

Good Afternoon, Representative Grove and Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Congressional re-districting process.

My name is Joseph Chapmond. I am a resident of Chester County. My family has lived in the Oxford-Nottingham area since 2003.

We know that Pennsylvania is losing one Congressional district in 2022. Therefore, 17 new Districts must be created, each with a larger population of about 147,000 residents per District. This is an opportunity to create more appropriate Congressional Districts in our Southeast PA region.

I am speaking today about the current 6th Congressional District and how that region of PA should be re-drawn.

Priorities of "Compactness" and "Contiguity" are highly recommended by good-government groups and redistricting experts. Such districts are closer to the people and may reduce the appearance of partisan gerrymandering.

Another recommended priority for redistricting is "Communities of Interest." I will discuss this approach, using my own community as an example. I'm sure everyone thinks their community is "interesting." But we are talking about communities with a shared history or shared economic interests, land use, demographics, and so forth.

The Southwestern corner of Chester County, where I live, borders Maryland to the south, and Lancaster County to the west. The Oxford-Nottingham area is a rural community of about 7,000 people. We have working farms of up to 100 acres. Amish and Mennonite families are all around this area. There are many retirees and retirement communities around. And a fair amount of manufactured housing. It is a quiet, friendly, laid-back area.

Family incomes in this part of the Chester County trend below the Chester County averages, as you move further south and west. We have a few large employers: Herr Foods, The Tastykake bakery, and the Oxford Area School district. 10 miles to the East is Jennersville, with a grocery store, a few shops, and medical offices. Unfortunately, Tower Health has announced it is closing the Jennersville Hospital soon, leaving our community with a huge gap.

A bit further east is Kennett Square, home of the large mushroom industry.

My community of interest also includes Southern Lancaster County (Solanco)" just to the west and north. This includes Octoraro Creek, and small towns like Quarryville, Little Britain, Strasburg, Gap, Lampeter and Willow Street. These areas of Lancaster county are near the long border with Chester County. So even though we live in Chester County, (barely), Lancaster County is part of our life. We buy plants at Maple Shade. We walk the Enola Rail trail. We get house repairs from Amish carpenters. We go to the Lancaster DMV.

I can easily contrast this community of interest (Oxford-Nottingham-Solanco) with Chester County in total. The Chesco Population has increased by 7.1%, about 35,000 more people, since 2010. More population growth is expected, mostly in the Northeastern part of the County. (That is roughly the areas on or above Highway 30, and East of the Brandywine River.) Those areas in the Northeast have built up

its suburban footprint. It is now a large, growing, and affluent part of the county. They have a big retail base, and large corporations, and extensive medical facilities.

So, for "Communities of interest, I have to say the populous Northeastern part of Chester County has very little in common with my community of interest in Southern Chester County and Solanco. The Land use, income, industries, property taxes, - and of course values - are very different.

Therefore, I would request you to consider the following approach:

1) Replace the Current 6th Congressional District with a new District, that combines the Townships on both sides of the border between Chester and Lancaster Counties. This District would include the Communities in rural Southern Chester County - the Avon Grove, Kennett Consolidated, Oxford Area, and Unionville school districts. These historical agricultural areas - including the Pennsylvania Dutch and the mushroom industry, are communities of interest, with much more in common with Southern Lancaster County, and less in common with the rest of Chester County.

Also, this combination with Lancaster County will also help to meet the higher population for needed for new Congressional Districts. Neither Chester nor Lancaster County is large enough to be its own district.

2) In the larger, more populous Northeastern area of Chester County, a separate Congressional district should be created. That district would combine with another similar, and adjacent suburban county - such as Delaware County or parts of Montgomery County - as needed to get the required population target.

3) Finally, the Portion of the Current 6th District in Berks County should be removed. Berks County and the City of Reading has even less connection to Chester County, and is not a collar county around Philadelphia.

If communities of interest and shared values are important, I hope this this gives you a head start on how to make better Congressional districting in the Southeast PA Region.

Thanks for your time and consideration.