

Redistricting

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Court Chief Justice Kathleen A. Blatz in a July 12, 2001 order, the Minnesota Special Redistricting Panel "...shall release a redistricting plan that satisfies constitutional and statutory requirements only in the event a legislative redistricting plan is not enacted in a timely manner."

The competing plans submitted to the Judicial Panel in the event of legislative failure are one senate, know as the DFL plan; the congressional, or GOP plan, and the Governor's.

Mr. Dean Barkley of Governor Ventura Office, believes their plan (created by Ron Abrams GOP -45A) is the most likely to be approved by the State Supreme Court.

The Congressional - Republican plan (created by Marty Seifert (GOP -21A), would create the majority - minority district in St Paul and Minneapolis. The GOP motivation is that by creating a minority opportunity district, it would encourage civic participation in political life.

Senator Lawrence J. Pogemiller (DFL - 59) created the Senate plan protects the composition of the districts currently held by people of color. He called it the responsibility of the state to ensure that redistricting does not create a situation where that person would be most assured of not keeping to seat.

"The community is appalled and deeply disturbed by proposals that call for the radical redistricting of Senate District 52 which, if enacted, will eliminate Senator Satveer Chaudhary from contention in that senate district and have him face off with an incumbent," said Adeel Lari, chair, State Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans. "This is unacceptable to us and we do not support these plans. Senator Chaudhary is one of only two people of color in the state senate and the highest ranking elected official of South Asian decent in all of the United States. As such there is a moral obligation to ensure that his district remains intact. This is a fact that Minnesotans should be proud of and seek to support. Instead, at the first opportunity his position is offered up for elimination by some proposals."

Lari applauded the Senate's plan which will keep Senator Chadhary's district intact and he believe it meets the test of compactness and contiguity as well as most of the other proposed districts.

Lari does not support the proposal to join Minneapolis and Saint Paul into one congressional district in the name of creating a minority opportunity district.

"This is a blatant effort to compact all people of color into one district so as to dilute opportunities for us," said Lari. "There is no data to suggest that various people of color vote as a block and the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled against such schemes. Instead of looking for ways to encourage and ensure more minority representation this proposal directly undermines opportunities for minorities."

Lari sought input on the issue with many people at community and at CAPM events. He said he did not meet one person who supported the idea. Most consider the two cities vastly different in addition to the impact on minority opportunities.

"We strongly oppose this proposal," he said.

Lari was recently re-elected as Chair of the Council of Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, for a second term, continuing on six years of leading the state agency responsible for advising governmental agencies, the Governor, and the Legislature on issues of importance to the Asian-Pacific Minnesotans community.

Governor Ventura appointed Lari to his Citizen Advisory Commission

urban congressional district that combines Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

He said that with a 12 percent minority population in the state, there would be 20-28 person of color in the 201 member legislature, rather than the 5 current minority members. He asked that the Panel consider the negative impacts on the current minority members of the legislature will in turn negatively impact the possibility of future minority representation at the legislature.

Dr. Bruce Corrie, also a professor of economics at Concordia University, made six major points from the perspective of ethnic minorities in Minnesota in his presentation to the Panel.

Corrie feels that new immigrant and other minority communities are communities of interest that, wherever possible attempts should be made to maintain the compactness with attention to their family and neighborhood networks. He is also concerned that, in redistricting issues, the proper reference should not be "minorities" as a combined group, and look more at spatial patterns of the individual subgroups.

"From this perspective except for the Black community in North Minneapolis, we do not have any other minority opportunity districts," said Corrie.

His concern was with the three major political party plans and whether they do justice to preserving the compactness of the "communities of interest" of particular minority groups.

"My conclusion is that for the most part they do so except in the case of the Asian American community in the Saint Paul area where the community is fragmented into multiple political districts thereby diluting their voice in the only area where they have some critical mass."

Corrie's Census study showed that there should be as many as 100,000 new minority voters by the end of the decade. The minority 10-17 age group comprises 16.4 percent of the minority population, a much higher rate than the 11.6 percent white in the same age group. He considered this significant in the urban and rural redistricting plans, as this group will attain voting age before the next Census and redistricting planning sessions of 2010.

He encouraged the Judicial Panel to protect the district boundaries where minorities have achieved political, and not to put them at a disadvantage by running them against an incumbent of an adjoining district, namely Senators Satveer Chaudhary (District 52), and Mee Moua (District 67), both compromised in some of the four legislative and congressional plans.

"If we lose one of these senators because of the way we draw our districts then it truly is a shame," he said.

Corrie favors multiple congressional districts for the Twin Cities area to increase Asian and other minority influence.

"Our newly elected Senator Mee Moua lives in a minority opportunity district, where Asian Americans make up 12 percent of the district," said Corrie. "She relied heavily on her "community of interest" for her successful "under the grassroots campaign." I am sure her road to success would have been easier if district lines were drawn to preserve the compactness of her community living in the Saint Paul area."

He said there are four ways that minorities have achieved elected office in Minnesota: winning in a minority majority district; winning in a minority opportunity district; winning in a minority influence district (where voting strength is at least 10 percent); and winning in a majority district. These pathways reflect the many possibilities in the Minnesotan political landscape.