

## Citizens Committee for Fair Redistricting

Good afternoon,

Mr. Commissioner, distinguished members of the commission, members of the audience...

Thank you very much for allowing us to address this respected commission. It is a great honor to be standing before you today. My name is Abdulkadir Warsame, I one of the organizers of the Citizens Committee for Fair Redistricting.

We are a group of individuals, business owners, and religious leaders, community activists primarily from the Somali and East African Community, who are interested in participating in the redrawing of the thirteen City wards which represent the city of Minneapolis. We believe that the time has come for the City of Minneapolis to recognize the diversity of Minneapolis residents.

We are very excited to be taking part in this important and historic moment where average citizens can voice their concerns and assert their right within the framework of our long standing Democratic ideals.

### **City of Minneapolis:**

According to the last census, Minneapolis has a total population of 382,000, of which 150,000 are minority members this means that minority population accounts for 40%. Yet minorities are extremely underrepresented on the Minneapolis City Council. Currently, of the thirteen wards, there is only one elected official from the minority community. We think this lack of representation to elected offices in Minneapolis City Hall is grossly unfair. We also find some of that ***underrepresentation can be attributed to the way current ward boundaries are drawn.***

The East Somali American community is composed mostly of immigrants from Somalia and East Africa. We are a hard working, family orientated, and patriotic community that has demonstrated its political cohesiveness. At a time when

civic engagement is at all time low, members of the East African community in and around Cedar-Riverside area have demonstrated an unprecedented participation in voting and being actively involved in exercising their voting rights. From 2006, the Somali American votes have contributed to the election of Keith Ellison to congress. In the 2010 election, the Somali American became much more politically active in the DFL gubernatorial primary and the general election race. The precincts surrounding the Cedar- Riverside community voted overwhelmingly for Governor Mark Dayton by a vote of. More recently, in the 2011 Special Elections, a Somali candidate ran for the State Senate seat in District 60, generating 660 votes, or over one-third of the vote in that DFL primary. In the Senate District 59 election, the Somali community came within 360 votes of succeeding to elect Mohamed Noor for that district. In both of these elections, we believe the Somali Americans demonstrated their political cohesiveness and political involvement.

The City of Minneapolis has the largest Somali American population in the United States. The community is centered primarily in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, the Seward neighborhood, the Elliot park neighborhood and throughout the Phillips community. In a short period the community has established hundreds of small business, numerous places of worship and community organizations in this area. ***Yet the current ward boundary as they are, divides the community, dilutes its voice and prevents it from having proper representation.***

**It is for these reasons we propose to you our plan,**

The map we propose today would create a district that is regular, compact and contiguous and would comply with the requirements of the Minneapolis City Charter.

We label this as Ward 2, and it would form a district which has a 40% African American or black population, a white population of 33%, an Hispanic population of 18%, and a Native American population of 10%. We believe this would create a minority opportunity ward in the near Southside. The district would also fit into a

larger City redistricting population that would create regular, compact and contiguous districts throughout the City.

The map would also create two other inner-city wards. The first would be the new 6<sup>th</sup> ward, which would be comprised primarily of downtown, the Whittier neighborhood, and the western part of the Phillips neighborhood. It would also create a new 8<sup>th</sup> ward that would have a 28% Hispanic population and create a potential minority opportunity ward. It would likewise make rationale ward boundaries throughout the remainder of the City and would seek to achieve fair redistricting.

Hazel Reinhart, the former State Demographer, is working with us as a consultant on our efforts. Ms. Reinhart has a wealth of knowledge about population, demographic and social trends that affect communities like ours. We intend to be involved in your considerations of the Redistricting Committee and actions of the Charter Commission over the next two months and hope to have meaningful input into your decisions.

Dear commission, our **aims are just and fair**, the status quo is untenable. The city of Minneapolis in general & its 40% minority population in particular deserves better. It's also high time that the Somali American community's voice is heard and that its wishes are taken into account and respected. We thank you for this opportunity and ask you kindly to consider our map.

Thank you!