

Testimony before the Topeka City Redistricting Commission
August 18, 2022

My name is Mary Torrence. I represent the League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County. The League promotes effective citizen participation at all levels of government by encouraging registration and voting and providing unbiased nonpartisan information about elections, the voting process, and issues.

The foundation of our representative government is the ability of all citizens to have an equal, effective voice in electing their governmental representatives. To achieve, this city council and other governmental districts must be nearly equal in population. This concept, "one person, one vote," is the first principle citizens think of when talking about redrawing governmental district boundaries. However, another important factor in making representative government work for all citizens is to draw district boundaries to encompass groups of citizens having common interests and concerns. This enables those groups to elect governmental representatives who speak for them. If those groups are fragmented, they run the risk that no one effectively represents them. For this reason, the League believes groups of residents working together to improve and maintain the quality of life in their neighborhoods (such as neighborhood improvement associations) should be given an opportunity to be heard on the important issue of redistricting and to comment on redistricting plans that reflect their interests and concerns. Before sending a plan to the City Council, the League urges you to create a district plan based on tonight's input, then solicit comments on that plan to ascertain whether residents' needs regarding representation are met.

Mary Torrence
Secretary, League of Women Voters of Topeka-Shawnee County