing venues to identify facilities that are convenient, accessible, and able to accommodate a large legislative hearing. All these steps are intended to maximize public participation in this process.

Based on comments in Mr. Gonzalez's July 8 letter, I would like to clarify one point about the tentative schedule. The letter expressed concern that hearings in five large urban areas are tentatively scheduled for September and October of this year and suggested that these hearings occur closer to the 2021 legislative session. Please note that the tentative schedule also provides for a "final lap" after the general election, where I intend for the Committee to revisit major metro areas. It is my hope that this, too, will maximize the opportunities and avenues for public input on the 2021 legislative redistricting process.

Finally, given the interest you have expressed in the legislative redistricting process, I'd like to draw your attention to a practical reality that the enclosed letter explains. We will not have the official 2020 Census data from the US Census Bureau—which the new electoral maps must be based on—until the 2021 legislative session is underway. Under the Texas Constitution, the legislature convenes for 140 days

Members:

Sheryl Cole, Matt Krause, Lyle Larson, Jeff Leach, Ben Leman, Ina Minjarez, Joe Moody, Chris Paddie,
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beginning the second Tuesday in January of each odd-numbered year.¹ The 87th Legislature will therefore convene January 12, 2021 and adjourn 140 days later. Meanwhile, the deadline for the US Census Bureau to provide the official 2020 Census data to the 87th Legislature is one year after the census date²—April 1, 2021. As a result, by the time the data comes in, there will be limited time to complete the legislative redistricting process. As a Bureau representative testified to the Committee last session, the Bureau will provide the official data as expeditiously as possible after the 2020 Census. But, the data will not be ready during the interim.

Therefore, while we surely will discuss projections during these hearings, such discussions will necessarily be hypothetical without the official Census data. I am highlighting this practical reality now so that it might inform your preparations to participate in the hearings. It is my hope that these hearings will put the next legislature in the best possible position to complete the 2021 legislative redistricting process in the limited time that will be available, and I invite you to join me in this effort.

Sincerely,

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

Representative Phil King
Chairman, House Redistricting Committee

CC: Members of the House Committee on Redistricting

¹ Tex. Const. art. III, § 5.

² 13 U.S.C. § 141 (c).

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