

Dear Mr. Tounget:

Please accept the following as official comments to the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission.

I have examined your preliminary maps of the new Austin City Council districts, and wish to make the following comments regarding District 5 as currently drawn. It is apparent that you are receiving many negative comments on your preliminary maps for the districts, so this is a comment *in favor* of the boundaries you have drawn so far, for District 5. As I live in Voting Precinct 435, which is included in District 5, I believe I am qualified to comment on this District map, but on no other districts.

As per my previous written and oral testimony to the Commission, our area of Austin is connect geographically and by infrastructure as you have defined District 5. We are connected north to south by Manchaca Road, Brodie Lane, and South Mopac, and to a lesser degree by South First Street and South Congress. We are connected east and west by West William Cannon Drive on the north and by West Slaughter Lane on the south. Further, the Davis Lane/Deer Run/Guidepost/Davis Lane stretch of roadway also connects almost all of the neighborhoods you have included in District 5. This series of two-lane roads connects from South Mopac and runs all the way to Manchaca Road, crossing Manchaca Road as Dittmar. Further, we have Cameron Loop, a very small two lane road that carries considerable traffic from Brodie Lane to Seminary Ridge. Westgate Boulevard carries traffic all the way from the south Travis County line to Highway 290 West/Ben White/Lamar Boulevard intersection. This is the roadway infrastructure we live with amongst the neighborhoods in preliminary District 5. They are integral to all of us, hence our common needs.

The area is ethnically diverse, with many of the voting precincts either primarily Hispanic or evenly divided Hispanic and anglo, with 6-7 percent black and the same for Asian. And yet we have many common bonds... roads, churches, schools, and businesses. We live in zip code 78745 and receive in our Wednesday newspaper an HEB Grocery Company ad for the Brodie Lane/William Cannon HEB and the West Slaughter Lane HEB in Circle C. This should tell you that we are connected with all of the neighborhoods in between. HEB puts out five different ads each week for different areas of Austin.

Three of my neighbors are Hispanic and one is a black/anglo family. We do not care what ethnicity might represent us on the City Council, only that they INDEED represent our area of Austin and not areas 15 miles to the east of us. With due respect to the maps drawn by Austinites for Geographic Representation, their name is a misnomer. To say our area of Austin is "geographically connected" with neighborhoods so far to our east is NOT true. Their sole concern has been with meeting the Voting Rights Act, an issue I'm sure you will deal with adequately without having to split up neighborhoods that rightfully should be together.

But of luck to you all. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Sowards, Jr.