



NORTH CENTRAL
REGIONAL HEARING

Northcentral Regional Hearing

Written testimony (as of 10/8/21) submitted by:

1. Robert R.

Wellsboro, PA

To simplify district boundaries, impartiality, and congruence given existing county and township government and lines, districts should be set to take on the boundaries of existing counties, then the boundaries of existing townships and municipalities to balance population representation across the state. Population sizes of all townships and municipalities should be known first, then math/computer models can do the rest. Squarish to roundish districts are preferred to elongated ones that give the appearance of gerrymandering.

2. Steven B., Centre County Chapter of Democratic Socialists of PA

State College, PA

I am the chair of the Electoral Working Group from Centre County DSA. I speak as a resident and voter in Centre County and the State College area. I have seen firsthand the broad impacts of partisan gerrymandering especially in terms of representation and reapportionment. Representation because four house districts represent Centre County with three of the four members being Republican even though a majority of voters voted Democrat in the last election. Reapportionment because of how it affects social programs like education. The State College Area School District (SCASD) should not be represented by four different house members!

Therefore, I urge this body to draw fair, impartial maps and to include their Democratic colleagues in the map-drawing process.

3. Kathleen O.

Lemont, PA

I've lived in Centre County, in the State College area, for about 50 years. I'm writing to ask you who are redistricting PA to consider starting with a fresh map, emphasizing proportionality, and to keep Centre County in one congressional district.

Because Pennsylvania has changed so much in the last ten years, you need to start with a blank map. Our population has shifted, some counties losing up to 11% and others increasing up to 21% of their population. Erie lost its place as the state's 4th largest city to Reading. With such big changes, you can't just start with the old map and wiggle the lines around and expect to come up with a fair map. And it's not just where the population is now in Pennsylvania, it's who is making up our population. Pennsylvania was almost 80% white in 2010, and now it's 73.5%. That's a big shift that some residents, especially in rural counties, may not be aware of. The Hispanic population climbed from 2.4% to 8.1%. In fact, PA as a whole grew by about 300,000 people and that's very close to the about 300,000 more people of Hispanic heritage who live in our state now. Also, starting with blank maps indicates to residents that they, not incumbents, matter the most in this process. Pennsylvanians deserve new, and fair maps

Your redistricting process should emphasize proportionality. I realize drawing legislative district maps is extremely complex, with more data available than ever before. But the basic rule should be that groups should get the seats commensurate with their percentage of the vote. The 2010 Congressional map was a national laughingstock. With slightly more than 50% of votes cast for Democratic candidates, Republicans “won” 13 of 18 seats. That’s what got my attention about this issue; I was then a sixth grade social studies teacher, who taught “one person, one vote” for decades. I was totally at a loss to explain that election result to my 11 year old students. What kind of democracy was this? I realize the courts fixed that egregious map, but please, this time around, aim for a basic fair reckoning of votes = seats.

I lastly ask that you as much as possible keep counties together. Splitting Centre County’s more urban voters in half and tacking us on to two large rural districts goes against the compact and contiguous requirements in the State Constitution and looks a lot like gerrymandering. I’ve spent the last 5 years standing outside polls collecting signatures against gerrymandering, and almost 100% of voters are horrified by that process, asking, “Is that even legal?” Though Centre County’s voters are almost evenly split amongst the two parties, because Democratic voices are diluted into two large rural more Republican districts, our representatives can basically ignore constituents outside their parties, as they win elections by huge percentage margins.

You have been tasked with an immense project. And I thank you for doing it! Please start with a blank slate, emphasize proportionality and follow what your constituents want: fair and representative districts. As all your social studies teachers have taught you, fair voting is the basis of our representative democracy. You are charged with delivering that for the citizens of Pennsylvania. Please do your BEST.

4. Brooklyn J., Campus Vote Project Cheltenham, PA

I have lived in the city of State College for close to 2 months. I am also participating in a college student Redistricting Fellowship with Campus Vote Project, an organization that is empowering college students to have a voice in their state’s redistricting process. Since my move in date on August 16, 2021, I have been exposed to people from all walks of life with thousands of interests and thousands of stories to share. Being here, though, has definitely been a culture shock. Going from a predominantly African American community to one full of people who do not share similar experiences as me was frightening, yet eye opening. Although we have our differences, we should still be equally and fairly represented by those with political power. The testimony I shall share with you all is to advocate to keep my community together, so we can continue to elect candidates of our choice.

The population of my campus community is roughly 42,000, which makes it the 12th largest city in the state of Pennsylvania. 82.44% of residents are White, 10.91% are Asian, 3.89% are Black/African American, and 2.31% are other races/nationalities. The city’s inhabitants reside in on-campus dormitories, that include South, Pollock, North, East, and West, off-campus apartments that can be found on West College Ave, East Calder Way, a or a little farther away such as on Blue Course Drive and Toftrees Avenue, and frat house row is home to many Greek life lovers. The boundaries of this area include Blue Course Drive, Westerly Parkway, Loop Road, and Fox Hollow Road. Many residents are between the ages of 17 and their early 30s, including part-time and full-time students, as well as young professionals. Despite the large population and mass diversity, State College has a poverty rate of 44.86%. 57.75% of the people below the poverty line are Black/African American.

Many celebrations that occur here in State College are very exciting. Events like FET, THON weekend, Welcome Week, and more are great ways to bring our campus community together. On campus, student organizations and clubs offer social events for people to come out and enjoy the company of others. Many people meet lifelong friends at these social events. Penn State has over 1,000 student organizations, so it is easy to find a community of people with similar interests, while allowing students to voice their opinions and unapologetically be themselves. If Penn State strives to keep its students together by offering so many outlets to allow their voices to be heard, elected officials should strive just as much to keep us together. The area of Penn State, in and of itself, is very unproblematic, with a crime rate of 10 per 1,000 residents, which means your chance of being a victim to crime is 1 in 97. Although Penn State is not a picture-perfect community, like any community, I have had a safe time here and honestly, I am having one of the best times of my life. Being in State College has allowed me to explore who I am and develop ideas on who I aspire to become in the years ahead. Many students feel the same way, too.

All of the information shared through my testimony should be a driving factor to keep our campus community together. The Penn State community brings learning, growth, development, and enjoyment to thousands and drawing lines to break up this community could lead to negative outcomes. Ethically and legally, we should be able to remain unified and vote for who we desire, despite the color of our skin or circumstances we face. Moreover, I want to stress the importance of keeping colleges and universities, as well as their nearby communities, intact as Communities of Interest throughout the redistricting process. College students share similar concerns related to policy issues and, as such, should be represented by those who will seek to understand and advocate for their needs. I appreciate you all for taking the time to hear me out and I hope you can keep Penn State and other colleges and universities together through our state's ongoing redistricting process.

Thank you.

5. Bintou F., Campus Vote Project Meadville, PA

I am a sophomore at Allegheny College. I am also participating in a college student Redistricting Fellowship with Campus Vote Project, an organization that is empowering college students to have a voice in their state's redistricting process. Allegheny is a small private liberal arts college in Meadville, Pennsylvania. The surrounding Allegheny College community begins on Park Avenue and Chestnut Street and ends on Park Avenue and Griffith Lane. Allegheny College has been embedded into the community since 1815. Thankfully, Allegheny College is intact within singular districts at the Congressional, State Senate, and State House levels, so I am advocating to keep our community together as a Community of Interest moving forward. I also believe that all colleges and universities throughout the Commonwealth should be considered in a similar manner as part of our redistricting process.

The Allegheny College community has developed into a diverse community that consists of 1,700 students. 55% of whom identify as women, and 32% of students who identify as BIPOC, or Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color. This diverse and inclusive community creates a welcoming environment for all prospective students, current students and past students. Students have access to educational, personal and health related resources to improve the overall quality of life at Allegheny. This allows students to feel welcomed and creates a safe space. When students have a safe space, it empowers them to work hard and to give back to their community. Allegheny students are known for

their contributions to the community. For example, a group of students organized a series of videos and resources to help women in need, specifically access to housing and employment opportunities. This is one of many reasons why I am asking you to keep my community together as part of our redistricting process.

Allegheny College is more than just a district, a special place to be. It is a place where students work together to make the community a better place. It is a place where professors always want the best for students, even if it means sacrificing something they love. It is my home.

Thank you for listening to my testimony. I pray that you keep my district together, and that you consider all colleges and universities throughout the Commonwealth as Communities of Interest moving forward.

Northcentral Regional Hearing

Written Testimony Received 10/11/21

Shane F., National Council of Prison Locals representing the Correctional Professionals of the Federal Bureau of Prisons

Watsontown, PA

Since the opening of USP Lewisburg in 1932, coupled with the expansion of the Federal Correctional Complex in Allenwood, the United States Government, and more specifically, the Federal Bureau of Prisons has established itself as the largest and most consistent employer in Central Pennsylvania. The facilities mentioned above has established safe and community sustaining neighborhoods which have consistently been sought out as 'good' and 'safe' areas to raise a family. As the largest employer, we have established ourselves as good partners to our communities and businesses, continue to immerse ourselves in our local school districts, and are active civic minded citizens who respect the model governments we have established and actively participate in. The vast majority of our employees are considered 'homesteaders' meaning they do and will remain anchors in the community for their entire lives, even after retirement, just as they have continued to do for nearly 90 years.

We have kept our neighbors safe and would be honored to continue to do so far into the future. We believe our communities are anchors in the central part of the state and are currently well represented by the congressional districts as currently outlined.

To redistrict these areas would be counterproductive and disruptive to long established communities in the Northumberland, Union, and Lycoming County areas.

Sincerely,
Shane F.
National President
Council of Prison Locals
And Life-Long Resident of Central Pennsylvania

Written Testimony Received 10/12/21

Rev. Carol C.
Mount Jewett, PA

I realise that there is a very limited opportunity for making a 'district' out of the vast rural center of PA, but it is very clear that the Republican efforts to gerrymander everyone who does not support their radical agenda out of existence as citizens will extend even to the deep-red areas of our state. It is convenient that reliably 'blue' areas like State College can be bundled in with the counties in which I live and move (thereby canceling out their votes), but it's not how things should be in a democracy. Those of us who still believe in democracy and resist the Republican drive for permanent minority rule deserve to have OUR voices heard too. Non-partisan election committees need to be in effect to subvert this drive at every level. Leaving redistricting to our current disgracefully-unbalanced state legislature is as anti-democratic a move as you could be making at this crucial time for our nation. The shenanigans have to stop if America is to survive. I am tired of having to be ashamed of my country, once a light to the nations, now a sad and shabby testament to greed, ignorance, stupidity, inequality and lies. Fix it!

Written Testimony Received 10/12/21

Micaela A.

Boalsburg, PA

Citizens are silenced and our votes are nullified if our districts are gerri-mandered to the point where our communities are torn into shreds --for the unconstitutional purpose of one party controlling the results of an election over another different group of citizens...Communities have a civil right to be heard through our votes and through equal and fair representation.

Is the United States still a Democracy or is it a dictatorship of those who wield unjust power and control over the electoral process?.

Written Testimony Received 10/12/21

Sharon B.

Mansfield, PA

2-3 years ago, I did some presentations for Fair Districts, PA. We were trying to get our local townships and boroughs to sign declarations supporting a constitutional amendment to redo our redistricting process by establishing an independent citizens commission. I learned a lot in the process. It did not matter that the townships were predominantly Republican. Everyone was interested in establishing transparency and fairness to our districts. This is not a partisan issue. We need to abide by the PA Constitution, and make our districts compact, contiguous, and the process should not be run by politicians themselves. (Or, if they are involved, which seems probable, the entire process has to be transparent, with lots of public input.