

## **Testimony of Harry Haas (Northeast Regional Hearing)**

My name is Harry Haas, and I am a resident of Kingston Borough, Luzerne County. I have served as a member of Luzerne County Council for 10 years, and in full disclosure, unsuccessfully ran in the 2020 Republican primary for Congress in the judicially-gerrymandered PA8. I do not plan on running again. By trade I am a social studies teacher, so I'm very concerned about districts that significantly lean disproportionately toward registered voters of one political party over the other. My testimony will reflect on redistricting from each of these four viewpoints: elected official, citizen, candidate, and teacher.

As an elected official representing my entire county, I actually don't mind that we are split between two congressional districts; both congressional offices have been very helpful to me during my term of service, and from a purely county standpoint, it has actually doubled our representation in Washington.

As a citizen—and a former candidate whose views wanted to reflect that of the people—living on the edge of PA8, I have less in common with Lackawanna County and its neighboring counties that view Scranton City as the region's center. Those on the committee who are unfamiliar with the Northeast will find it puzzling that despite having a shared history, common industry, easy access through the 81 corridor, and similar demographics, people from the major cities of Wilkes-Barre and Scranton do not interact like many other metropolitan areas. Culturally, the new district should reflect that. Susquehanna County from the PA-12th should be placed in the eighth, the portion of Monroe County currently in the PA7 should as well. The northern Wyoming Valley communities of Duryea, Avoca, Dupont, Pittston, Pittston Twp., Jenkins Township, Hughestown and Yatesville are located in Luzerne County, but many people there read Lackawanna County newspapers, have jobs in Lackawanna County, and participate in community events of the communities near Scranton. Culturally speaking, belonging to the PA8 would probably be a better fit.

Lastly, as a social studies teacher who is very familiar with the culture groups and geography Pennsylvania, Carbon and portions of Schuylkill County could be added to the PA8 since they tie in with the geography and tourism of the Poconos. The remaining portions of Luzerne County should be represented in the PA9. Bradford, Sullivan, Wyoming, and Columbia counties have more in common with northern and western Luzerne County. People living there are more likely shop in Wilkes-Barre and view it as the regional center. In order to offset the additional population added to the PA9, the counties of Dauphin, Lebanon and Berks should be merged into the neighboring PA12 and/or PA7 because they are distinctly out of the Northeast. Their commerce and culture are more linked to the Lehigh Valley or lower Susquehanna Valley.

As I wrap up my testimony, voters in the Northeast are willing to elect candidates from the opposing party of registration. Even the areas that have larger concentrations of Democrats will occasionally vote for a Republican if the right candidate comes along. We also have Democrat office holders who have strong followings in traditionally conservative and rural areas, so a 55-45 registration split here might look more like a 50-50 split in other parts of the state.

In general, I would hope that this committee would strive to craft districts that try to keep parity with the registrations from opposite parties. Elected officials who need votes from both sides of the political aisle will be more accountable to the people at large and will focus more on getting the job done rather than posturing to the more extreme ends of our two-party system.

Commerce, Culture, Geography, and Registration are the four most important factors to evaluate in the weeks ahead.