

## **Testimony of John Hauser (Northwest Regional Hearing)**

Good morning. My name is John Hauser. I have been a resident of Greenville for 42 of the past 50 years and have served as a judge of elections at my precinct. I am retired from Thiel College and currently serve as the college archivist, a volunteer position.

I want to thank the committee for its efforts to make the redistricting process a more transparent one. The task you have before you is not an easy one.

You have to create seventeen “cogs” in the 435-cog wheel that is the United States Congress. As you re-align what was 18 districts into 17, each district will not only be larger in population but, in most cases, geographically, making it more difficult for the majority of us to be in touch with our member of Congress.

As you go about this unenviable task, I would urge you to keep the following in mind:

Congressional districts should be as geographically compact as possible so that we have access to our representative. Please remember that many rural counties like Mercer, Crawford, and Venango do not have comprehensive public transportation systems. Thus, many individuals do not have reliable transportation that can take them to their member’s office.

Mercer County has lost 5% of its population over the past decade. We don't want to further dilute our county by being divided up among two or more congressional districts. We need to have a leader who will put Mercer County first and help to champion our county and our priorities: economic development to bring companies to our county, improved educational opportunities for our children and our workforce, and putting a stop to the brain drain taking members of the younger generation away.

Mercer County should be part of a district that reflects the shared values of our county so that our member of Congress can represent those values in her or his work in Washington. This goes for our entire region. It's important that we have a member who has roots in our area – a shared history and experiences.

We want to be on an equal footing with the other counties in our congressional district and not be dominated by one - or more - much larger counties that may not

share our values. Due to our shrinking population, we cannot afford to be the county that is left behind.

What the committee determines will affect the residents of Mercer County for the next ten years. While the voters of our new district will ultimately decide who their member of Congress will be, as citizens of Mercer County, we want to have a voice in the process that leads up to determining who that representative will be.

I'm sure that Mercer County is reflective of many counties across the Commonwealth – many diverse communities who share a common county-wide identity. Although our communities may not all share the same socioeconomic characteristics, I can assure you that we do identify as one Mercer County and would prefer to stay that way with our Congressional representation.

We trust that you will do your best to make sure the districts are compact and contiguous while keeping existing political boundaries with shared values together.

Thank you for your time. I hope that what you have heard this morning will be of help to you in your deliberations. We appreciate the opportunity to share our opinions with the committee and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.