

Dear City Council Members,

As you move forward with your discussions of districting for the City of Everett, please give serious consideration to the 5-2 plan developed by the grassroots coalition, Everett Districts Now (EDN). This plan came about after research with other jurisdictions that have gone to a districting model and after consultation with a nationally known expert from UW, Richard Morrill, who created the five-district map that is now promoted by EDN. Washington law has not established a procedure on how to create districts, but it is very specific on how to redistrict. (RCW 29A.76010) EDN used this RCW to prepare the 5-2 Districting Initiative that has already been signed by over 3000 registered voters in Everett. It serves as a framework on which to redistrict following the 2020 census. The key points of this law are summarized at the end of this letter.

One of the cornerstones of the League of Women Voters is that representative government is the path to democracy by the people. The Snohomish County League is fully behind the Everett Districts Now initiative to make our city government more responsive to all citizens. The League supports submitting the current petition signatures to put the 5-2 EDN initiative on the ballot at the next municipal election. We urge the City Council to get behind this citizen initiative.

The League of Women Voters of Snohomish County is aware of some objections that have been put forth by members of the Council and others. We will counter those objections with reasoned arguments.

- 1) Issue: Dividing the city into 4 districts with 3 at large seats would be a better configuration for Everett than 5-2.

Answer: A 4-3 plan would permit one district to have a Council majority if the 3 at large members came from the same district. That would look a lot like our present Council membership where the power is concentrated in one part of the city. That could not happen with a 5-2 plan.

- 2) Issue: Some neighborhoods have been divided up into two or more districts. Casino Road, a major arterial, is split. A neighborhood should be in only one district.

Answer: There are 19 neighborhoods in Everett, not all having the same population. Neighborhoods are not based on census tracts; districts are. There is no way to evenly divide 19 neighborhoods into 4 or 5 districts. Evergreen Way and Broadway are long north-south roads; they are also split. If a neighborhood is located in more than one district, those citizens would have more than one council member who knows the needs of the neighborhood. That sounds like a plus.

- 3) Issue: Right now I get to vote for all 7 members on the Council. I don't want to lose some of those votes when we go to districts.

Answer: What you gain with districting is one councilmember who is directly tuned in to the issues within her/his district. It is the way we elect County Council members, state senators and representatives and members of Congress. We only get to vote for

the representative/s from the district where we live. It's how representative government works.

- 4) Issue: How do we find qualified people to run? I don't know anyone living in my neighborhood who would run for a City Council seat.

Answer: The only qualifications to run for a City Council seat are that you are a registered voter and have lived in Everett for at least one year before the election. Well-informed potential candidates live throughout all of Everett. Look to the PTA president, the successful small business owner, the neighborhood leader, a school teacher, a computer programmer—all have skills that will transfer to running the business of a growing city.

- 5) Issue: Some residents living in the Delta neighborhood in northeast Everett object to being placed in the same district with the Northwest neighborhood under the 5-2 plan. They believe that there is no way Delta could elect a district councilperson that truly represents them because of the legislative power that currently resides in the Northwest neighborhood.

Answer: If Delta citizens with the skills and knowledge needed to serve on the Council choose to run for this position, they will be listened to. There are signs of resilience and rehabilitation in the Delta Neighborhood; WSU brings with it the benefits of a university environment. Because of these changes, Delta's voice will be even more likely to be heard in the future.

Issue: We should expand the size of the Council so that all citizens have more representation.

We should change the way councilmembers are elected.

Answer: Expressing these concerns is a smokescreen, a delaying tactic. The question at hand is "Do the voting citizens of Everett want to move to a 5-2 districting plan so that they can be more equitably represented on the City Council?"

Yours truly,

Patricia Fogarty-Cramer,
President, League of Women of Snohomish County
Districting Committee of LWVSC

Barbara Eklund, M.J. Donovan-Creamer, Lois Wentink, Brenda Bolanos-Ivory

According to RCW 29A.7601 on redistricting municipal districts.

The plan shall be consistent with the following criteria:

1. Each district shall be as nearly equal in population as possible to each and every other district.
2. Each district shall be as compact as possible.
3. Each district shall consist of a geographically contiguous area.
4. Population data may not be used for purposes of favoring or disfavoring any racial group or political party.
5. To the extent feasible, district boundaries shall coincide with existing recognized natural boundaries and shall, to the extent possible, preserve existing communities of related and mutual interest.

RCW44.05.30 puts forth the required structure of a commission to redistrict that will be established following every decennial census. This structure is incorporated in the EDN 5-2 proposal.