

Testimony to the Pennsylvania House Republican Caucus Southeast Hearing on Congressional Redistricting.

Distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak with you today about the important topic of Congressional redistricting. The task ahead of you, and the rest of our representatives in Harrisburg is a difficult one, and I appreciate the effort you are committing to learn all you can about how your decisions might impact Pennsylvanians across the Commonwealth.

Like my fellow Commissioner, Gene DiGirolamo, I am a life-long resident of Bucks County. I have served as an elected official at the local, and now County levels for 18 years and am very proud to represent my County here today.

Bucks County is one of the three original counties created at the time of Pennsylvania's founding almost 340 years ago. It is impossible to tell the history of Pennsylvania without including the history of Bucks County, and even the founding of our republic has deep roots here in our county. Our history is one of the things which unifies this county and one of the reasons why I feel strongly about keeping it contiguous in any redistricting. In addition to our history, Bucks County communities are knitted together through economic and social ties, including strong organizations of police and first responders who work collaboratively to pursue grants and other opportunities to help them better serve our residents. All of these connections and efforts will be made much more difficult should Bucks County be divided.

For us as County Commissioners, having one United States Representative for our county is extremely important. Having one representative allows us to communicate more clearly about county issues, and advocate for our residents more effectively. In addition, having one representative also impacts our residents and local elected officials. They too benefit from a system that gives Bucks County one recognized voice in our nation's capitol. The creators of previous district boundaries have recognized this benefit as well, and not just as it applies to Bucks County. A look at the existing map of Pennsylvania congressional districts shows that the overwhelming majority of our 67 counties, 56 in fact, are kept intact. And of those counties who are divided between districts, three of them are counties larger than Bucks County who have too many people to be a district in and of themselves. This explains why they have had to be divided up between different districts, but even in those cases, the effort was made to keep them as whole as possible. Bucks County's population of approximately 640,000 makes us the fourth largest county in Pennsylvania, and also means that we already contain about 84% of what the population of a new congressional district should be. What's more, because we are surrounded by counties larger than us, or counties with larger populations than other counties in Pennsylvania, any map which divides up Bucks County will necessitate dividing up other counties around us as well in order to make districts of the proper size. This would lead to a domino effect, creating more fractured counties, not fewer.

I join Commissioner DiGirolamo in imploring you to keep Bucks County intact in the process of redistricting. We are representatives of different parties, but we are united in our commitment to this cause.

Thank you again for your time and efforts.

Bob Harvie

Bucks County Commissioner