

Commissioner Jim Regnier, Presiding Officer
Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission
PO Box 201706
Helena, Montana 59620-1706

Chairman Regnier and Commission Members:

The City of Billings is submitting comments on the Commission's tentative House District plan and your upcoming consideration of Senate pairings. This correspondence was approved by the Billings City Council.

The tentative House District plan is not what we hoped to see for Billings and Yellowstone County. As you know, we submitted a plan that was endorsed by several private and public agencies, including Yellowstone County, Billings and Laurel. It focused on the county's and this city's genuine communities of interest, which were explained in correspondence that you received in December, 2011 and in testimony at no less than three public hearings.

The Senate District plan is almost as important to us as the House District plan. You may remember that it is Senate District 22, which stretches from south Billings to Miles City, that catalyzed our participation in the districting process. We hope that you will avoid again creating that type of Senate District. This is especially important to us because we believe, based on your tentative House District plan, that all but House Districts 38 and 46 may be combined to create seven (7) Senate Districts that are wholly within the borders of Yellowstone County. Districts 38 and 46 are almost entirely rural in nature and combining them would make a large Senate District, but no larger than many of the other prospective eastern Montana districts. There is also a small portion of the Crow Reservation in Yellowstone County that is assigned to District 42 and we understand that it will probably be paired with District 41 to create a Senate District. We have examined the House Districts in the remainder of eastern Montana and believe that the Yellowstone County pairings coordinate well with surrounding counties, so there should be no barriers to granting our request. House District pairing could be as follows:

| | |
|---------|---------|
| 47 + 53 | 48 + 54 |
| 49 + 51 | 50 + 52 |
| 55 + 56 | 57 + 60 |
| 61 + 62 | |

There may be other preferred pairings, but we request that they result in seven (7) Senate Districts within Yellowstone County.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about the City's request.

Sincerely,

Thomas W. Hanel, Mayor