

# HB 356 – Setting the Record Straight

## A Response to Summit County’s Talking Points

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**Q: Doesn’t HB 356 create unintended consequences by forcing already-districted counties to redraw their maps?**

**A:** No. We fully support restoring the **grandfather clause** from earlier versions of HB 356, which would exempt counties that already have **at least 50% of council seats elected by district**. This resolves concerns without changing the core goals of the bill. Governor Cox also indicated support for keeping the bill’s main structure intact.

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**Q: Is assigning current council members to districts by lottery a good idea?**

**A:** We agree that randomly assigning councilmembers isn’t ideal.

The **better solution** is to assign each councilmember to the district where they live. Only if two or more members live in the same district should a lot be drawn to determine who represents it, with the remaining councilmembers placed into unassigned districts.

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**Q: Why should the districting commission—not the council—draw the maps?**

**A:** Allowing seated councilmembers to override or redraw districts **would create an obvious conflict of interest**. HB 356 rightly puts that power in the hands of a **bipartisan districting commission** to protect public trust and ensure fair representation, just as it is done for legislative and congressional districts.

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**Q: Is the districting commission representative enough?**

**A:** Yes. The commission will represent the entire county:

- Mayors are geographically distributed across Summit County.

- The County Council can appoint a member specifically to represent the Snyderville Basin.

Adding more council-appointed members risks tipping the balance and undermining the commission's neutrality.

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### **Q: What about the costs of contested elections under HB 356?**

**A:** The Council's analysis **ignores real election costs** today.

Contested countywide elections already cost **\$50,000 or more**, and candidates struggle to reach voters across the sprawling geography. District elections are more affordable, manageable, and give local residents better access to their candidates.

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### **Q: Doesn't districting undermine the "countywide perspective"?**

**A:** No. In fact, the **current system concentrates power in Park City and Snyderville**. True districting will finally ensure the entire county—including the East Side and rural communities—has representation.

- **Most governing bodies** (school boards, legislatures, Congress) are district-based and still consider broader needs.
  - Voters can still **contact any councilmember**, not just their district representative.
  - Claims about "gerrymandering" are false. If any imbalance exists, it exists **right now**, not under HB 356.
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### **Q: Will HB 356 create administrative disruption?**

**A:** No. Councilmembers will continue to **serve out their full terms**. Districting would only take effect for future elections. There is no operational disruption.

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### **Q: Is there real support for a five-district model without at-large seats?**

**A:** Yes.

- **All mayors in Summit County** unanimously support the 5-district model.
- **At least one current councilmember** also supports it.

Adding an at-large seat would **guarantee another Park City/Snyderville seat**, further disenfranchising other parts of the county.

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## **Q: Was HB 356 “pulled” or rushed at the end of the session?**

**A:** No.

- HB 356 **passed the House in late February** and was sent to the Senate.
  - It was “circled” (temporarily set aside) in committee but **was never pulled**.
  - It passed the Senate on the last day—not at the “11th hour,” but with ample time for the House to ratify Senate changes before the session adjourned.
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## **Bottom Line:**

**HB 356 is about fair, district-based representation for all Summit County residents—not just Park City and Snyderville.**

We support restoring the grandfather clause and fixing minor technical issues, but we must defend the core principles of the bill:

- **Fully districted representation**
- **Neutral, bipartisan districting commission**
- **Respect for voters in all communities across the county.**