

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING

STATE THEATRE CENTER FOR THE ARTS
UNIONTOWN, PA

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 2021
9:03 A.M.

PRESENTATION ON
CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING
SOUTHWEST REGION

BEFORE:

HONORABLE SETH M. GROVE, MAJORITY CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE MATTHEW D. DOWLING
HONORABLE ANDREW LEWIS
HONORABLE RYAN E. MACKENZIE
HONORABLE BRETT R. MILLER
HONORABLE ERIC R. NELSON
HONORABLE CLINT OWLETT
HONORABLE FRANCIS X. RYAN
HONORABLE PAUL SCHEMEL
HONORABLE JEFF C. WHEELAND
HONORABLE SCOTT CONKLIN, DEMOCRATIC CHAIRMAN
HONORABLE ISABELLA V. FITZGERALD
HONORABLE MAUREEN E. MADDEN
HONORABLE BENJAMIN V. SANCHEZ
HONORABLE JARED G. SOLOMON

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

HONORABLE GEORGE DUNBAR
HONORABLE JIM RIGBY
HONORABLE RYAN WARNER

* * * * *

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SUBMITTED WRITTEN TESTIMONY

* * *

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P R O C E E D I N G S

* * *

MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Good morning.

Today, the House State Government Committee will convene the third of eight regional hearings across Pennsylvania on congressional redistricting. Today we'll be hearing testimony about the southwest region of our Commonwealth.

Thank you to the State Theatre Center for the Arts and Representative Matt Dowling for hosting, and I'll open it up to Representative Dowling for opening comments.

REPRESENTATIVE DOWLING: Good morning.

I just want to take a moment to again thank the staff here at the State Theatre Center for the Arts. We did have a conflict and several weeks ago had to find a secondary venue, and they were more than accommodating here to help us out with this morning's hearing.

I am very proud that we are here in Uniontown for our southwestern PA hearing. The testimony that is given today will be extremely important to our process, as our goal is to have one of the most open and transparent redistricting processes to take place.

So I thank our testifiers that will be with us here today, and I look forward to hearing their testimony.

1 Thank you so much.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.

3 A couple housekeeping items.

4 Due to Sunshine Law requirements, we are
5 livestreaming this. If livestreaming goes down, we will
6 pause the meeting and we'll wait until that gets back up
7 and operational to proceed.

8 Testifiers will be given 10 minutes to present
9 their testimony before the Members of the Committee. We
10 will be keeping firmly to those time limits. We are here
11 to listen. No questions will be asked of testifiers.
12 Testifiers, I will give you a 3-minute warning, so
13 periodically do look up. I will try to count you down. To
14 date, we haven't had any issues of that, so it has been
15 good.

16 Also, testifiers, please keep your comments
17 relative to the topic at hand. We are here to learn about
18 this region of the State -- its industries, its values, and
19 its unique communities of interest. We are here to learn
20 from you and to take your input on the congressional
21 districts that will be in effect for the next decade. This
22 is an important task, so if a testifier begins to stray
23 from relevant testimony, I will ask you to refocus on the
24 topic before us. If not, I will move on to the next listed
25 speaker.

1 We also ask that any attendees here in the room
2 with us today remain quiet and respectful. Today's public
3 input hearing is being livestreamed at paredistricting.com
4 and it is also being recorded. Please help us to ensure
5 those who are watching at home can easily hear all the
6 testimony.

7 And I would be remiss if I didn't mention that in
8 addition to these testifiers who are present today, the
9 Committee has also received testimony from people all
10 across the Commonwealth who have submitted their written
11 comments online. For the southwestern regional hearing,
12 we received testimony from Patricia O. from Westmoreland,
13 Rose Ann J. and Ronda W. from Uniontown, and Michael S.
14 from Johnstown. That written testimony is before each
15 Member of the House State Government Committee for today's
16 hearing and will be posted shortly after we conclude.

17 I also want to remind people that the written
18 testimony for the southwest region will continue to be
19 accepted online at paredistricting.com until October 12th,
20 so there is still time to participate. You can also go to
21 paredistricting.com and list your communities of interest.
22 Eventually, you will be able to submit actual maps to the
23 Committee as well and post comments on the 2018 map or
24 anything dealing with redistricting as well, and that will
25 be part of the Committee's public record as well.

1 To our testifiers both in person and whose
2 testimony we hold in our hands, thank you for taking an
3 interest in redistricting and for participating in this
4 once-in-a-decade process. I hope it is evident that the
5 House of Representatives is committed to undertaking the
6 most open, transparent, and accountable redistricting
7 process in Pennsylvania history, and we believe that
8 transparency and accountability are the bedrock of good
9 governance, and public input through the hearings plays an
10 essential role in that.

11 With that, I'll turn it over to Chairman Conklin
12 for any opening remarks.

13 MINORITY CHAIRMAN CONKLIN: Thank you, Chairman
14 Grove.

15 I, too, want to thank everyone for coming. We
16 are on stop three of a statewide go-around, just to hear
17 what the people have to say.

18 I'm going to be short. This is your government.
19 You have the right to be involved in it, and we're anxious
20 to hear what you have to say today.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.

22 We're going to go to introduction of Members.
23 There are Members who are Members of the State Government
24 Committee. There are also Members, every Member was
25 invited from this region to participate and hear what their

1 citizens have to say are priorities in their area.

2 With that, we're going to start all the way to
3 the right and then introduce the Members here in the room,
4 and then we will go and introduce the Members who are
5 participating virtually.

6 REPRESENTATIVE LEWIS: Thank you, Chairman.

7 Representative Andrew Lewis, representing the
8 105th District in lovely Dauphin County near Harrisburg.

9 REPRESENTATIVE SCHEMEL: Representative
10 Paul Schemel. I represent a portion of Franklin County in
11 the south-central portion of the State.

12 REPRESENTATIVE RIGBY: Jim Rigby, the
13 71st District, representing Cambria and parts of Somerset
14 County.

15 REPRESENTATIVE NELSON: Representative
16 Eric Nelson, the 57th District, representing Westmoreland
17 County.

18 MINORITY CHAIRMAN CONKLIN: I'm State
19 Representative Scott Conklin, the 77th District, Centre
20 County, the home of Penn State University.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Seth Grove, the
22 196th District, York County.

23 REPRESENTATIVE DOWLING: I'm Representative
24 Matthew Dowling of the 51st Legislative District in parts of
25 Fayette and Somerset Counties, right here in Uniontown.

1 REPRESENTATIVE WHEELAND: Good morning.

2 Representative Jeff Wheeland from the
3 83rd District, Williamsport, home of Little League Baseball.
4 Make sure you watch it tonight.

5 REPRESENTATIVE DUNBAR: Good morning.

6 Representative George Dunbar, Westmoreland
7 County, the 56th District.

8 REPRESENTATIVE WARNER: Good morning.

9 Representative Ryan Warner, the 52nd District,
10 Fayette and Westmoreland Counties.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative
12 Ben Sanchez.

13 REPRESENTATIVE SANCHEZ: Good morning.

14 This is Ben Sanchez, representing the
15 153rd District in Montgomery County.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative
17 Brett Miller.

18 REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Good morning.

19 Brett Miller, the 41st District, Lancaster County,
20 Pennsylvania.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative Owlett.

22 REPRESENTATIVE OWLETT: Representative
23 Clint Owlett, serving Tioga and parts of Bradford and parts
24 of Potter County.

25 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative

1 Fitzgerald.

2 REPRESENTATIVE FITZGERALD: Good morning.

3 Isabella Fitzgerald, representing the
4 203rd Legislative District, Philadelphia -- West Oak Lane,
5 East Oak Lane, and the Lower Northeast.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative Ryan.

7 REPRESENTATIVE RYAN: I'm Representative
8 Frank Ryan, the 101st District of Lebanon County,
9 Pennsylvania, and I want to wish Representative Ryan Warner
10 a happy birthday.

11 REPRESENTATIVE WARNER: Thank you, Frank.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative Madden.

13 REPRESENTATIVE MADDEN: Good morning.

14 Representative Madden, the 115th District, Monroe
15 County. Good morning.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative
17 Mackenzie.

18 REPRESENTATIVE MACKENZIE: Good morning.

19 Ryan Mackenzie, Representative from the
20 134th District in portions of Lehigh and Berks Counties.

21 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Representative Solomon.

22 REPRESENTATIVE SOLOMON: Good morning, everybody.

23 State Representative Jared Solomon, the
24 202nd Legislative District in Northeast Philadelphia.

25 Thank you.

1 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: And just to
2 double-check and make sure I got everybody virtually or who
3 is present in the room? All right.

4 Hearing none, we will move on to our first
5 testifier: Scott Dunn, Fayette County Commissioner,
6 Dunbar, Pennsylvania.

7 Commissioner Dunn, if you can just come up, take
8 a seat, and then whenever you are comfortable, you can
9 begin your testimony.

10 And I can't see the audience. There you are.
11 Thank you, sir, and whenever you're comfortable, we
12 appreciate your time and your willingness to come testify
13 today.

14 MR. DUNN: Thank you.

15 I'm ready if you're ready. So good morning,
16 everybody, and welcome to Fayette County. I appreciate
17 this opportunity to testify before you.

18 Fayette County has a unique set of demographics,
19 population, geography, and industries that set us apart
20 from other counties, even some of our close neighboring
21 counties. As Commissioner of Fayette County, I see every
22 day the needs of our communities and our citizens and the
23 demand for effective government to help address our needs.

24 The poverty rate in Fayette County is
25 approximately 17.5 percent. This can be directly traced to

1 the collapse of the coal and steel industries dating to the
2 1970s and the lack of leadership to fill that void.

3 Job training has helped our citizens obtain new
4 employment, but without the needed businesses in the county
5 to support those jobs, that employment oftentimes has gone
6 elsewhere. This has led to a precipitous population
7 decline from over 200,000 in 1940 to 159,000 in 1980 to
8 approximately 129,000 today.

9 Factoring in to our population decline is a lack
10 of local college choices. While we have Penn State Fayette
11 and a number of vocational and technical schools in the
12 county, many of our college-bound students leave the county
13 to pursue their postsecondary education. Many of these
14 students do not return. Please note that the poverty rate
15 -- as I had said before was 17.5 percent overall -- for our
16 educated and our trained citizens, that poverty rate falls
17 to 4.4 percent.

18 As commissioner, I see the need to add a
19 community college-type facility in our county to keep our
20 students local and to lower the poverty rate. Community
21 colleges can also benefit by working with high schools to
22 keep those students on track to continue their education.
23 The poverty rate in Fayette County for those who drop out
24 of high school is 35 percent.

25 Much the same as other counties, Fayette

1 struggles with the opioid crisis and the related problems
2 of crime, blight, behavioral health, healthy lifestyles,
3 housing, food insecurity, and others. Much has been done
4 to help alleviate these problems, but much work remains in
5 the way of effectively addressing them.

6 Our industries have transformed over the years.
7 Tourism and agriculture have become our number one and
8 number two industries, in no particular order. The county
9 has a robust health-care system with two local hospitals,
10 WVU Medicine in Uniontown and Highlands Hospital in
11 Connellsville. I believe as a county leader that this
12 industry, health care, is primed to take off in the near
13 future. It is also needed that our other industries,
14 including manufacturing, education, and the trades, be
15 addressed.

16 There's a lot of talk about the word "inequity"
17 these days, and rightfully so, but there is more to that
18 locally in Fayette County than just a racial inequity. We
19 also have what I call a rural inequity. Inequities based
20 on geography, age, income, and education abound in rural
21 and semi-rural counties like Fayette. We saw this in the
22 recent rollout of the COVID vaccines where the Department
23 of Health decided rural residents could drive up to
24 30 miles one way to get vaccinated while an urban resident
25 was given options within 2 miles.

1 While rural counties are losing population
2 coupled with urban gains, increasing the geographical size
3 of rural districts limits options for our citizens to
4 connect with needed services and representation. Couple
5 that with a lack of rural broadband connectivity, access to
6 government, and the representation promised in the
7 Constitutions of the United States and the Commonwealth of
8 Pennsylvania will become more difficult to achieve for the
9 citizens of Fayette County.

10 Fayette County has great amenities to promote.
11 We have a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Fallingwater, located
12 within our boundaries. We have a five-star resort at
13 Nemaquin Woodlands. We have one of the biggest State
14 parks at Ohiopyle, which offers outdoor recreation like no
15 other place in this State. The county is seeing in excess
16 of 1.5 million visitors annually. And I would be remiss if
17 I didn't offer an invitation to all of you to come visit.
18 Representative Dowling and I will show you around.

19 Good things are happening in Fayette County. I
20 believe we have strong, committed leadership at each level
21 of government. It is important that any new district that
22 includes Fayette County represent the citizens and needs
23 that I have expressed. This is difficult to do if a
24 district is too large and too widespread.

25 In the past, parts of our congressional district

1 have included counties in the center of the State. These
2 areas often have little in common with the needs of Fayette
3 County. I strongly recommend creating districts that have
4 counties and communities with similar needs, demographics,
5 and are geographically linked so that problems can be
6 effectively addressed by our government and that our
7 citizens can be effectively represented by our government.

8 Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to
9 testify today, and thank you so much.

10 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you very much.

11 And I haven't yet been to Fallingwater, so I may
12 have to take you up on the tour.

13 MR. DUNN: Matt and I can make that happen.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you so much for
15 your time, Commissioner. I know you're very busy, and we
16 appreciate your testimony today. Thank you.

17 Next, we have Etta Albright from Cresson,
18 Pennsylvania.

19 I feel this is like a game show. Come on up.

20 And, Etta, thank you for your time this morning
21 and your willingness to testify, and whenever you're
22 comfortable and ready, please begin.

23 MS. ALBRIGHT: Before I begin, I would like to
24 ask, were all of the Representatives invited to witness
25 this event? I see there is just certain ones that have

1 been recognized.

2 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: It's the State
3 Government Committee Members and then Members regionally
4 who wanted to come.

5 MS. ALBRIGHT: Okay. When you say Members
6 regionally, then my Representative would have had the
7 opportunity to be here?

8 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Yep. Yep.

9 MS. ALBRIGHT: I just wanted to establish that.
10 Okay.

11 My testimony was submitted earlier, and I would
12 like to expand upon that a little bit.

13 I would like to represent through the role of
14 being an ordinary citizen, and I take that title very
15 responsibly, because I think that it now represents public
16 ministry. So I would like for you to think of my testimony
17 as being a witness to the motivation that directs our
18 government. And it's very important, because the character
19 of our government is under question as to who we are, what
20 we are, and what we stand for, not just as a local
21 community but also on a global stand as well.

22 And to bring attention to you the "Lies My
23 Teacher Told Me," it's a book by Dr. James W. Loewen, who
24 just passed away last Thursday, unfortunately. But I bring
25 this to your attention and I urge you all to read it,

1 because we are all under the influence of our ancestors, of
2 our history that define how we approach things. And in our
3 education, my own included, there was a severe lacking of
4 truth. The history is presented to us in a one-sided way,
5 where we and our historical figures have been what
6 Dr. Loewen says, "heroified." And so we weren't taught
7 about the adversarial conduct of Christopher Columbus and
8 what he did to the people in Haiti, that if they were under
9 slavery and if they did not produce their expected amount
10 of gold, hands were cut off and such horrific crimes
11 against humanity.

12 And so when we say, how can we put a statue up to
13 honor such a human being, we realize it was wrong, but we
14 weren't taught, we weren't told that side of history. We
15 weren't told the side of history that massacred the Native
16 population. It's just now coming to front as to what was
17 done to these people in the name of progress -- in the name
18 of progress. We don't want to go there again. We don't
19 want to make the same mistakes that we made in the way we
20 treat other human beings and the way we care for our
21 environment.

22 We're at a crisis. We're at a crisis that is not
23 going to be solved by simply drawing lines for legislative
24 districts our congressional districts. It has to be
25 motivated, and it has to be motivated by a character that

1 cares.

2 And in my history of advocacy when I was going
3 through things to prepare this testimony, I came across
4 this character, "The Core of Education and Life," that was
5 put together by the Wake County Public School System, and
6 it gives you guidelines on how to shape your character,
7 that we all need to be in unison of whether you are an
8 individual, a member of a municipality, a member of a
9 county, a member of a State, a member of a nation, because
10 we are connected globally to all of that.

11 When I go to the store and I buy bananas, I pick
12 up that banana and I think, what was the life and what is
13 the life like of that person who picked that banana? Are
14 they operating in slavery? Am I being an enabler by buying
15 this particular brand of a banana? What do I need to know?
16 And at my age, the burden is heavy in trying to keep
17 informed, and that's why I need to trust my representative,
18 and that he is not here and listening to this testimony is
19 disturbing.

20 And yet I know, Representative Rigby, you listen.
21 We had a phone conversation about how he visioned a place,
22 a municipality in his district that lives in opulence,
23 while a neighboring, right next to the line, lives in
24 poverty. What do you think about that? How do you think
25 about that? How do you see it? What should I be thinking

1 about, because I carry the weight of the vote, and I have
2 to be informed. And it's tough, because even the people,
3 even the people who tell your story, the press, are under
4 the influence of the lies that my teacher failed to tell or
5 needed to correct and tell the story. So we have to tell
6 them.

7 I don't want to hear that a Democrat said this, a
8 Republican said this, or this said this or that said that,
9 that label said that. No, I want to hear the truth. I
10 want you to say, according to so-and-so, this is why I base
11 my decision, not so it's a Republican decision or a
12 Democrat decision or an Independent decision; it's one of
13 goodwill and empathy and caring.

14 Thank you for your attention.

15 This will remain for you if you want to make a
16 copy -- 50 cents at Copy-Rite Banner Zone.

17 And also, here's a vision of a holistic approach
18 to the problem. When you draw your lines, you're talking
19 about people and you're talking about needs, and if needs
20 are met in one community, if you have a supply of water and
21 energy in one community and in one other, your neighbor,
22 doesn't have it, guess what? You share, right? And you
23 share it in a way that does no harm.

24 That's the message, do no harm in your decision.
25 Wherever your lines are drawn, whoever you represent,

1 people are the focus and then the needs for sustainability.
2 We just finished a Zoom program called "Reimagining Blair
3 and Cambria Counties: Visioning Sustainable Communities,"
4 underscored by public health, well-being, and safety. Let
5 that be your mantra.

6 Thank you.

7 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you very much,
8 Etta. We appreciate your time this morning and your
9 willingness to come out and testify.

10 And you can give those papers to the person that
11 brought you up on stage to make sure we have them.

12 MS. ALBRIGHT: Thank you kindly.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Yep. Thank you so
14 much.

15 Next, we have Muriel Johnson-Nuttall, Fayette
16 County Chamber of Commerce, Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

17 And whenever you are situated, ready, and
18 comfortable, please begin, and we thank you for your time
19 this morning and your willingness to testify.

20 MS. JOHNSON-NUTTALL: Thank you for allowing me
21 to be here.

22 As Fayette County Pennsylvania's largest and
23 most active business organization, representing over
24 600 employers and 17,000 employees throughout the area,
25 the Fayette Chamber of Commerce appreciates this

1 opportunity to address the PA House Republican Caucus in
2 this southwest regional hearing on redistricting.

3 The Chamber believes that there is significant
4 opportunity to improve the current process of drawing
5 boundaries for State legislative and congressional
6 districts so as to be drawn in a fair and transparent
7 manner.

8 As an organization that advocates for the best in
9 business practice and fairness of opportunities for our
10 business owners and entrepreneurs, we believe that the
11 districts should be compact, substantially equal in
12 population, and be inclusive of full county areas by
13 following geographic boundaries and not drawn in a way that
14 favors one political party or another.

15 The leadership in Fayette County, from Federal to
16 State to county government throughout our economic and
17 community development organizations and to our business
18 communities, is currently laser-focused on opportunity and
19 growth for our future. We are poised to seek, identify,
20 and capitalize on economic development projects, and
21 representation of our area as a whole, without geographic
22 division, will allow us to maximize that growth, which will
23 especially benefit southwestern Pennsylvania and, in turn,
24 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a whole.

25 Our region is lucky to have such solid leadership

1 and partnerships at the local, State, and Federal levels.
2 This has allowed important legislative measures to be
3 introduced and funded through the State, not just due to
4 the merits of concept but because leaders and communities
5 choose to work together for the benefit of the whole. This
6 history of cooperation and unity has also increased
7 interest in economic development across our region.

8 It is our hope this collaboration will continue.
9 It is vitally important to our business community that the
10 redistricting process will continue to be transparent and
11 will continue to assure that public input is not only
12 included but truly incorporated into a final decision on
13 those legislative boundaries.

14 I do thank you for coming here today, for
15 listening to us, and allowing the Fayette Chamber of
16 Commerce to publicly comment on this most important issue
17 related to the future of our area.

18 Thank you.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you so much. We
20 greatly appreciate your time and your testimony today.
21 Thank you so much.

22 MS. JOHNSON-NUTTALL: Thank you.

23 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Next, we have
24 Mark Rafail, the Fayette County Economic Development
25 Office, Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

1 Mr. Rafail, first and foremost, thank you so much
2 for your time and your willingness to testify today, and
3 when you're comfortable and ready, the floor is yours, sir.

4 MR. RAFAIL: Thank you, gentlemen.

5 On behalf of the Fayette County Economic
6 Development Office, I want to thank you for giving me this
7 opportunity to speak to you on such an important matter as
8 this. Coming from a small city within Fayette County and
9 now within county government, I felt very comfortable in
10 talking about this issue.

11 When I was first asked to speak, I asked myself
12 the following questions, so what I'm going to do is ask my
13 question and answer my question to you gentlemen so it will
14 be easier for you to see:

15
16 How is Fayette County alike or dislike to
17 counties within our current map in relationship to retail
18 activities, manufacturing, and industry?

19 Westmoreland County is the largest of the
20 four counties in the current 14th District with 30 to
21 45 percent more industries than the others. This is
22 also reflected in the average income per household.

23 Washington County has twice the number of
24 industries as Fayette County, with an average income
25 per household slightly higher than the State average.

1 Greene County is very similar to Fayette
2 County, although about 50 percent of their total
3 industries, their income per household is very close
4 to ours.

5
6 Do you feel that the congressional district that
7 would include Fayette and Allegheny Counties would put the
8 Fayette County region in unfair competition with the urban
9 Pittsburgh region in relationship to grants, funding, and
10 overall opportunities?

11 It would be very difficult for Fayette
12 County to participate and to compete in those
13 opportunities of urban Pittsburgh. Urban Pittsburgh
14 does have the ability to receive matching moneys and
15 more support due to demographics alone. However, it
16 is important for Fayette County to work with the
17 entire region and not just pigeonhole ourselves in
18 Fayette County.

19
20 From the point of view of economic development,
21 how is having Fayette County fit into one of the cohesive
22 congressional districts beneficial?

23 As one district, Fayette County would work
24 on multiple municipality projects and not split the
25 projects up with different Federal officials to gain

1 support for those projects.

2
3 Why would businesses want to locate here?

4 It is my hope that businesses realize that
5 we in Fayette County have not only what we need to
6 locate here -- for example, infrastructure and
7 workforce -- but just as important, the amenities that
8 the employees need to make Fayette their home.

9
10 It is my hope that the redistricting be looked at
11 as similar counties placed in the same districts and that
12 no counties be split into several districts.

13 Thank you very much.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you so much for
15 your time and your willingness to come testify. We greatly
16 appreciate it.

17 Next is Vernon Ohler, the city of Connellsville,
18 Connellsville, Pennsylvania.

19 And when you are situated and ready, Mr. Ohler,
20 please begin, and we greatly thank you for your time and
21 willingness to come testify this morning.

22 MR. OHLER: Thank you all.

23 The rural counties and communities of our region
24 are kind of on the back burner when it comes to big-time
25 politics. I mean, our local representatives at all levels

1 do help us out, but, I mean, we are the forgotten child.
2 If you come at election time, you don't see too many big
3 races being fought on our own turf, where the freedom of
4 our country was fought here. So we're kind of put on the
5 back burner.

6 Part of our problem here is accessibility.
7 Broadband, as Commissioner Dunn talked, we have a heavy,
8 heavy senior population. Not all of those people have
9 access to computers as well. When you're dealing with
10 State Government, especially during this pandemic, the
11 accessibility has not been here. You guys have had
12 numerous departments and agencies not working.
13 Communication is not at its best. And moving forward, you
14 know, we're worried with redistricting. How is this going
15 to affect us down the road?

16 Our problem is, another thing that we're looking
17 at is our roads. Even to people that can drive and talk to
18 their local representatives, you know, are these roads good
19 enough? Public transportation, though we have some, very
20 limited.

21 We have a declining and/or stable population in
22 this region. Out in the southeast region, you guys, your
23 population is growing. You're going to have to add a seat
24 out there. We're going to lose one back in -- I mean, the
25 State is losing one, but out there, you're adding local and

1 State seats. How can we find out what they're doing right
2 and bring this back here to us?

3 And that is it. Thank you, gentlemen.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you very much for
5 your testimony today. We greatly appreciate it.

6 Next, we have Mary K. Sykes, Uniontown,
7 Pennsylvania.

8 Mary, thank you so much for your time and
9 willingness to testify this morning, and when you're
10 comfortable and ready, please begin.

11 MS. SYKES: Okay. Good morning.

12 I'm glad to be here. I come as a private
13 citizen, and I want to say that I'm in favor of
14 non-gerrymandered districts where the voters choose our
15 legislators.

16 Every voter should be fairly represented,
17 regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, and regional
18 interests. It is grossly poor "representation" when
19 legislators choose their voters and form districts that
20 they will dependably win. We need non-gerrymandered
21 districts for fair representation for all.

22 I grew up in Uniontown. I am the child and
23 grandchild and great-grandchild of immigrants and emigrants
24 in a very large multiethnic and multiracial family. And I
25 was told that my original testimony was too far out, so I

1 want to explain to you why I want to say this, that I don't
2 want gerrymandered districts.

3 When we grew up here in Uniontown like in the
4 1950s and 1960s, there were many different religions, you
5 know, Catholics, Protestants, Jewish, others, many
6 different ethnic groups, and at that time, they were
7 freshly here. And so people identified, you know,
8 Lebanese, Irish, Polish, Slovak, Italian, Black people from
9 the South who had come up for, you know, opportunity, and
10 we were all going to the same schools.

11 And because of the equity that we experienced
12 there -- and yes, there was prejudices and there were
13 suspicious, and I had them myself, you know, but over time,
14 when you work with people that are different, you discover
15 that you have a common goal. That's why I want
16 non-gerrymandered districts, because from Fayette and
17 Westmoreland and, you know, Greene Counties came
18 astronauts, skilled workmen, doctors, lawyers. There were
19 432 kids in my class, but we couldn't all stay in Fayette
20 County even though we thought we could. You know, we
21 thought we were coming home.

22 But that equitable education, that excellent
23 education that we received has paid benefits to the third
24 and fourth generations, to the families of people who have
25 left here. And yeah, there's a lot of poverty here. So

1 let's see if we can work together to make what we have now
2 be good for those who stay and for those who go.

3 Don't gerrymander. Let the unexpected surprise
4 of what you get from the other, the people that you don't
5 expect to do anything, let them contribute to the
6 community, and then the little old ladies that walk around
7 in my neighborhood won't say, ah, they get elected and they
8 all become corrupt. Be fair. Make fair non-gerrymandered
9 districts.

10 Thank you.

11 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you so much,
12 Mary. We appreciate your time and your testimony today.

13 Next, we have Joyce Royster, NAACP, Uniontown,
14 Pennsylvania.

15 Joyce is on her way, so we will go to Jana Kyle,
16 and when Joyce arrives, we will plug her into the agenda.

17 So Jana Kyle, Fayette County Drug and Alcohol
18 Commission, Inc., Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

19 Thank you so much for joining us today. We
20 appreciate your time and your testimony, and whenever you
21 are comfortable and ready, please begin.

22 MS. KYLE: Good morning.

23 Thank you, and welcome to Fayette County.

24 My name is Jana Kyle, and I am the Executive
25 Director of the Fayette County Drug and Alcohol Commission.

1 I really would like to thank you for the opportunity to
2 provide comments regarding the redistricting issue that is
3 being faced within our Commonwealth.

4 The Fayette County Drug and Alcohol Commission
5 serves as the Single County Authority of Fayette County.
6 As the Single County Authority, we receive State and
7 Federal dollars through contracts with the Pennsylvania
8 Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. That is to
9 provide, plan, coordinate, and programmatically and
10 fiscally manage the delivery of drug and alcohol
11 prevention, intervention, recovery, and treatment programs,
12 all at the local level.

13 As an agency that serves the entire county and
14 all the residents of Fayette County, I am requesting that
15 the Committee reflect on the local needs and the diversity
16 that is being faced within our county during any of your
17 redistricting considerations.

18 From an agency that serves the entire county, I
19 really have two requested considerations of you:

20 One is any redistricting would keep Fayette
21 County with "like" counties. Those like counties would
22 share our local issues and needs and preferably are
23 contiguous.

24 The second one is to minimize the splitting of
25 the county among multiple political districts.

1 Redistricting should really encourage community
2 cohesion rather than a division. I would request that any
3 consideration be given to ensure that any redistricting
4 does not divide our "communities of interest" or use
5 portions of our county to meet any population requirements.
6 Additionally, a cohesive and contiguous redistricting
7 really could make it easier for legislators to serve their
8 constituents.

9 I would like to thank you for making this time
10 available to all of us and for allowing me to provide input
11 and comments regarding this very important process.

12 Thank you.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you so much,
14 Ms. Kyle. We appreciate your time and your testimony
15 today.

16 Next, we have Dan DeBone, Westmoreland County
17 Chamber of Commerce.

18 MR. DeBONE: Good morning.

19 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Good morning. And we
20 appreciate your time and your willingness to come and
21 testify, and whenever you're comfortable and ready, the
22 floor is yours.

23 MR. DeBONE: Sure.

24 Before we begin, I would like to have our
25 exceptional President and CEO of the Westmoreland County

1 Chamber of Commerce introduce ourselves.

2 MR. AMOND: Hi.

3 Thanks for us being here. My name is
4 Chad Amond. I'm the President and CEO of the Westmoreland
5 County Chamber of Commerce, and Dan DeBone is the Executive
6 Director of the Chamber of Commerce, and he will speak now.

7 MR. DeBONE: Good morning.

8 On behalf of the Board of Directors and our
9 President and CEO, Chad Amond, we want to thank Chairman
10 Grove, Chairman Conklin, and Members of the House State
11 Government Committee for holding this important discussion
12 on congressional redistricting.

13 My name is Dan DeBone, Executive Director of the
14 Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce, who represents and
15 advocates for a healthier, more competitive business
16 climate for over 900 members.

17 As the largest business association in
18 Westmoreland County and as one of the largest Chambers in
19 all of southwestern Pennsylvania, we are extremely proud
20 that our voice continues to resonate when speaking about
21 the interests of small and large companies across a myriad
22 of industries, which are basically, basically in our
23 backyard. Policymakers and elected officials from
24 Westmoreland County, Harrisburg, and Washington, DC, look
25 to the Westmoreland County Chamber for an unvarnished,

1 nonpartisan assessment of what is important to our
2 community.

3 Founded in 1773, Westmoreland County is the
4 second largest county in southwestern Pennsylvania. The
5 county encompasses over 1,000 square miles with a
6 population of 345,779 individuals. Adjacent counties
7 consist of Armstrong, Indiana, Cambria, Somerset, Fayette,
8 Washington, Allegheny, and Butler County.

9 Westmoreland County is part of a 10-county
10 Pittsburgh region offering its own but very unique
11 strengths and character for business locations. With its
12 expansive area, access to major transportation arteries,
13 comprehensive industrial park system, and strong work
14 ethic, Westmoreland has the business climate to assure
15 success.

16 That's why so many companies have grown strong
17 within our region. Exemplified by the huge numbers of the
18 European immigrants who came to Westmoreland to work in
19 coal mines, steel mills, and glass factories during the
20 Industrial Revolution, Westmoreland County is distinguished
21 by a workforce that boasts traditional work ethics, values,
22 and pride.

23 Our loyal and hardworking people are the basis to
24 a solid manufacturing foundation that we'll continue to
25 build upon. But most importantly, our region has continued

1 to thrive with the development of new industrial parks, the
2 steady growth of small businesses, a high tourism rate,
3 some of the best medical facilities in our region, a number
4 of colleges and universities, and light manufacturing.

5 The recent census data, in correlation with the
6 legislative mandate, will soon produce as well as dictate
7 new congressional maps due to the population shifts. The
8 Chamber is pleased to see the stability of population in
9 Pennsylvania throughout neighboring counties; however, and
10 I say "however," our region endured a population decline
11 according to population estimates from the recent census.

12 Additional estimates show Westmoreland lost
13 1,943 people just in 2020 through natural population
14 changes, meaning there were more deaths than births.
15 Westmoreland County is in the process of offsetting this
16 change with the "Reimagining Our Westmoreland"
17 comprehensive plan. This aggressive plan lays out several
18 ideas to make the county attractive for businesses and
19 younger generations by creating a community and environment
20 where people want to live.

21 The "Reimagining Our Westmoreland" campaign
22 included public participation from more than 5,000
23 residents, community officials, and business leaders. The
24 outcome included multiple projects, core objectives that
25 are aligned with specific strategies, and incorporating

1 over 300 different recommendations towards achieving those
2 goals. Many goals reflect new initiatives that were
3 approved over the last year by county commissioners,
4 including additional money for tourism, projects, and the
5 creation of a demolition fund to pay for the removal of
6 blighted buildings throughout the county.

7 The plan also identifies steps to improve job
8 opportunities; highlights the county's cultural,
9 historical, and recreation assets; seeks to revitalize
10 urban centers and local business districts; promotes the
11 use of parks and nature; modernizes the local economy and
12 enhances public transportation. These planning efforts are
13 just part of many long-term growth initiatives that will
14 dramatically help attract, develop, and retain a diverse
15 and stable workforce, which will ultimately sustain a
16 healthy economy throughout Westmoreland County for many
17 years to come.

18 The momentum and progress that is being gained --
19 and I can tell you that it is being gained -- to grow
20 Westmoreland County economically can now be in jeopardy
21 regarding the realignment or merging of districts. This
22 also includes the potential loss of sufficient
23 representation. Most importantly, any change within the
24 status quo could ultimately increase the competitiveness of
25 much needed funding resources at the State and Federal

1 level, which is currently utilized for a variety of
2 purposes, especially to supplement programs or projects
3 such as Medicaid payments, education funding assistance,
4 infrastructure, and more.

5 Some aid is awarded in the form of competitive
6 grants while other Federal funding is given according to
7 formulas established by law. Formula grants usually
8 incorporate factors like population size, poverty
9 statistics, and State matching dollars for distributing
10 Federal aid among counties.

11 Competitive grants will also be in jeopardy since
12 the vast majority of them are issued upon a discretionary
13 basis and are more likely to fluctuate from year to year.
14 Overall, any possibility of increasing our competition with
15 surrounding counties due to redistricting or the loss of
16 sufficient representation will not only slow progress but
17 could eventually stop the amount of growth which has been
18 made to date.

19 Therefore, on behalf of the Westmoreland County
20 Chamber of Commerce, our Board of Directors, but most
21 importantly, our business community, we respectfully
22 request the House State Government Committee,
23 Mr. Nordenberg, and members of the redistricting panel take
24 the time to review and understand the level of economic
25 progress that has been gained throughout the past several

1 years, as well as our ongoing comprehensive plan that will
2 continue to attract, develop, and retain a diverse and
3 stable workforce in Westmoreland County.

4 Most importantly, we respectfully request that
5 our county, communities, and level of government
6 representation remain as is, especially as we strive to
7 enhance our economic footprint now and over the next
8 several decades.

9 We will be happy to provide a copy of our
10 "Reimagining Our Westmoreland" comprehensive plan to this
11 committee or perhaps schedule some time to review our
12 progress and future plans in greater detail.

13 In closing, Chad and I would like to thank
14 Members of this committee for your time, and as always, we
15 are happy to answer any questions or provide additional
16 information.

17 Thank you.

18 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you, gentlemen.
19 We appreciate your time and your willingness to testify
20 today. We greatly appreciate it.

21 We will now move to Joyce Royster, NAACP.

22 Good morning. We appreciate your time and
23 willingness to testify. Please grab a seat and make
24 yourself comfortable, and when you're ready, the floor is
25 yours.

1 DR. ROYSTER: Thank you.

2 From what I have been told is, the State of
3 Pennsylvania -- first of all, let me introduce myself. I'm
4 Dr. Joyce Royster, Vice President of the National
5 Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the
6 NAACP of Fayette County. I am also personally a
7 consultant, having spent 35 years in education.

8 From my understanding, you need to collapse, if
9 I'm not mistaken, you need to collapse one of the
10 districts. Am I correct?

11 On the table you have, I studied and analyzed all
12 the districts of Pennsylvania, and I'm a very logical
13 person, so I'm looking at what is available, what could be
14 collapsed, and what shouldn't be collapsed.

15 The first thing I want to say from the data I
16 have analyzed, it is evident, in my professional opinion,
17 that Districts 17 and 18 can be smoothly consolidated.

18 Our district here, District 14, would suffer
19 major setbacks if eliminated. Fayette County has a
20 population of 131,302 people, consisting of 66,467 females
21 and 64,835 males. Our population is 92.5 percent White,
22 4.2 percent Black, 3.3 percent biracial, and 1.2 percent
23 Hispanic. Our per capita income is \$43,835. Our
24 unemployment rate is 8.4 percent, in contrast with the
25 6.9 percent from the State. Therefore, we definitely need

1 representation to protect our natural resources, our
2 professional and business services, and basically our
3 constituency. We need someone to continue to represent,
4 specifically represent our Pennsylvania 14th Congressional
5 District.

6 I can't see the 14th District being eliminated,
7 and from my analyses, I just see that the 17th and 18th
8 Districts, which are side by side, and that's the Lamb and
9 Doyle districts. Am I correct? Okay. And my
10 understanding is Conor Lamb is running for Senator. It
11 almost becomes a no-brainer, what needs to be done.

12 I'm just asking you to please do not consider
13 eliminating the 14th District. It would be very detrimental
14 to not only my African American constituents, but I also
15 represent, in the NAACP, I also represent a lot of
16 non-African American constituents. So we need as much
17 representation. We need more grants in this area. We need
18 more money for nonprofits.

19 I have a meeting tomorrow where I'm going to meet
20 with the powers that be that have a huge nonprofit in
21 another area. I'm trying to see if I can talk to them and
22 ask them to bring it to Fayette County. So I'm kind of
23 working behind the scenes before I get a chance to present
24 something.

25 I don't present anything without data. I don't

1 say, well, I wish; I hope; I want. No. This is what it
2 is, and that's why this district and this area which I
3 absolutely love and retired to by choice, I want to see us
4 continue to prosper, and we will because of people like you
5 who are working hard for us. Regardless, Republican,
6 Democrat, whatever you are, you are a public servant. You
7 know it and I know it, and I don't care what anyone says,
8 you are doing an excellent job, and I think you should be
9 applauded for that. It's not easy being away from your
10 family and friends and traveling up and down that turnpike
11 now to Harrisburg. And I used to live in the Harrisburg
12 area for 7 years, so I know what it's like living out
13 there. It's certainly not Beverly Hills. We all know
14 that.

15 But anyway, I'm just imploring you on behalf of
16 the constituents here in the 14th District to please
17 preserve our district. We are represented by some very
18 great representatives, Democrats and Republicans. I deal
19 with the person, not the party -- okay? -- because I am a
20 person who is very community oriented and I think that's
21 what we all need to do, because together, we are much
22 stronger than if we're not together.

23 So I do ask that you continue doing what you do,
24 and I just ask that you take our recommendation not to
25 eliminate the 14th District. Now, the 17th and

1 18th Districts might not like me. Mr. Gaines might be on
2 the phone with me or Peduto or whatever, but that doesn't
3 matter. It is what it is. I'm a strong person.

4 Okay. Does anyone have any questions of me?

5 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Nope, we don't have any
6 questions.

7 DR. ROYSTER: Come on, Mr. Grove. You have to
8 have one question.

9 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: I don't have any
10 questions, but thank you so much for your time and your
11 testimony, Dr. Royster. We greatly appreciate it.

12 And if you want to submit your data, we'd be more
13 than happy to take a look at it.

14 DR. ROYSTER: I already submitted it online,
15 believe it or not.

16 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Perfect. Perfect.

17 DR. ROYSTER: I'm not an online person, but I did
18 take the time to submit it online, and the old-fashioned
19 way, to write it out for myself.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: No; we greatly
21 appreciate it.

22 Thank you so much for your time and your
23 willingness to testify. It's invaluable input to help us
24 manage a statewide issue, and obviously you pointed out we
25 have to lose a district here. So someone is going to lose

1 something, so we appreciate your advocacy.

2 DR. ROYSTER: They're not really going to lose
3 because they'll still be represented, Representative.

4 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Correct; correct.

5 DR. ROYSTER: Their district may be combined.

6 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Correct.

7 DR. ROYSTER: You know, we're not losing
8 representation. It's not like we're going to have one
9 district that is sitting there with no representation.
10 That's not what's before us. The question is, which one
11 gets eliminated and which ones, 17th and 18th, get
12 consolidated? It's simple. I mean, it's not a hard job,
13 guys. I mean, really, don't lose sleep over this.

14 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Will do.

15 Thank you so much, Dr. Royster.

16 DR. ROYSTER: Okay.

17 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: We greatly appreciate
18 it.

19 DR. ROYSTER: You're welcome. Thank you.

20 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Okay. Our next
21 testifier is Mandy Zalich, Westmoreland Community Action,
22 Greensburg, Pennsylvania.

23 Thank you so much for your time and willingness
24 to testify, and when you're comfortable and ready, the
25 floor is yours.

1 MS. ZALICH: Great. Thank you.

2 And thank you for allowing me to be here today to
3 talk about Westmoreland County and the benefits and
4 wonderful things of Westmoreland County.

5 As I was listening to other speakers, I realized
6 that what you are hearing is very much repetition, because
7 so many of us love and value our neighborhoods, our
8 communities, our county, and see value. And so I do
9 apologize, there is a bit of some of that in my testimony,
10 because Westmoreland County is my home. It has been my
11 home for generations for my family and as CEO at
12 Westmoreland Community Action, which is a nonprofit that
13 provides services, support, guidance to individuals and
14 families to help them have better lives and to reduce
15 poverty in the community.

16 Through all of that and through my lifetime of
17 living in Westmoreland County, I have seen it go through so
18 many different changes, so many different seasons --
19 economic, climate, cultural -- and I have watched it change
20 over time. And we're at a pivotal point in Westmoreland
21 County to really make changes, to see the continued
22 progress that both Dan and Chad were talking about in
23 Westmoreland County with the "Reimagining Our Westmoreland"
24 plan and at a point where we can see things move forward --
25 or progress backwards.

1 And as I was listening to folks, I feel like
2 that's a bit of the nut, and so I'm diverging a smidgen
3 from what's written. But we are at that pivotal point in
4 Westmoreland County where so many of the cultural pursuits
5 have brought us to where we are in Westmoreland County. We
6 have generations of families that have impacted both faith,
7 both food, the cultural color, the tenor, the vibe that you
8 see across Westmoreland County and the impact that we have.

9 Being in the Appalachian region, families have
10 stayed for generations and generations. That is part of
11 the cultural background of Westmoreland County. We stay.
12 However, with the changes in the economy, with the
13 declining population, with losing businesses over the
14 years, we have seen that population shift and families have
15 to leave because they needed to find other jobs, and that
16 is starting to change the culture and flavor of
17 Westmoreland County.

18 That may not be a bad thing. Adding other
19 flavors, adding new cultures, adding new perspectives and
20 backgrounds, is going to add to Westmoreland County's
21 appearance, to its flavor, to its engaging in the
22 community, and that's going to add new ideas and new
23 businesses and new communities -- new progress.

24 But we're really at a pivotal point, and what was
25 mentioned about the "Reimagining Our Westmoreland" plan,

1 there's a variety of activities in there that Westmoreland
2 Community Action is taking over or spearheading. The
3 "Welcoming Westmoreland" initiative is one of the groups to
4 try and help make Westmoreland County a little more
5 welcoming, to shifting some of the culture to be a place
6 where new folks would want to move to, and that's an
7 undertaking. And all of the activities and goals in that
8 plan need to happen.

9 All of that requires funding. None of it is
10 going to be a free cost. None of it is going to be
11 timeless. All of it is going to require manual work and
12 manpower and hours in volunteer time and support from our
13 legislators, support from our constituents in order to move
14 it forward. But by working together in Westmoreland County
15 together as a united front and with the support of our
16 partners in the community, we are able to move forward and
17 better the region.

18 So there was talk of size in the counties. And
19 Westmoreland County is the eighth largest landmass in the
20 State; however, it is more than double the population of
21 any of those others that are larger than it. And when we
22 look at the problems that creates across the county and
23 connecting our constituents already within Westmoreland
24 County, it's already a struggle.

25 And so when we look at the communities, it goes

1 everywhere from New Kensington to Monessen, from
2 Jones Mills to New Florence, from Laughlinton to Trafford,
3 and it's a vast area and already divided into so many
4 different urban, rural, and suburban areas; that it's
5 already a unique set of struggles within Westmoreland
6 County, looking at roads and infrastructures that haven't
7 been updated in over 50 years, families that are struggling
8 without Internet connection, without cell phone coverage,
9 without hookups to cable, without access to public sewage
10 and water. You know, we have some dry days in the summer,
11 and a big chunk of our population has to worry about how
12 they're going to make basic necessities without having
13 running water. And then we have other parts of the county
14 that are very urban, and you would think they're going to
15 do just fine, and they struggle with so many of the same
16 issues and transportation and jobs.

17 And Westmoreland County is at a pivotal point
18 where we can either move forward and grow and assist in
19 growing the whole entire population and the whole entire
20 region or we're going to continue to see things struggle
21 and folks move away from the area, and that is my fear for
22 Westmoreland County, because it is my home and it is a
23 place that I love. And so many of the families and
24 residents here strive to make it the Westmoreland County
25 that it used to be, but it will never be the Westmoreland

1 County that it used to be. Unfortunately, those days have
2 changed. You know, industry has changed; the community has
3 changed; the Internet has changed. We need to poise our
4 county for what we're going to be in the future, and we are
5 at a pivotal point for that and can move forward.

6 And so I implore everybody, just as so many
7 others this morning, to consider the needs of our county
8 and the region in the assessment of the redistricting and
9 assessing that those supports continue so that we can
10 thrive and support the whole entire region, so.

11 Thank you so much for allowing me again this
12 morning, and I appreciate all of your time. Thank you.

13 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you so much,
14 Ms. Zalich. We really appreciate your time and your
15 testimony today. Thank you.

16 And our last in-person testifier is Bill Bretz,
17 Westmoreland County Republican Committee from New Stanton,
18 Pennsylvania.

19 Bill, thank you so much for joining us today. We
20 appreciate your time and willingness to provide testimony
21 to the Committee, and when you are comfortable and ready,
22 please begin.

23 MR. BRETZ: Okay. Thank you for having me this
24 morning. I appreciate the opportunity to testify. And I
25 respect my role in being all that is between you and

1 adjournment, so I will be concise.

2 This year's redistricting process will require
3 removing one of the congressional districts from the map,
4 and conventional thinking suggests it will impact western
5 Pennsylvania by consolidating a district into the
6 surrounding areas.

7 Westmoreland County is in the middle of a band of
8 southwestern Pennsylvania counties including Washington,
9 Greene, Fayette, Somerset, Bedford, and extending into
10 Armstrong, Indiana, and Blair that are similarly yoked by
11 history, economics, and conservative values that are
12 ideally suited to be constituents in any proposed
13 configuration of congressional districts.

14 The majority of southwestern Pennsylvania has a
15 common economic heritage rooted in coal, coke, glass, rail,
16 forestry, and agriculture, and an economic future
17 prominently featuring natural gas development and the
18 supporting industries -- transportation and distribution
19 and agriculture -- all anchored by a vibrant
20 entrepreneurial base of small business owners driving the
21 development, with Allegheny County and its large
22 metropolitan area and suburbs serving both then and now as
23 a consumer of the goods and services from the surrounding
24 areas and a significant contrast with its more rural
25 neighbors in their values and needs.

1 The differences between the majority of
2 southwestern Pennsylvania counties are manifest in the
3 patterns of political party affiliations seen in voter
4 registration trends in recent years, with Allegheny County
5 remaining more democratic and surrounding counties becoming
6 Republican majorities after decades of change. While I
7 don't see this as a partisan matter, I do think that party
8 affiliation is something most people hold very deeply, and
9 those values shift over time and they are reflective in how
10 they vote and what they deem as important for their
11 representatives to carry with them to Washington. So in
12 light of me being the representative of the Republican
13 Committee, I am using those party affiliation statistics to
14 support my data.

15 While congressional districts must shift due to
16 the census results, the most desirable configurations
17 retain a consolidation of the counties in a manner similar
18 to those currently configured, which best captures the
19 economic and social values of the regions.

20 My submitted testimony is amplified with the
21 addition of data from the Pennsylvania Department of
22 State's website on "Voting & Election Statistics," which
23 reflects the conservative shift in voter registrations from
24 counties in the current 13th and 14th Congressional Districts
25 from the period of the last census in 2010 to May 2021.

1 In my home county of Westmoreland, we have seen
2 a shift of 66,000 people from Democrat to Republican.
3 Washington County has seen a shift of 42,000; Greene,
4 10,000; Fayette, 36,000; Somerset, 14,000; and Cambria,
5 30,000 people, while Allegheny County has remained
6 substantially unchanged in the direction that their party
7 affiliations are going.

8 While redistricting should not be a partisan
9 matter, these trends in voter registration affirm the
10 commonality of the electors and their views in the 13th and
11 14th Districts and that their interests are well represented
12 as presently construed. The inclusion of any portion of
13 Allegheny County in a district with Westmoreland would
14 compromise the representation of both populations, because
15 the interests of the populations are so divergent and would
16 serve only to dilute the voices of the minority area in the
17 developed district.

18 The preferred congressional district for my home
19 county is one that encompasses the current 14th District as
20 well as the eastern portion of Westmoreland County, making
21 us a whole entity again, and any portion of Cambria or
22 Somerset that might be required to meet the requirement for
23 district population, because it would preserve our voice in
24 Washington by ensuring that the districts share common
25 interests and needs throughout. Alternatively, a

1 consolidation of all of Westmoreland County with the
2 13th District to our east would be acceptable for the same
3 reasons.

4 I would like to conclude by thanking you for the
5 opportunity again to testify, and I appreciate the efforts
6 earlier in the year of the State Government Committee as
7 they reviewed the PA elections process. I found it to be
8 very enlightening to me and my constituents, and I
9 appreciate the thoroughness with which you reviewed that
10 matter.

11 Thank you all.

12 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you so much,
13 Bill. We really appreciate your time and your willingness
14 to come out and testify.

15 With that, that was our last testifier. We have
16 read into the record the public comments we have had.

17 I'll throw it over to Chairman Conklin for final
18 remarks.

19 MINORITY CHAIRMAN CONKLIN: I again just want to
20 thank everyone for coming out. It was very informative,
21 and most of all, it shows that we really do believe in an
22 open democracy.

23 Thank you.

24 MAJORITY CHAIRMAN GROVE: Thank you.

25 I also want to again thank each and every

1 testifier. This kind of wraps up our western swing of
2 regional hearings throughout Pennsylvania for the western
3 region, including the southwest. You can continue to
4 submit written testimony until October 12th. We find it
5 invaluable to learn about the local areas, their
6 communities of interest, and where they think their
7 communities are located to help us better be map drawers
8 moving forward.

9 I would also like to thank the State Theatre
10 Center for the Arts for hosting and Representative Dowling
11 for hosting. Matt is also a Member of the State Government
12 Committee, so we greatly appreciate his leadership and his
13 willingness to host this committee.

14 We look forward to continuing the public process
15 in other regions of the Commonwealth in the coming months.
16 I invite those in attendance or viewing at home to follow
17 those hearings as well. They will be posted at
18 paredistricting.com. And again, you will be able to submit
19 communities of interest and eventually in the near future
20 be able to actually submit maps as well for us to review,
21 and all of that will be made public.

22 So again, we thank you for your time, and we are
23 adjourned.

24
25 (At 10:12 a.m., the public hearing adjourned.)

1 I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings
2 are a true and accurate transcription produced from video
3 on the said proceedings and that this is a correct
4 transcript of the same.

5
6
7 *Debra B. Miller*

8 Debra B. Miller

9 Transcriptionist

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