



Northeast Regional Hearing

Written testimony (as of 10/14/21) submitted by:

1. Clayton B.

Montrose, PA

Voters have the right to choose their representatives. Representatives do not and should not have the right to choose their voters. End partisan gerrymandering. Districts should be drawn or created only by 3rd Party and/or nonpartisan entities.

2. Sharon N.

Brackney, PA

Asking people to draw a map is pointless and misleading without any information about things like population distribution.

Communities of interest sounds like "friends and family," and should be irrelevant to this process. I hope this isn't what is deemed "transparent." It is counter to objectivity. Redistricting should be blind to characteristics or beliefs of the individuals in the district.

I suggest that districts conform to established county boundaries when possible. I can see that this is like juggling jello. According to the map, this is done in some cases but fails downstate and especially with districts 14 and 18. At least one county shows three districts, 9, 4 and 6. Where county boundaries don't work, to reduce the amount of manipulation guidelines should be set. For example, ideally no district should have more than five sides and its length and width should not exceed a ratio of 1:2 or 2:1.

I look forward to Pennsylvania demonstrating leadership and setting a high standard for the redistricting process. Specifically, appointing and enthusiastically supporting a nonpartisan committee that is independent, ethical, unbiased and unencumbered by favors or politics. Redistricting should NOT factor in the party affiliations or other beliefs. Gerrymandering creates districts that look like random jigsaw puzzle pieces. No one is fooled to think it is anything but contrived. It is admittance that its supporters could not win elections on a level playing field. Set the example and do it right!

3. Pike County Commissioners

Milford, PA

Dear Chairmen Grove and Conklin, and esteemed members of Pennsylvania's House State Government Committee.

We, the Pike County Commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony to you today on behalf of the taxpayers and residents we represent, whose lives and livelihoods will be affected by any actions taken to redraw the boundaries of Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District.

It is critical to our constituents – and to the efficient functioning of county government – that the State Government Committee, members of the Pennsylvania House and Senate, and Governor Wolf carefully and fully consider the impacts of their decisions on this matter.

Currently, Pennsylvania's 8th Congressional District is comprised of the rural counties of Pike, Wayne, northern Monroe, and parts of Lackawanna and Luzerne. These areas share significant economic and

cultural similarities, which intrinsically link our communities and enhance the quality of life of our residents.

Redrawing the 8th District's lines to, perhaps, group Pike County with larger, urban communities such as those within the Lehigh Valley, would diminish our voice in important decisions affecting taxpayers and visitors to the area.

We, therefore, request that the 8th District remain whole as the General Assembly and Governor Wolf complete Pennsylvania's redistricting process.

Using population as a guidepost, for example, Pike County is most similar to our neighboring counties of Wayne, and northern Monroe. Specifically, U.S. Census figures show that as of April of 1, 2020 Pike's population was 58,535 and Wayne's 51,155. Conversely, the population of Northampton County in the Lehigh Valley was 312,951, or more than five times that of Pike's and Wayne's respectively.

Economically, communities within the 8th District currently share tourism and hospitality as core industries. The Pocono Mountains region, in which Pike is very effectively served by the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau (PMVB), has the highest tourism-related labor income and employment in Pennsylvania. According to data gathered by PMVB, tourism supports a total of 35,201 jobs in the Poconos, or 24.5% of all jobs in the Pocono region of Pike, Wayne, Monroe and Carbon counties. Woodloch Resort, one of the largest employers in our area, is located near the border of Pike and Wayne counties, providing family-sustaining jobs to many local residents.

Geographically, both Pike and Wayne counties within the 8th District share natural resources and environmental features, such as Lake Wallenpaupack, the upper Delaware River, and a large acreage of State Gamelands and Forestlands, which support our area's tourism economy, and are the basis of our cultural and historical traditions of fishing, hunting, and other forms of outdoor recreation. From a governance perspective, the commonalities among the communities within Pennsylvania's 8th District also provide opportunities to partner on projects related to county services and infrastructure, creating efficiencies of benefit to local taxpayers. Examples of this include grant applications and the sharing of information that results in solutions to challenges unique to counties of similar size and demographics.

In order to preserve the clear economic, cultural, and governmental benefits outlined today, which exist within Pennsylvania's 8th District, we respectfully request the General Assembly and Governor Wolf to keep our District whole as it completes the State's redistricting process and draws the next congressional map.

We, again, thank Chairmen Grove and Conklin, and the members of Pennsylvania's House State Government Committee, for the opportunity to provide this testimony regarding Pennsylvania's redistricting process.

Sincerely,
Pike County Commissioners
Chairman Matthew Osterberg
Vice Chairman Ronald Schmalzle
Commissioner Steve Guccini

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

I am a sophomore at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania's Crawford County. I am participating in a college student Redistricting Fellowship with the Campus Vote Project, an organization that is empowering college students to have a voice in their state's redistricting process. I am also a Vote Everywhere Ambassador with The Andrew Goodman Foundation, an organization that is working to register voters, reduce voting barriers, and tackle important social justice issues on college and university campuses across the country.

Today, I am advocating for all college and university campuses, including nearby communities where large numbers of students reside, to be intact within singular districts at the Congressional, State Senate, and State House levels throughout the Commonwealth.

College students are young individuals, training to become active members of society. Each student deserves an equal opportunity to vote, to have their voice heard, and to be represented by elected officials who will seek to understand and advocate for their needs. Colleges and universities are indeed an integral community of interest and should be considered as such as part of our state's redistricting process. Unfortunately, this is not yet a reality on college and university campuses where they are split between multiple districts. Split districts dilute the voting power of students and fail to represent the needs and concerns of students. If students feel as though they are not accurately represented within their community, they will be less inclined to vote and engage in civic life. Failure of representation affects voter turnout in local elections. How can college students become active members of society if they are not treated as active members of society with the same rights and privileges of others in neighboring communities?

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

5. Brooklynn J., Campus Vote Project
Cheltenham, PA

I am a participant 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. Today, I am hoping that I can convince you to keep colleges and universities throughout Pennsylvania together as Communities of Interest in the state's redistricting process. Many students attend college as a way to connect with people from all around the world, figure out who they are, and better understand who they want to become in the near future. This idea is why many higher education institutions put forth and heavily exercise the idea of community engagement and unity. If an institution can advocate for a safe, sound, and unified community amongst its members, those who hold political power within our state should advocate for similar objectives.

Over the last 30 years, there has been racial inequity built into the redistricting maps of Pennsylvania, which hinders marginalized communities across the state. Being that constituents now have the opportunity to participate and have a voice in their state's redistricting process, our voices should be listened to, considered, and applied when developing maps that include everyone of all backgrounds, ideas, beliefs, and faiths. This form of civic engagement will allow for the future production of equitable

maps that will more than likely combat the issue of packing and cracking amongst our BIPOC communities.

The urgent need for racially equitable maps is long overdue. These maps should not only keep current colleges and universities across the state together but rejoin any previously separated colleges and universities so that the voting process is fair and just. Minority groups have been the victims of broken promises when it comes to voting and the rights constitutionally granted to them. The demographics of minority voters has greatly shifted, being that communities of color are growing 12 times faster than those of its white counterparts, and they will continue to shift as the years progress; this should be recognized when drawing our next Congressional maps. The current district lines in the state of Pennsylvania do not adequately represent all of its demographic groups, and this should be a call for immediate action.

According to Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the right to vote cannot be abridged "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude," and it also grants judicial relief to those who feel as if their government officials are limiting their rights to vote due to race, color or membership in a language minority group. These poorly drawn maps are limiting BIPOC communities to elect representatives of their choice because officials are choosing their voters rather than allowing the voters to choose them. This is unconstitutional and should not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Being that the next Congressional maps will be in place for the next 10 years, everyone with a voice needs to be heard and understood no matter your skin color or ethnic background. A majority of Pennsylvania's constituents are growing to be minority groups, and this is a valid reason why they should be considered when giving seats at the table for these types of democratic decisions. Biases and personal decisions should not be a factor when trying to gain and/or maintain political power. The moral and ethical ideas of equal representation and justice for all should be the main goal of government officials. If this mindset is embedded within you all, members of the committee, we could develop into a unified state that prospers tremendously in the years to come.

I hope that my testimony has laid on your heart and mind, and you will consider keeping university and college communities all throughout the state of Pennsylvania together when developing this year's maps. Thank you for your time and consideration.

6. Laurie M.
Stevensville, PA

I am interested in the redistricting because I would like it to be done with an eye to fairly representing all districts in the state so that the result reflects the will of the voters. No more drawing districts to minimize the voting power of any particular group of people or any particular party(gerrymandering). It shouldn't matter what political party holds the majority in our legislature, the redistricting should be done fairly!

7. Jeffrey Z., Retired Military

Dalton/Wyoming, PA

Do not allow party affiliation to be a factor in determining voting districts. This allows partisan gerrymandering which creates voter apathy as voters feel their vote does not count. It also pushes both parties to the extreme as the only election that really counts is the primary in these gerrymandered districts.