

## **Testimony of Commissioner John R. Moyer (Northeast Regional Hearing)**

My thoughts on congressional redistricting are simple in concept, but, perhaps, more difficult to effectuate. I represent Monroe County with a 2020 population of 168,337 people. First, I believe all of Monroe County should be in the same congressional district. Second, Monroe County should be placed in a district where the needs and challenges are similar to those faced in Monroe.

Monroe County is currently split between two congressional districts – 07 and 08. District 07 serves all of Lehigh and Northampton Counties but only part of Monroe. Seven complete municipalities in Monroe fall under District 07 and twelve complete municipalities fall under 08. One of our municipalities (Smithfield Township) falls partially in 07 and partially in 08. It is bad enough that Monroe is served by two congressional districts, but one of our municipalities, by itself, suffers the same fate. Residents on one side of the street are in one district while their neighbors are in another. The differentiation is broken down by census tracts, a concept completely foreign to most people. It stands to reason that splitting a county leads to confusion over representation. Residents should not be required to know the census tract in which they reside to know who speaks for them in Washington, DC.

A second argument for keeping Monroe County in the same congressional district is that by not doing so, Monroe's political strength is fractured. District 07 serves approximately 64,000 Monroe County residents or approximately 9% of the total residents in District 07. District 08 serves approximately 104,000 Monroe County residents or 15% of the total population in District 08. Neither of these percentages presents a compelling reason why a representative would need to be concerned with the wants and needs of Monroe County residents. Representatives could be elected without a single vote from Monroe County. Monroe County is never going to be the elephant in the room based on its population. However, if the population in each congressional district going forward is close to the 706,000 in each district based on the 2010 census, keeping Monroe's 168,337 residents in the same district would bring its percentage up to 24%. This is much better than the 9% and 15% referenced above.

Monroe County is nowhere close to having a enough residents to warrant its own representative. Thus, it becomes critical that Monroe share representation with municipalities and counties with similar characteristics and needs. Part of Monroe (as previously described) shares a representative in District 08 with Lackawanna, part of Luzerne, Pike, and Wayne Counties. District 07 includes part of Monroe and all of Lehigh and Northampton Counties.

The characteristics and needs of Monroe County are much more closely aligned with the other counties in District 08 than those in District 07. Monroe County's economy is highly reliant on the resort/recreation industry and jobs in other service industries. At the same time, ours is a

rural county with many of our townships more heavily populated than our boroughs. We have no cities. We have struggled with the rapid influx of residents from New York and New Jersey. By far, more people are employed in the hospitality industry than in any other. Pike County, and to a lesser extent, Wayne Counties are in the same boat. Monroe County is a member of NEPA Alliance that serves Monroe, Pike, Wayne, Luzerne, Lackawanna, Carbon, and Schuylkill Counties. This economic development organization recognizes the similarity of needs in all its constituent counties. On the other hand, Northampton and Lehigh Counties (the bulk of District 07) have very different needs and challenges from Monroe's. A significant part of their economies is made up of jobs in health care, higher education, warehousing and transportation services.

In years past, geographic features like rivers or mountains were relied on to separate one congressional district from another. Today, districts should be based on similarity of characteristics and need. The message is clear – keep Monroe County in a single congressional district and align us with counties like ours such as those serviced by NEPA Alliance.

John R. Moyer, Vice-Chairman  
Monroe County Commissioners