

NJ Legislative Apportionment Commission Hearing Statement
The College of New Jersey
10 December 2021

Good Morning,

My name is Brady Rivera. I am a lifelong resident of Mercer County, hailing originally from the City of Trenton and currently living in Hamilton Township. I'm here with a group of my neighbors and my friends from the Latino Action Network and Our Revolution Trenton Mercer.

As a native resident between these two municipalities and as a member of the Hispanic community, I have seen firsthand the demographics change throughout the years up to present day. Being born in Trenton, my family and I were part of the increase of Hispanics in the area, and since moving to Hamilton in 2006, we also made up the increase of the Hispanic population in Hamilton. Hispanics have largely been moving into Trenton and moving on to creating their own families into neighboring Hamilton, Ewing, and Hightstown.

And as a public health worker in Hamilton, I have firsthand witnessed the increase of Hispanics in Hamilton as well. Since working with the Hamilton Division of Health, I have been helping with the COVID-19 vaccination effort and translating services for Spanish-speaking residents, having met many individuals and families along the way. I have noticed that us Hispanics have had an increased presence in the municipalities, many who moved there from Trenton, and others who have even decided to resettle here from New York City, Jersey City, Union City, and other northern cities. This increase must be reflected in our representation in the NJ Legislature.

As per the 2020 Census, the Hispanic population has grown larger, making up a considerable plurality of the population. In my 14th Legislative District, Hispanics make up 15.43% of the district, doubling from 7.8%. In the 15th Legislative District, they make up almost a quarter of the population at 23.71%, increasing from a comparable 18.1% of the population. Yet despite making up a great portion of these districts, along with the Black and Asian populations, we hardly constitute any of the legislative seats in either district. Looking at the numbers statewide, Hispanics constitute almost 22% of the state, but only about 8% of Legislators.

This disparity is not special to only the Hispanic community - the Black and Asian communities are disproportionately represented. The Commission must keep the residents of New Jersey in mind when redrawing our districts lines and give to our residents the political power and representation that we have a right to. Hispanics, Black and Asian representation is vital to the healthy democracy that New Jersey has maintained, and vital to the engagement of the political process.

Good Morning everybody,

It's good to be back in front of you and even better to voice my concerns and demands in person. My name is Victor Miguel Rivera, I'm 19 years old from Hamilton and I'm a community organizer for the Latino Action Network and Co-chair of the communications committee for Our Revolution Trenton Mercer.

I'm here today advocating for Latino representation in the legislative maps and more specifically in district 14, the second fastest growing hispanic district in the state with a 98% increase in the proportion of latinos . Latinos continue to be disproportionately affected by New Jersey's lack of affordable housing, trapped in segregated school districts, skyrocketing drug prices and lack of access to everyday basic civil rights.

Fair representation matters in New Jersey because too often are decisions, like the redistricting effort before us, made without a single Latino at the table. Why do you think only 40% of the population turned out to vote in the gubernatorial elections this year? When we consistently show individuals that their vote doesn't matter, they fail to cast their ballot and ultimately lose access to critical funding, social programs, and most importantly the right to be heard and represented in a democracy.

Despite us representing 21.6%, of the population Latino representation lags in top political appointments in New Jersey. And before everyone here today, I present my testimony to a commission composed of zero Latinos, in a state where I'm represented by a legislature composed of only 8% Latinos.

However, there is now an opportunity for NJ to put forward a fair and accurate redistricting effort that can respect the power of the Latino vote. This is especially important for a new generation of Latinx voters with Latinx youth comprising 21.8% of NJ's school-age

children.

Despite the clear imbalance of economic prosperity and political representation between Latinos & whites in my home town, the redistricting process provides the opportunity to build a more equitable, inclusive and fairer New Jersey, one in which Latinos have appropriate representation at the state and federal levels. To be clear, I'm advocating for appropriate legislative districts. These districts must respect our communities of interest and ensure that our communities are neither "packed" nor "cracked," so that our influence is not diluted. The 2020 census confirmed what we have known for years; the future of New Jersey is Latino and it's time we received fair representation because Latinos are wide awake in the fight for fair representation in the garden state.

Hi, my name is Joe Marchica, I'm from Hamilton, and I co-chair Our Revolution Trenton Mercer. We're a grassroots group within a national network pushing for progressive policy, candidates, and change at all levels of government. I'm also here in solidarity with our allies, the Latino Action Network and the Fair Districts Project.

I'm here to ask you to help fix New Jersey's broken democracy. Our representatives are all but pre-selected by our primary election ballot format and by gerrymandered districts. The latter minimizes the number of competitive districts, setting the expectation that our legislative elections will be non-competitive.

Now, demographic changes over the past 10 years made for some surprises back on Nov 2nd. Even so, only 4 districts saw the incumbent party lose a seat: 2, 3, 8, 16. Add in three others that were closer than expected (11, 21, and 38), and we're up to 7. But this a DECADE since districts were drawn. It took THAT LONG to get only seven competitive elections, out of 40 districts.¹

This is not a healthy democracy. With so few competitive elections, people feel their vote doesn't matter. So they don't vote. To engage New Jerseyans in their government and elections, we must SHOW them their vote matters- not just tell them how important it is. Otherwise, our words ring hollow.

An example: LD16 was widely expected to be competitive this year, and both parties aggressively tried to turn out voters. Turnout in the LD16 Senate race was up 23% this year vs. 2017. Compare that to the governor's race statewide, where turnout increased by only 19%. That 4% increase, applied statewide, would mean almost 90 THOUSAND more people voting.

Let's compare that to the largest upset in the state: LD3. There, we saw about a 20% increase in turnout. If instead, LD3 had matched LD16's 23% turnout increase, that's 1500 more voters. Had the outgoing Senate President's district been perceived as more competitive, and had his campaign emphasized turnout like Sen. Elect Zwicker in LD16, perhaps he'd have stood a better chance to hold his seat.

Furthermore- our Governor won more votes in LD3 this year than he did in 2017. But LD3's incumbent Senator LOST votes compared to 2017. So the narrative blaming our Governor and progressives for others' losses doesn't seem accurate. More likely, lackluster Democratic voter turnout is to blame, due to a perceived non-competitive district and lack of voter engagement/enthusiasm. I urge South Jersey Democrats to take note: Emphasize engaging with voters to improve our democracy, and issues that clearly support blue collar, working-class people, and you may see more success.

Back on topic: We MUST stop drawing virtually every district to be non-competitive. This cuts voters out of our democracy- especially when combined with New Jersey's unique, intentionally undemocratic Primary Election Ballots. This means stagnation, and protects the systemic racism entrenched in our state government and history.

New Jersey county party leadership is disproportionately old, white, and male. So when Party Committee Chairs pick candidates, they tend to pick people who look like them, and grant these candidates preferential ballot placement on The County Line. This rigs the primary election in their favor- no incumbent state rep has lost a primary election while on The Line in 12 years.

When districts are drawn to be non-competitive, these disproportionately white and male candidates win the general election. So not only do people's votes end up not mattering in either election, but our

legislature doesn't represent the diversity of our state. Is it any wonder New Jerseyans are disengaged, when we're repeatedly shown our votes don't matter?

Some demographics on our legislature, compared to the latest census data:

- 30.8% of NJ legislators are women- that's much less than half. We're only 27th nationally, behind MT, WI, and OH.
- Half the legislature is over 59 years old, and a whopping 92% are over 40. Millennials are grossly underrepresented- People between 25 and 40 years old deserve FAR more than 9 representatives out of 120.
- 73.3% of the legislature is white, versus 54.6% of NJ residents
- In comparison, 2.5% of the legislature is Asian American, versus about 10% of NJ residents.
- And 7.5% of the legislature is Hispanic or Latino, versus 21.6% of NJ.

This lack of diversity results directly from our unhealthy democracy. That is what lets mostly white, male County Party Chairs, predetermine election outcomes to favor people who look like me in 30 years, at the expense of everyone else- especially people of color. New Jersey's legacy is rife with systemic racism, and it's long past time to take decisive action to fix this.

In closing, I urge you to do two things:

- 1) Draw fair, competitive districts that where voters are able to decide who their representatives are. This is necessary for a healthy democracy
- 2) Draw districts that enhance, rather than diminish, the voices of people of color, women, and young people. Given our state's history of systemic racism, communities of color in particular **MUST** have their voices heard.

That's all I've got- thank you.

Joe Marchica

Co-Chair, Our Revolution Trenton Mercer

bit.ly/ORTMercer

¹ I considered Senate races withing 8 percentage points, or races where the incumbent party loses a seat, to be competitive elections.

Fenner, Pamela

From: Siddharth Satish <
Sent: Tuesday, December 14, 2021 9:02 AM
To: Fenner, Pamela
Subject: Re: TCNJ hearing 12/10 -- apportionment commission

Good Morning,

Thank you for your email. This is my testimony:

Reapportionment Testimony - Siddharth Satish

Good Morning members of the NJ Apportionment commission, Chairman Jones, Chairman Balras. My name is Siddharth Satish and I am a 17 year old senior at West Windsor Plainsboro High School North in West Windsor, an aspiring lawyer and currently the President of the NAACP West Windsor Plainsboro Youth Council. As a lifelong New Jersey and West Windsor resident, I am here to talk to you about the reapportionment as it relates to my community.

My community is largely made of people of color, including Asian Americans, African Americans, and those of Hispanic descent. My community is in the Raritan Valley area and in legislative district 15 and 12th congressional district. It is bordered by Plainsboro, and Monmouth and Middlesex counties. In my community you have wonderful parks like the Mercer County Park and the Woo-Ri mart shopping complex. Our community's strength is in its diversity and inclusion, being a member of the 25 charter members the NAACP chapter here has allowed me to further unite a lot of people of color within the community. Nevertheless, as a community of majority people of color we have experienced the lack of inclusivity of colored history in our school curriculums, where the history of our ancestors and those of our allied communities are never explored or discussed. We hope to see this change. My community is a lot like our neighboring township of Plainsboro but unlike areas like Mount Laurel or Voorhees. To sum this all up, the West Windsor area is a tight-knit community with deep roots in the area, and we hope to be well represented in the new maps.

As the name of our Youth Council suggests "West Windsor-Plainsboro", and the names of our two high schools- West Windsor Plainsboro North and West Windsor Plainsboro South, West Windsor and Plainsboro are one community of interest. Both high schools are in a comprehensive high achieving *regional* public school district in New Jersey, United States, serving students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade from West Windsor Township (in Mercer County) and Plainsboro Township (in Middlesex County). There are 10 schools within our school district that residents of both townships can attend.

However, despite this fact, the current NJ map has West Windsor but within two state legislative districts. West Windsor being in legislative district 15, and legislative district 14 for Plainsboro.

I thank the Committee for listening to me today and ask of you the following:

1. that you consider keeping my West Windsor together, and adding Plainsboro, without in any way diluting minority voting power or otherwise violating the law or fair redistricting principles, and maintaining racial equity.
2. Currently, four out of the five meetings that were scheduled were on weekdays during work hours (including today!) – times when it is extremely difficult for most people to participate. Most people are working and/or attending school. The Commission should schedule additional meetings on nights and weekends when people may more easily participate. I personally had to obtain an excused absence to be present here today.

bx

A deserved thank you goes to the NJ Institute of Social Justice who assisted the NJSC Naacp Youth Works Committee in preparing my testimony and those of the NAACP students that have previously testified before you and the redistricting committee. My testimony and that of my peer from Trenton Youth Council is part of our NJ NAACP Youth and College Convention. Our job is to help educate youth about redistricting and reapportionment. Today, we are having our 3rd virtual watch party on Zoom for our members to watch us and others testify. The theme for our convention is "Change is up to Us". I am excited to be a registered voter next year and hope that my testimony today will help change the landscape of the state districts for the better of all of NJ residents, I . Again, thank you, for listening to my testimony today. A copy of this testimony will be provided to the commission.

Best,
Siddharth Satish (they|them)

Lund's Proposal
2021 Apportionment Commission

Todd C. G. Lund Jr.
 Ocean County

1

11th Member Criteria

2001: Bartels

- (1) minimizing the population deviations among the districts, as required by the "one person, one vote" rule;
- (2) keeping each of the forty districts contiguous;
- (3) keeping each of the forty districts reasonably compact;
- (4) respecting municipal boundaries by not splitting any town (other than Newark) and Jersey City (which are too large to fit in one legislative district);
- (5) respecting voting-district boundaries;
- (6) avoiding any bias in the map that might favor one political party over the other in an election year when the two parties were highly competitive;
- (7) ensuring that some seats were competitive so that the composition of the legislature would be responsive to shifts in voter from one party to the other;
- (8) minimizing voter dilution, so as not to deny too many (1) or (2) voters the opportunity to vote for incumbents who had served their term or against incumbents who had not done so

2011: Rosenthal

- "where for districts that are as equal as possible, perhaps a 1% deviation - 1.2% above and 1.2% below the average district, if we can make it, the single district, I would hope, would deviate more than 1% from the norm."
- (1) no division of municipalities, except for Newark and Jersey City which would be "divided no more than once";
- (2) contiguity, but "each district [would] not be scattered in several pieces";
- (3) compactness, as much like a square, circle, or rectangle as possible, recognizing that the whole-municipality standard does perfect compactness impossible;
- (4) recognition of "social, cultural, ethnic, and economic communities of interest";
- (5) "continuity of representation," if it did not conflict with other more important standards, to allow for "a little disruption as is necessary";
- (6) competitiveness, so that the redistricting "should absolutely not reduce the number of competitive districts and, perhaps, increase the number a bit";
- (7) meet the requirements of the VRA.

2

District Population Deviations

<p>Historical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011: 5.29% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 ... +2.64% • 40 ... -2.65% • 2001: 7.84% • 1991: 4.61% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38 ... +2.21% • 32 ... -2.41% 	<p>Federal Courts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% is the general rule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much larger deviations have been accepted in cases where a MAJOR compelling interest in adhering to the boundaries of political subdivisions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16.8% in Virginia, 20% in New Hampshire, 68% in Wyoming • 5% above or 5% below
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3

Constitutionally Preferred
 2021 Data (prisoner adj.)
 Locally, a maximum of 51 Splits

Constitutional Demands

- Compact
- Contiguous
- No County with fewer than 1 should be divided
- No County should be contain more districts (or parts of districts) than their total whole and partial portions of the ideal number of districts.

4

Constitutionally Preferred Grouping Technique
 — Helps reduce the chances of over-splitting —

1st Group Counties such that they fall within the 10% total deviation. Ex:

- Group B:
 - Burlington
 - 457,330
 - 2 ... -1.45%
- Group C:
 - Ocean, Monmouth, Mercer
 - 1,667,877
 - 7 ... 2.67%

• Then proceed to crafting the assigned number of districts within those Groups, while aiming to not over-split any counties within the Group.

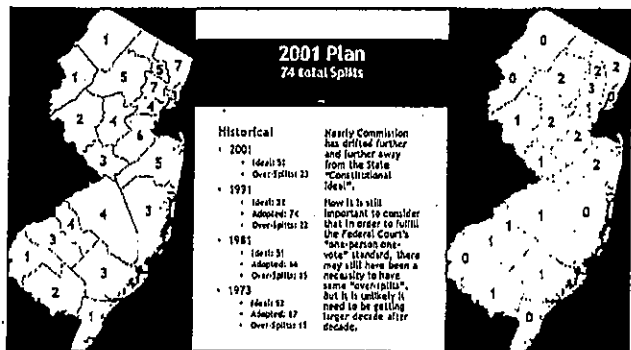
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2011 Plan
 81 total Splits
 10 Over-Splits

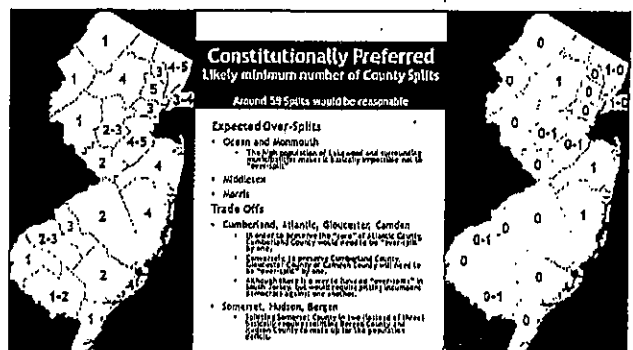
Communities of Interest

- Counties, by their nature of being a political body and generally being similar of landscapes, ARE "communities of interest"
- This is even more important when redistricting Counties that are smaller to one district or only part of a whole district. Since there tends to be a greater sense of "community" in these less populated Counties as compared to the more populous Counties.
- Of course, there are other "communities of interests" that ought to be considered.

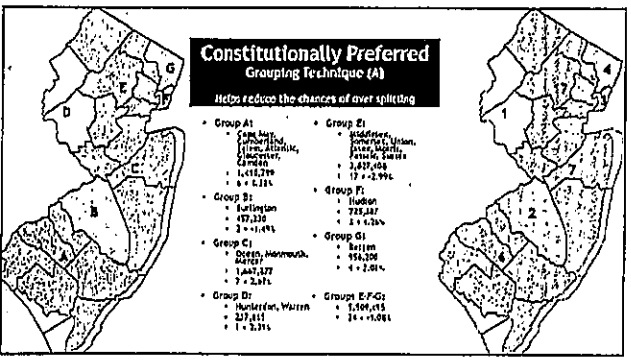
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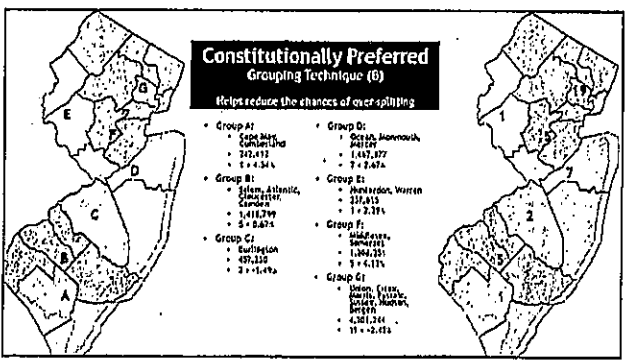
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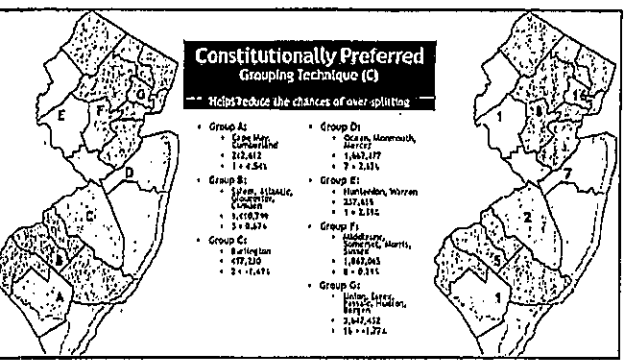
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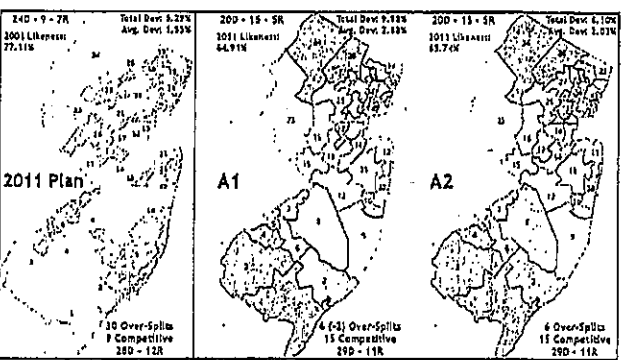
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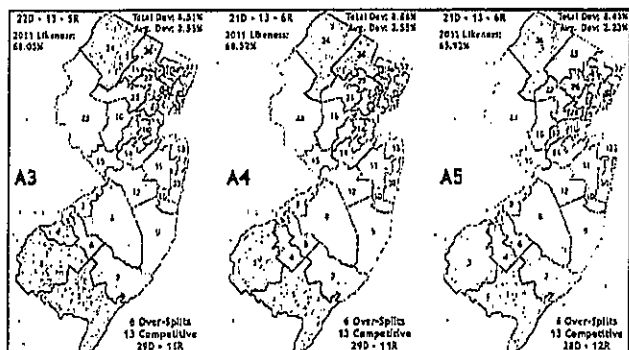
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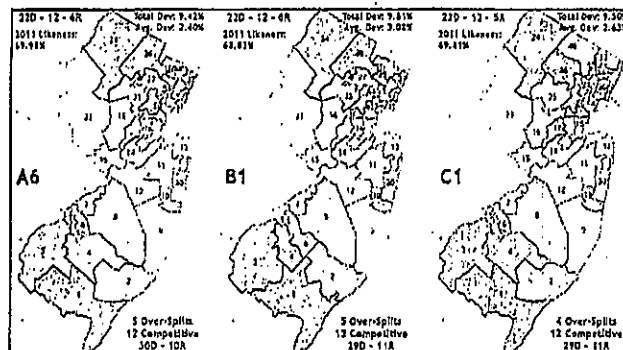
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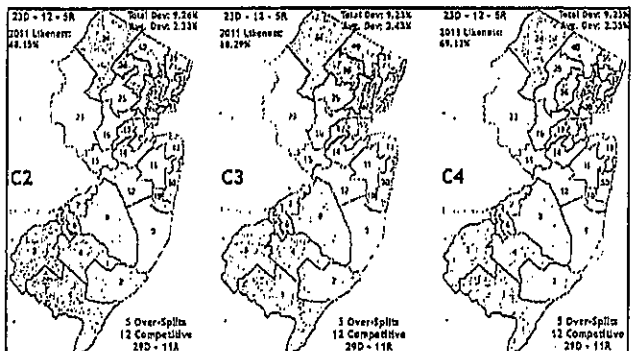
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14



15

Data and Contact

- Feel Free to contact me at
- These maps were designed using Dave's Redistricting
 - My name on there is "Jersey Todd"
 - They have many other stats that would be quite useful for the commission
 - Race
 - Voting Age Population
 - Partisan Lean by state-wide election
 - I have included the location of the incumbents
- I have been working on this for over a year, I would be more than happy to assist any of the Commissioners

16

Dear NJ Reapportionment Commission,

I have submitted previously some possible maps involving NE NJ Legislative districts.

In using districtr.org, a website that facilitates drawing mock legislative districts, I have come to realize that Hudson County will be a tricky area to redraw districts. Since Jersey City can only be divided into two districts, it is, unfortunately, unfeasible to keep LD33 as it historically was from at least 1980 to 2010. To keep the population balanced, a tiny sliver of Jersey City was enlarged or narrowed to maintain population balance during that period in LD33 while LD 32 and LD 31 covered the rest of Jersey City.

It appears that Jersey City saw larger than average growth, in particular in Ward E according to 2020 Census numbers. LD 31 as it currently stands, is way too big population wise. It has to be shrunk. LD 33 can't grow anymore as it's too big as it stands. LD 32 is also somewhat oversized as well. Realizing this, I had to get creative.

In my Nov 16, 2021 written testimony, I said that Northern Hudson County should be in one district. So I created a district stretching from Secaucus, Northern Jersey City, Hoboken, and Weehawken. I then created another district. This district keeps Northern Hudson County in one district. It encompasses Union City, West New York, North Bergen, Guttenberg, Fairview, Edgewater, and Ridgefield for a population total of 235823. As you can see, I had to shift things north as a result of the growth spurt Jersey City experienced.

Kearny, Harrison, and East Newark would be joined with LD 36 through Southern Bergen County.

LD 31 would remain Bayonne and Southern Jersey City, though, a bit modified in Jersey City to keep a population balance.

I would have preferred to include Weehawken with my Northern Hudson County district, but population constraints won't let me. If the commission can find a way to include Weehawken, Kudos to you all.

I hope my contributions can be of help to the commission as they embark on the task of redrawing the state's legislative districts.

Thanks.

Arthur S Amidano Jr



Because Agriculture Matters!

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Website: www.njfb.org

REMARKS TO NJ APPORTIONMENT COMMITTEE

BY PETER FUREY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DECEMBER 10, 2021

AGRICULTURE IN NEW JERSEY: AN UPDATE

TALKING POINTS:

- FARMLAND DATA AND PRODUCTION VALUE IS WELL-DOCUMENTED (U.S. AG CENSUS, NASS).
- NEW JERSEY IS NEARLY 50% UNDEVELOPED – FARMLAND, SOUTH JERSEY PINELANDS, FOREST LAND, PUBLIC LANDS, ENVIRON. REGULATED LANDS (FARMLAND=750,000 ACRES).
- 2/3 OF NEW JERSEY POPULATION RESIDE IN 1/2 LAND AREA. (NEW JERSEY'S POPULATION DENSITY IS NOT UNIFORM BUT HIGHLY CONCENTRATED).
- 2020 PRODUCTION VALUE OF CROPS AND LIVESTOCK: \$1.26B (EXPANDING ANNUALLY; NOTE HIGH VALUE CROPS).
- PRESERVED FARMLAND: 241,600 ACRES ON 2,729 FARMS (\$1.8B INVESTED SINCE 1983; AG GETS 31% SHARE OF DEDICATED OPEN SPACE FUNDS).
- PLATFORM FOR OUTDOOR WEEKEND EXPERIENCES (RETAIL FARM MARKETS, WINERIES, AGRI-TAINMENT).
- PLENTY OF WATER FOR IRRIGATION NOW AND FUTURE: CLIMATE IMPACTS.
- FEDERAL DEFINITION OF "RURAL" NEW JERSEY BY USDA IS CONFUSING; NEED OUR OWN STATE DEFINITION?
- WELL-POSITIONED FOR THE FUTURE IF ... SOLVE VIABILITY CHALLENGES (PROFITABILITY, RTF/NUISANCE, LABOR, WILDLIFE).

#

Dear Members of the Redistricting Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding Legislative Redistricting in New Jersey.

I am writing you as a recent candidate in a district that is politically lopsided to advocate for fairer maps on the basis that representation can suffer when the people don't have fair races and qualified, competitive candidates from whom to choose on their ballots.

While it is true that voters of a particular affiliation are often geographically congregated and the task of drawing fair, consolidated districts becomes difficult accordingly, I am hopeful that the final district maps you approve will reflect a best-case effort to resolve differences and create fair districts for healthy competition. Attached please find one example of a potential map that might be fairer for North Jersey than the district maps we have now.

Voters should be able to expect representation, accessibility, district advocacy and accountability from their representatives. During election campaigns, they should have the opportunity to hear the incumbents and the challengers speak, to hear an exchange of views in debate, and to make up their minds about who better represents their views and their needs from a place of gathered knowledge. They should have representatives who realize that their likelihood to keep their seats is directly tied to their willingness to do the work of the elected role. This is not what we have in District 26. I ran for office in my district in 2021, and my opponent was so unconcerned by the challenge and disinclined to participate in his own district race in 2021 that he focused his political activities in other areas and on advancing his own personal political ambitions, refusing to debate or engage. Sadly, there were also no Election Day consequences for this. He won the seat back, as the district was drawn to prearrange. Thus, the open issues in the district that need state attention will continue to go unresolved as they have. There can be real and financial consequences to static representation.

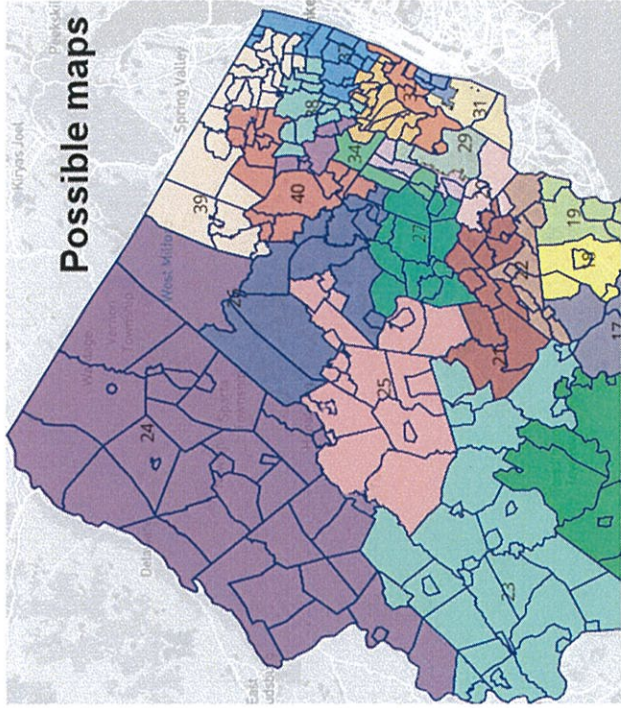
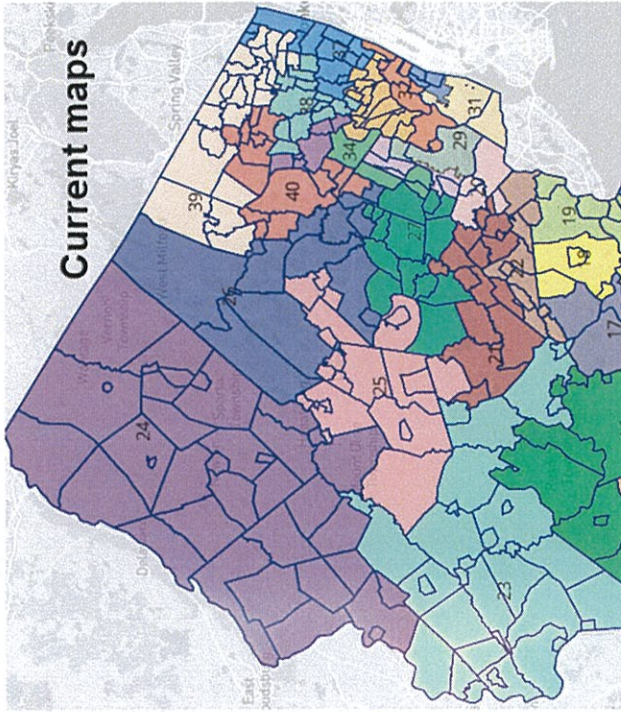
In districts in which such conditions are the case, over time, it becomes difficult for one party or the other to solicit qualified candidates to run at all, which affects the quality of prospective representation. When a contest is discounted in advance by incumbents and the media because a district leans too far in one political direction, the challengers and their teams must generate all the more funding to educate voters. That isn't easy, and makes political candidacy inaccessible for many New Jersey residents.

I appreciate the enormity of the task of redrawing districts, and the parameters that make it difficult. I understand that the inability to split towns, the inclination to keep associated towns together and draw concise districts, the concerns over equity in district composition, and for those to whom it matters the continuity of representation all matter. I understand those priorities are often in conflict with one another. I appreciate that it is nearly impossible to 'make everyone happy' with the results.

However you end up drawing the district lines, please ensure that New Jersey voters have a fairer chance to decide whether they should keep or replace their representatives, themselves.

Thank you.

Kind regards,
Christine Clarke
Former State Senate candidate, New Jersey District 26



LD	County	Municipality	Population	Registered	Original District	Move to District
LD 21	Morris	Chatham Borough	9212	7149	21	27
LD 21	Somerset	Far Hills Borough	924	880	21	23
LD 23	Warren	Hackettstown Town	10248	6697	23	24
LD 23	Warren	Harmony Township	2503	2157	23	24
LD 24	Morris	Mt. Olive Township	28886	21975	24	25
LD 24	Warren	Oxford Township	2514	1,827	24	23
LD 25	Morris	Dover Town	18460	8962	25	26
LD 25	Morris	Mt. Arlington Borough	5909	5017	25	24
LD 25	Somerset	Bernardsville Borough	7893	6835	25	23
LD 26	Morris	Butler Borough	8047	5849	26	39
LD 26	Passaic	West Milford Township	24862	20635	26	24
LD 27	Essex	Caldwell	9027	6382	27	26
LD 27	Essex	Essex Fells	2244	2143	27	26
LD 27	Morris	Harding Township	3871	3906	27	25
LD 39	Bergen	Saddle River Borough	3372	3149	39	40

LD	Target Pop	Population +/-	Pop	Registered Voters
LD 21	220,000	223,138	3,138	168,896
LD 23	220,000	220,811	811	166,188
LD 24	220,000	223,127	3,127	182,076
LD 25	220,000	221,538	1,538	178,054
LD 26	220,000	221,406	1,406	168,458
LD 27	220,000	227,849	7,849	183,425
LD 39	220,000	222,669	2,669	177,462
LD 40	220,000	221,725	1,725	173,774

Kenneth F. Cerullo, Esq.

Mahwah, NJ 07430

December 10, 2021

Dear Members of the New Jersey Redistricting and Apportionment Commissions:

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to address the commissions with this written testimony. I am a concerned citizen interested in government reform in the hope of creating a system of government that works better for the citizens of New Jersey.

Our current system of redistricting and apportionment is embedded in the New Jersey Constitution and is effectively controlled by two parties – the Democrats and Republicans – despite the fact that over a third of New Jersey voters are registered as Unaffiliated.

It is a fallacy to think a split of seats between the Democrats and Republicans is the panacea for the redistricting and apportionment process. After all, it is entirely conceivable that what may be agreed upon by the 2 major parties may not be in the interest of the general public. For example, the 2 parties could together decide to create safe districts for each party and disenfranchise many voters favoring competitive elections. By comparison, some states prohibit the use of political data to favor or disfavor political parties as part of redistricting criteria while other states require that district lines be drawn to encourage competitiveness.

Moreover, there is no way to change this redistricting and apportionment process other than by an amendment to our state constitution which must be proposed by the legislative branch of New Jersey. In short, the Democrats and Republicans control the redistricting and apportionment process, and at the same time, are also the gatekeepers to any proposed change to the system. That does not seem fair to the people of New Jersey. It is no wonder why this current system is in place and will likely never change!

For the above-referenced reasons, we need a limited citizen initiative process in New Jersey. Citizens should be empowered through a limited form of direct democracy to propose government reform initiatives directly to the voters of New Jersey. After all, it is perfectly appropriate and logical for the people to write the rules of the game in the areas of government reform, and bypass a potentially conflicted legislative branch. We have many good state representatives doing good work – but that does not take away from the fact that these same representatives may have a potential conflict of interest when it comes to a government reform measure that may threaten re-election.

Besides redistricting reform, the limited citizen initiative process may be used for other government reform efforts that may be supported by the general public, but not the politicians in control of the system.

That being said, I am a realist and we must deal with the process we currently have in place. The following recommendations will help make this system fairer for the general public and increase transparency:

1. The commission should publicly release preliminary maps in advance of certification and hold public hearings afterward so that the proposed map is subject to scrutiny before a final vote.
2. The commission should solicit the input of a broad sampling of non-partisan experts and researchers to help scientifically identify problematic districting before any maps go into effect. A North Carolina state court used such information, in part, to strike down that state's map. Many experts that have served as expert witnesses in redistricting cases across the country should instead be consulted early in the redistricting process to help identify problems before new maps are approved. Please see Gupta, S. (September 7, 2020), "How next-gen computer generated maps detect partisan gerrymandering (Researchers are ready to expose hidden biases when redistricting begins in 2021)", *ScienceNews*, <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/gerrymandering-elections-next-gen-computer-generated-maps>

3. The commission should publish a written report justifying all map making decisions in response to public and expert/researcher input and scrutiny.

Please note that numbers 1 and 3 are recommendations that were made in previous testimony by Fair Districts NJ. I also support other recommendations by Fair Districts NJ including making public all materials and communications related to the process as well as making recordings and transcripts of each meeting available in a timely manner. I simply propose the addition of scientific scrutiny by the expert/ research community. Scientific scrutiny provides additional objective criteria in drawing and evaluating maps besides other objective redistricting criteria that may not be required, but is good practice such as compactness and contiguity (required in NJ legislative redistricting).

I would like to remind the commissions that each has a special obligation to work in the interest of the general public considering voters cannot directly amend our current redistricting and apportionment system. The commission should always work towards full transparency and opportunity for meaningful public participation during the entire process.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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