

Testimony of Etta Albright (Southwest Regional Hearing)

Regardless of the titles or labels used for identification and to represent roles and responsibilities in this Commonwealth of Pennsylvania there is one title that is of most significance and must be esteemed above all other labels. That title and word is citizen. It's the one word under which all else becomes significant and measurable. Citizen given reason and meaning to fair and equal representation. It's the one word that justifies the taking of a census every 10 years to guide the processes that provide for equal and fair representation for every citizen. It's the one word that provides the foundation for governance.

Given an understanding that the meaning of life is an occurrence of time, space and energy, imagine that time, space and energy is entitled (as a citizen) to equal accessibility to essentials/resources for survival, and equal opportunity for thriving/striving toward individual fulfillment unique to that citizen's capability, capacity, reasoning and consent of the will.

Losing sight for each Pennsylvania citizens has resulted in a power grab between the two major political parties creating the reality that the founding fathers feared most. Even in the beginning of our country's independence, the ensuing partisan battles led George Washington to warn of "the baneful effects of the spirit of party" in his Farewell Address as president of United States. Washington was wise but his warning went unheeded for it only took about 22 years for Gerrymandering; using the census for party and special interest power while neglecting the needs and unmet needs of others. This has resulted in poverty, unhealthy conditions, unsafe conditions, ill will and an assault on truth and trust in governance.

In a serious and respectful phone discussion with an area representative whose district includes parts of Cambria County, I asked how he viewed two opposing municipalities in his district with one reflecting opulence and the other being labeled the poorest city in PA. He cited a transient population in the impoverished municipality is caused by people leaving overcrowded home space with waiting lists so long no more names are being taken. They seek available housing here until space in their home area becomes available then they leave. I asked if there could be any consideration for inviting people in need of essentials for sustainability to come with the intention of living, working, playing, learning and enjoying life here, where resources are plentiful for sustainability if, first and foremost, resources are used with public health, well-being and safety in mind.

If Redistricting and Reapportionment were based on visioning sustainable communities underscored by public health, well-being and safety it could cause a domino in neighboring communities/districts over Pennsylvania, then across the nation and around the globe.

Independence started in Pennsylvania why not fair districts visioning sustainable communities holistically.

I would hope that Pennsylvanians eating a banana or pineapple or using any product made outside the state would be thinking of the people who picked it, made it, delivered it etc. This is empathy and something missing from the process of governance that ignores and oppresses some for the benefit and gain of others.

Redistricting and Reapportionment must start with addressing needs and unmet needs across the state. Infrastructures should be worked upon collectively and collaboratively with unmet needs for sustainability prioritized. There should be no room for partisanship with it's us against them. We need respect for each other when we don't agree. Historically it's been repeated that some politicians referred to party based disagreement and those who disagree as the "loyal opposition."

If the LRC focuses on visioning sustainable communities underscored by public health, well-being and safety across Pennsylvania, boundary lines can be established by taking inventory of resources and recognizing the need to have as efficient use and distribution of those that cover essential needs as possible without causing damaging harm to humans or the environment. This will set the stage for the changes that are needed to do our part to curtail human activities contributing to global warming and climate change. Only through collaboration and cooperation will governance be effective. Gerrymandering must end.