



ALLEGHENY
REGIONAL HEARING



Allegheny Regional Hearing

Written testimony submitted (as of 8/23/21) by:

1. **Frederick A.**
Beaver Falls, PA

The following comments are provided to the PA House Committee requesting voter input for the Pennsylvania Congressional Redistricting. I am a registered voter within the Democratic Party and have lived at this address since 1977. Prior to moving to White Township, I lived briefly in Beaver Falls PA and prior to that across the Beaver River in New Brighton PA where I was raised by my parents. My ancestors initially located in Beaver County about 1825 and family members have lived here since that time. I graduated from New Brighton High School and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from Geneva College in Beaver Falls. I am a certified Project Management Professional and am a Fellow of the Project Management Institute, an international award based upon my professional performance and contributions to the profession. Currently I am mostly retired but assist a local Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business headquartered in Beaver County and provide pro bono project management support through the Project Management Institute's Pittsburgh Chapter. This volunteer support is provided to assist local governments and non-profit organizations in their economic revitalization and social improvements.

My comments are based upon my background of over 49 years in supporting regional and federal governments and the private sector on numerous projects and programs that have a direct tie to the geographical area in the 17th District. These activities involved energy generation/transmission/distribution, manufacturing, finance, environmental, engineering/construction, regulatory hearings, and litigation. The capital cost exceeded \$6 billion on projects on which I participated and that were managed by regional Owners. Government projects experience included nuclear power component and systems demonstration, regional transportation, airport modification, and large (\$2billion+) significant IT infrastructure for the US Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense.

The most current definition of the boundaries of the Pennsylvania 17th Congressional District were developed and approved by the Pennsylvania State Supreme Court on February 19, 2018, in violation of the Pennsylvania Constitution. The boundaries significantly changed the nature of the 17th District and resulted in a political allocation. Nothing about the process nor the results of the decision to define the 17th District were fair, proper, or reflective of commonalities of those living within the new 17th District. It was a political solution dictated by a political Court.

It is also unfair and improper for the redistricting process to be performed without the finalization of the last US census. This is not critical of the Pennsylvania State House but to the federal government and to the lack of demonstrated engagement by the District's Congressman to expedite the availability of this information to the Pennsylvania voters. Excuses of the federal government in issuing the census data to the voters are not acceptable and, again, promote another political decision. Additionally, the political turmoil caused by current elections of a Pennsylvania Senator and the announcement of the current 17th District Congressman to seek the Senate position further adds influencing conditions to the establishment of new congressional boundaries in Pennsylvania.

The process for soliciting and obtaining voter input is impacted by a lack of information easily available to the voters. There seems to be a lack of desire to establish criteria that provide value to understanding importance to identified communities of interest. This lack of criteria, coupled with the failure to provide timely current census information, impacts the quality of the input to be submitted to the House's Committee. It is requested that the House provide for the voters the following information:

- Current demographics¹ of the population within each county, city/borough, and township
- Demographics of the population of the counties, cities/boroughs, and townships of the previous congressional districts
- Basis of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's determination of current congressional districts
- Current registered voters' party affiliations (Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Independent...) per county, city/borough, and township

It is requested that the demographics include identification of the following standard categories: age, sex, income level, race, employment, employment by industry, income, location, homeownership, and level of education. Additionally, it is requested that the actual number of residents voting and the percentage of residents voting of the total eligible voters in the last statewide election be provided.

The current boundaries for the Pennsylvania 17th District truly represent what has been described as gerrymandering in the worst sense of the term. Now is the time to correct this embarrassment. For the 17th District in which I live I recommend the following in the priority of my recommendations:

1. Return to the boundaries previously established (as the 12th District, prior to the current 17th District) which included all of Beaver County, and parts of Allegheny, Cambria, Lawrence, Somerset, and Westmoreland Counties.
2. Establish the 17th Congressional District to include:
 - a. All of Beaver County; and
 - b. Lawrence County townships/boroughs of Mahoning, Bessemer, North Beaver, SNPJ, Little Beaver, Enon Valley, New Beaver, Wampum, Wayne, Ellwood City (the portion within Beaver County), and Ellport; and
 - c. Allegheny County townships of Findley, Hanover, Burgettstown, and Smith.

The basis of these recommendations is that these communities of interest share many values and common interests – including attributes related to being rural, small town oriented, strong emphasis on family, dedicated focus on public education, common cultural interests, sports, community events, and employment (note that the new Beaver County petrochemical complex has/is currently employing approximately 8,000 workers have been employed on the project, and is targeting 600 workers once it is operational next year; and the Pittsburgh International Airport also employs a high percentage of personnel from Beaver County).

At present the 17th District includes Beaver County as well as Allegheny County's Mt. Lebanon and Pittsburgh's South Hills – there are exceptionally little common components between Beaver County and Mt. Lebanon and Pittsburgh's South Hills. I can verify this as not only have I lived in Beaver County for about 70 years but have worked based in in Bridgeville/Vanadium for many years. There is no comparison to the economic, employment or cultural aspects of Beaver County to those of Mt. Lebanon and Pittsburgh's South Hills. There is nothing like-minded by these communities.

It is very important to Beaver County that the Congressional District boundaries be modified to correct the error of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 2018. It is the duty of the Pennsylvania House of

Representatives working with the Pennsylvania Senate to establish fair, well developed congressional boundaries.

2. Claire G.

Mt. Lebanon, PA

Evidence-based redistricting has the power to elevate voices, votes and accountability. It is one of the most significant uses of census data and has far-reaching consequences that can determine the economic trajectory of a region for decades.

Since the last decennial census, our region has experienced innovation and growth like no other district. We are the home of the Royal Dutch Shell Cracker Plant, which is slated to create 600 new jobs when it opens next year. We are the home of energy innovators fighting climate change and researching techniques such as carbon capture and sequestration. We are the home of multi-national manufacturing companies who would rather teach their employees how to operate a robot, rather than replace them with a robot.

The 2020 census data has shown that the 17th District has become more racially and socioeconomically diverse. The population of Hispanic and Black Pennsylvanians that the City of Pittsburgh lost, surrounding areas like Mt. Lebanon and Aliquippa gained.

Fair redistricting can impact a community's ability to elect a representative who accurately reflects the interests and values of the district. I write to you in support of preserving Pennsylvania's 17th Congressional District.

3. Jeremy B.

Pittsburgh, PA

The people of our commonwealth will have greater faith in the integrity of our elections if they feel their votes and voices are reflected in the make-up of our government. Please redistrict in a way that preserves neighborhoods and communities, not to make reelection of political incumbents easier. Thank you!

4. Francisco E.

Pittsburgh, PA

Redistricting is an opportunity, once every decade, for our elected officials to show what they truly value. Do they value self-preservation and cynical power grabs? Or do they value open process, good government, and the best interests of the citizens of Pennsylvania?

Voters and communities should come first.

5. Joseph S.

Glenshaw, PA

I believe strongly that the redistricting process should be as non-partisan as possible and driven by what is best for all of the people of Allegheny County and Pennsylvania. I believe it is necessary to start with a blank map and use scientific data to create the new districts. The process should be completely transparent and should have plenty of opportunities for public review and comments, and subsequently

for that input to impact the final decision making. I believe it is disastrous when the opposite occurs- when politicians create districts in "backrooms" and with their own partisan priorities creating situations where these same politicians are choosing their voters, rather than the other way around. I urge the House State Government Committee to implement these suggestions, as I believe these are absolutely essential for a successful outcome. Thank you.

6. Trevor R.

Oakdale, PA

You should start from a completely blank map for congressional and state districts and this time focus on actually keeping communities of interest together.

North Fayette, Findlay, Moon, Coraopolis, Ross, Kennedy, Sewickley, Leet, Aleppo, & Sewickley Heights should be linked together for every level of government representation.

7. Fran H.

Munhall, PA

Dear Sir or Madam:

From what I can decipher from the congressional outline of Pa.'s 35th congressional district where I live, the geographic outline resembles the front half of a crayfish, claws outstretched. There is nothing contiguous that I can see in this assemblage of various municipalities or parts thereof. Please aim for cohesive districts resembling a baby's building blocks rather than parts of varied animals.

Please be fair in your apportionment. Refrain from building mostly Republican or mostly Democratic districts where the election outcome will be mostly preordained. Our democracy should be robust allowing voters to choose their representatives, rather than incumbents to hold office indefinitely because of the geographic boundaries drawn every 10 years.

Thank you for allowing me to submit my testimony.

8. Phillip W.

Pittsburgh, PA

To Whom It May Concern,

I feel we need an independent body to oversee electoral districts in Allegheny County. Clearly the current system of districting is a conflict of interest as the majority party draws outlandish districts to help win elections.

The districts should be representative of the population of the area, NOT politically by two parties who have pretty much rigged the rules so not other party can make a fair bid to an electorate.

Thank you.

9. Suzanne G.

Wexford, PA

Redistricting needs to be done fairly. It needs to begin with a blank map. The districts then need to be drawn so they are as small as possible while including the number of constituents necessary. Districts drawn this way will benefit the community as neighbors come together to elect the person who will best represent their area. These same districts will benefit the elected representative as well. This person will have a more compact district thus enabling he/she to interact with their constituents more often and effectively.

10. Tim K.

Pittsburgh, PA

Our electoral system is totally broken and I believe it is due totally to partisan redistricting and use of computer modeling.

As a voting citizen, I AM TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY FED UP WITH A SITUATION WHERE SOMEONE ELSE'S VOTE COUNTS MORE THAN MINE JUST BECAUSE OF WHERE THEY LIVE. This is completely UNACCEPTABLE.

Additionally, in this day of technology, the need for an electoral college is totally unnecessary. DO AWAY COMPLETELY WITH THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE SYSTEM AND GO TO A STRAIGHT POPULAR VOTE!

11. Preston S.

Pittsburgh, PA

I recently moved to Mt. Lebanon after many years in Upper St. Clair. I have served Upper St. Clair as a School Director and Township Commissioner. One community tends to support Republicans and one Democrats. However, the registrations are close and most elections demonstrate that a qualified candidate can be elected from either party. This is what normal should be. The voters should have choices and the best candidates should be elected. In part, that is why these communities thrive with good local government and quality public schools.

All of Pennsylvania should be governed this way. You know it is not. Everyone in this room knows that political gerrymandering is the primary reason that elections are not competitive and that voters do not have choices. Our election districts are drawn to favor one party's candidates. We get along as well as we do because occasionally good citizens who care about their communities and want to serve will switch to the dominate party and run in the Primary. Win that primary and its a smooth sail into office in the General. You can smile. You know this is how it works.

Candidates for the US Congress from Pennsylvania should be elected the same way. Every election district should be drawn so that the major party registrations are numerically competitive and that a candidate from either party has a chance to win. The election that counts should be the General election, not the Primary. Pennsylvania is set up to be a two-party state. Each party should be in every race and candidates from each party should have a competitive chance in each race.

If you achieve this goal, you will have done your work responsibly.

12. Joanne G.

Swissvale, PA

Hello,

Thank you for reading my letter. I am asking that you redraw maps based on population not on geography. As a person in a more populous area, I don't want my vote to count less than an individual who lives in a more rural area. Please apportion seats so that people are represented in our legislature, not land.

13. Catherine W.

South Park, PA

Please refrain from drawing districts that split communities. Use some other line already in existence no smaller than a township border. Living in a small town split between districts is deplorable. People are forever confused and so much effort is duplicated!

14. Renee I.

Sewickley, PA

This is our chance to undo the gerrymandering that we currently operate under. It is our chance to put politics aside and create districts that are fair and equitable.

We are all exhausted from the partisan bickering that has become our government on the state and national level. Politics has no business in the process of drawing district lines.

Please rise to the occasion and do what is right for our state.

Thank you.

15. Jeanne S.

Pittsburgh, PA

Gerrymandering is unAmerican!! Maps need to be drawn following the rules that keep communities contiguous and do NOT allow parties to choose their voters but have voters choose their representatives. An independent group should do the drawing and NOT the majority in the legislature.

16. Joan P.

Pittsburgh, PA

Start with a BLANK map. Don't design districts around incumbents. Voters and communities should come first.

17. Douglas M.

Bethel Park, PA

In 1998 we moved from Brookline in Pittsburgh. The one- part rule of Pittsburgh politics was the reason. If we did not vote in The Democratic Party Primary, to 'select' candidates, our votes would never matter. Whoever won The Democratic Primary won the election.

We moved to Bethel Park because this suburb offered politicians from each part who could actually win in November. We changed our registration to Independent.

BUT, in 2020 the PA. Supreme Court chose to 'legally' (?) gerrymander us BACK into Mike Doyle's District. We moved our home town to remove ourselves from so-called 'progressive' (?) politics. (Effectively, One Party RULE.) THEN, were 'legally' (?) pushed back.

We want our districts to be aligned with Bethel Park, Peters, Upper St. Clair, South Strabane, even Washington PA and Washington County. MANY of our neighbors feel the same way. QUESTION: Do people always need to physically move every TEN years? Our 'area of interest' is for our views to be represented, NOT BLOTTED OUT. We HAD balance AND TWO-PARTY Representation. NOW, it's 'majority' (?) domination. Please adjust this injustice. PLEASE.

18. Michael E.

Wexford, PA

Start with a BLANK map. Don't design districts around incumbents. Voters and communities should come first.

19. Patricia M.

Sewickley, PA

Please don't redistrict around incumbents ' wishes. To be fair, please look @ communities & voters.

20. Roberta E.

Oakmont, PA

Start with a BLANK map. In my opinion, designing districts around incumbents is unfair. Voters and communities should come first.

21. Susan W.

Sewickley, PA

Start with a BLANK map. Do not, I repeat, do NOT design districts around incumbents. Voters and communities should come first.

22. Maureen P.

Pittsburgh, PA

Please do not draw districts in a partisan manner. This is NOT democracy for anyone. Voters should choose their elected officials. Elected officials should NOT choose their voters. I support the use of non-partisan computerized models for redistricting. This is an objective and fair way to do this. Gerrymandering from either of the political parties is NOT acceptable.

23. Kathleen H.

South Park Twp, PA

I think the redistricting should be done by independent body. I think they should take a blank map and choose districts in a fair, reasonable manner. Nothing that looks like a river flowing through another district!

24. Sharon H.

Pittsburgh, PA

Start with a BLANK map. Don't design districts around incumbents. Voters and communities should come first!

25. Peggi H.

Pittsburgh, PA

Re-districting should be done by a non-partisan group with no affiliations to either party or to incumbents. It should be approved by the voters and the entire process should be transparent and open to public discourse. It should not be done by either republican or democrat party or by pa legislators.

26. Kathleen M.

Pittsburgh, PA

Congressional redistricting should not be designed to suit incumbents or to favor one party over another. Congressional District maps should reflect voters and their communities and should enhance citizens' confidence that their votes matter. Start with a blank map. Let's do better at being an inclusive democracy!

27. Martina B.

Pittsburgh, PA

Start with a BLANK map. Do not, I repeat, do not design districts around incumbents. Voters and communities should come first.

28. Laura H.

Pittsburgh, PA

This effort should begin with the premise that voters elect representatives, not the other way around. Our districts have been twisted out of shape by both parties over time. We need to start over, with a blank map and no behind the scenes deal making. Then draw districts that reflect the voters in them. Attempting to submerge minority voices in white districts is unacceptable. Be fair, be open, and listen to the voters.

29. Alan W.

Pittsburgh, PA

The boundaries should not be designed for an outcome but starting with a blank slate should be parsimonious. It should group political entities that currently exist and have the lowest rate of parceling counties into multiple districts. Partisan redistricting will lead to upheavals.

30. Mary O.

Pittsburgh, PA

Dear PA House State Government Committee,

As a concerned voter, I urge you to consider starting with a *blank map* when considering next steps for PA Congressional redistricting. Likewise, I hope you'll prioritize adjusting districts to prioritize voters, communities, fair representation, and foundational principles of democracy -- rather than designing districts around incumbents or specific party preferences, as is currently the case. I hope the Committee will also consider consulting an independent expert body, which is equipped to support this objective redistricting process, as this would represent a fair and politically-neutral approach, helping to ensure a fair and trusted outcome for constituents.

Thank you for your consideration on this important issue.

31. Judith L.

Pittsburgh, PA

We need to change the redistricting process. We should start with a blank slate and the process should be directed by an "independent" organization. I know that there has been a considerable amount of research on how to create districts fairly - and we should take advantage of that expertise. No more crazy maps". No more elections where the proportion of seats held by one party is considerable higher than the share of that party in the overall population. We need to move towards a more "democratic" system.

32. Elizabeth N.

Pittsburgh, PA

I think it is important that those in legislatures do all they can to help move away from the strict polarization that has overtaken our governments on all levels. Legislators, judges and row officers who represent the overall community and not a small subsection of ideologies need to be elected. This will only happen if voting districts are drawn to represent the diversity of communities and not selectively drawn to represent one point of view, i.e. political party affiliation.

Please use city, township, county, municipal boundaries as much as possible when drawing voting district lines.

33. Marlene M.

Pittsburgh, PA

Districts should be drawn with the population in mind, not the incumbent politicians. That way, we would truly have representative government.

34. Joseph M.

Pittsburgh, PA

My home senatorial district #38, Sen. Lindsey Williams, is a perfect example of gerrymandering and its effect on constituents. It's fairly compact in shape- except for the bulge at the bottom, where it crosses the Allegheny River into Pittsburgh. As I understand the history of that "bulge", it was done to freeze out

then Senator Jim Ferlo by cutting out his Highland Park district. Anyone who knows the very strong neighborhood ties of the Pittsburgh region- as well as our tendency to "not cross the river"- realizes that this area is a misfit to the rest of the district. Sen. Williams of course reaches out to the Highland Park people, but that takes some extra effort on her part. As a result we in the northern suburbs lose something, no matter her extensive efforts to serve us as well. This is the evil of gerrymandering: a political win for one party ends up penalizing the citizens of the poorly-constructed district. START WITH A BLANK MAP and construct districts according to the PA Constitution: "compact and contiguous territory as nearly equal in population as practicable." Thank you.

35. Carol B.

Wexford, PA

Please start with a blank map! Please make the districts regular shape and honoring current township/borough/city/county boundaries if possible. Throw out the old gerrymandered maps and start fresh.

36. George C.

Pittsburgh, PA

Do NOT gerrymander -- Do NOT design around districts held by incumbents Thank you kindly

37. Mimi D.

Bridgeville, PA

The congressional redistricting process should be open and transparent with frequent communication with the public. The districts should be drawn simply starting with a blank map. What we have now are convolutedly drawn districts. They should not be drawn around the wishes or hopes of current incumbents.

38. Kevin K.

Canonsburg, PA

Trust in governmental processes is at an all-time low. Hopefully a fair, unbiased approach to redistricting will not fall in line with other examples of power politics. Districts should not be drawn just to keep Democrats or Republicans in "control" of any area in the Commonwealth.

39. Maria G.

Pittsburgh, PA

I'm writing to emphasize the importance of the work of redistricting. As a voter, a taxpayer, a parent and a community member, I want districts that reflect the communities we live in - not districts that serve to hold onto seats in one direction or another. In 2021 we have tools to ensure that redistricting is done in a non-partisan fashion - let's use those tools to ensure that our representation in our legislatures is truly representative.

Start with a BLANK map. Don't design districts around incumbents. Voters and communities should come first.

Thank you.

40. Lawrence E.
Pittsburgh, PA

Keep Voting Districts as they Now-Are (as best as possible): NO Gerrymandering.....
You WON in Our District last-time (as they now are).....

41. Annmarie R.
Pittsburgh, PA

Please make this process fair and transparent for voters of all backgrounds. Please start with a BLANK map and don't design districts around incumbents. Use common sense objective boundaries that put voters and communities first.

42. Adrienne G.
Pittsburgh, PA

Thank you so much for hearing my testimony today. My understanding of what the census data shows is that an increasing number of people are leaving rural areas and moving to suburban and urban areas like Allegheny County. The population represented, particularly by the 17th and 18th Congressional Districts, is already so dense, and I feel we are accurately distributed with the current map. But if one of the districts around here were to be eliminated, it would mean that the will of the voters in Allegheny County would be diluted too much. Therefore, I think that we should keep the current congressional districts the same as they are now.

43. Robert H.
Wexford, PA

First of all, I am not a member of Common Cause, League of Women Voters, or some other organization that claims to be non-partisan. When I attend a meeting of these organizations, I am hard-pressed to find another Republican in the room. So, I urge you to take their recommendations with a grain of salt."

I urge you to follow the PA Constitution and the process it establishes and ignore the calls to participate in racism and ethnic bias. The PA Constitution is clear. It does not call for you to prioritize "communities of interest" as the building blocks of the map. Nor does it direct you to create racial or ethnic or Democrat or Republican seats.

If you follow the PA Constitution you will have districts that are compact and contiguous and equal in population. If you follow the PA Constitution, unless absolutely necessary to obtain equal population, you will not be dividing counties, cities, incorporated towns, boroughs, townships, or wards. As it turns out you be creating districts composed of "communities of interest" because they are usually defined by compact and contiguous districts and by counties, cities, incorporated towns, boroughs, townships, and wards.

Thank you for your service and I expect you to do what you were elected to do. And that includes following the PA Constitution and not those interested in party representation based upon party registration.

44. Douglas M.

Bethel Park, PA

I would like all Congressional Districts to be comprised of roughly equal numbers of registered Democrats, Republicans, and Independent voters, if possible. I am not concerned if a boundary goes down the middle of a street or cuts off me from my next-door neighbor. The boundaries do not need to follow borough, township, or municipality boundaries. The Congressional Districts are NOT school board boundaries nor borough boundaries. The Congressional Districts should be drawn to enable each vote to COUNT, rather than individual votes being swallowed up by 'majority Party' rule. The GEOGRAPHY of the boundaries are LESS important than the ability of each voter's vote to be IMPORTANT, that is, to be HEARD and have an IMPACT on the outcome of the election, and, therefore, have an impact on the policies supported and expressed by OUR elected officials.

Thank you.

45. Mary K.

Pittsburgh, PA

Congressional Redistricting Statement for the PA House State Government Committee hearing on Wednesday, August 25, 2021

Voting is one of the most important ways that citizens can participate in government and make their voices heard. It is important to protect voter's rights and allow every legitimate vote to be counted. An important part of protecting our right to vote is to assure that the boundaries of congressional districts are drawn in a fair and responsible way. Criteria that should be used include the following:

1. Compactness
2. Contiguity
3. Equal population
4. Preservation of existing political communities
5. Partisan fairness
6. Racial fairness

It is hard to imagine a system less equitable than the current system in which legislators determine the boundaries of districts. It is inevitable that legislators will try to design districts to assure their own re-election and maximize the election of members of their political party. Deal making is likely to occur, i.e., "If you vote for my ridiculously contorted district boundaries that help assure my re-election, I will support your equally ridiculously drawn district. The classic "asking the foxes to guard the henhouse". Unfortunately, many politicians appear to be totally shameless when their careers are at stake. An independent commission should redraw district boundaries at all levels. This should be the goal. Given that legislators currently control the laws and rules governing redistricting, it is difficult to change the current system. At a bare minimum all phases of the redistricting process should be public and transparent so the work can be scrutinized by the media and interested citizens. Agreeing the ground

rules governing the process is important. The guidelines above should serve as the basis for redrawing district boundaries. The use of computers can be very useful, but only if programmed with fair criteria. All parties should have an equal say. A party with a numerical advantage in registered voters or currently serving legislators should not have an advantage. A system of checks and balances and a rule that there must be bipartisan agreement can help assure that districts are fairly drawn. A system in which potential maps are compared or scored against established criteria can help. If the group charged with drawing the maps cannot reach consensus, some super majority supporting the proposed maps, the threat should exist that the process will be removed from the group trying to produce maps and handed over to some other neutral group or the courts.

As a citizen and voter, I hope our system for determining district boundaries can be made more reasonable and fairer.

46. Kirk M.
Pittsburgh, PA

Humans are extremely fallible creatures. We have seen countless instances of gerrymandering, so I think we should have the districts drawn by a computer in a fair way that does not give an overt advantage to either party, nor discriminates by race or wealth. Disbarring that (I know computer programs bug up) then I would like it to be drawn in a simple straightforward manner, none of this nonsense about carefully drawing it into squiggly shapes designed to make some groups of voters less powerful.