

September XX, 2021

Senators Bart Davis and Dan Schmidt, Co-chairs
2021 Commission for Reapportionment
c/o Paul Boucher, Commission Secretary
Idaho State Capitol, Room W133
Boise, ID 83702

Dear Co-chairs Davis and Schmidt,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Idaho's efforts to redistrict based on the 2020 Census data. I also want to thank the Commission for taking the time and making the effort to ensure that the redistricting process is fair, balanced and completed within the rules and timelines needed for effective redistricting. This is no small task, and I have confidence in your efforts, so thank you to the Commission for being part of the process.

As you know, Meridian is a fast-growing city. In fact, based on the recent 2020 Census, Meridian's population is now 117,635. As Meridian grows, it is imperative that the interests of Meridian be kept whole. Specifically, maintaining two complete legislative districts central to Meridian will preserve the representative needs of Meridian's interests, with the remainder in as much of a district as possible. We believe that based upon our existing population and the identified size of legislative districts (52,546), this is an achievable goal.

To help effect implementing at least two districts which wholly reflect Meridian boundaries, we would suggest the Commission follow the guidance provided by Ada County Clerk Phil McGrane and ignore current precinct lines, as it is clear there will be significant changes to those boundaries once you complete your process. Further, we suggest you also ignore current legislative district lines in this process. As Meridian and our surrounding communities continue to grow and evolve, holding onto these outdated lines is not in the best interest of keeping communities of interest together.

Additionally, while splitting counties is not preferred where possible, if Ada County needs to be split once, we would recommend looking at northern Ada and Canyon counties - where Star has already annexed across boundaries. If it is important to keep communities of interest together, it would make sense in this area.

At the public hearing that was held in Meridian, one of the people who testified talked about looking towards the future. It is imperative that we do not shrink the size of districts simply because of projected – or possible – growth. We need to ensure that the 2020 census data treats people fairly based upon the existing data – not what it may look like in 5 years. That said, we would encourage the Commission to also look at Area of City Impact maps if you want to consider how cities may develop in the future and create districts that, over time, can keep communities of interest together.

To help the Commission in achieving the goals we have outlined in this letter, Meridian has developed a map for Ada and Canyon Counties which follows these principles for the cities of Ada and Canyon County to the greatest extent possible. For Meridian, we have tried to take into consideration areas where we expect growth to occur, without harming the representation for our community with future legislative districts. We hope the Commission can utilize the map as a guiding principle as you look at this region and make final recommendations.

In closing, thank you for your efforts as a Commission to take on this important task for the State of Idaho, and we hope that the Commission can work to map districts that best keep communities of interest, including Meridian, wholly within districts within the required parameters of the redistricting rules. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this process. Please reach out with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Simison
Mayor

Cc: Meridian City Council
Commissioners, 2021 Commission for Reapportionment
Paul Boucher, 2021 Commission for Reapportionment Secretary
David Miles, Chief of Staff, City of Meridian

Encl: Meridian Legislative Map Submission
Meridian Area of City Impact Map