
Commission Meeting

of

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE APPORTIONMENT COMMISSION

*“The Commission will take oral testimony from members of the public
on the establishment of State legislative districts in New Jersey”*

LOCATION: Meeting via Zoom

DATE: December 8, 2021
12:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMISSION PRESENT:

LeRoy J. Jones, Jr., Democratic Delegation Chair
Al Barlas, Republican Delegation Chair
Senator Stephen M. Sweeney
Assemblyman Jon M. Bramnick
Honorable Philip S. Carchman
Cosmo A. Cirillo, Ph.D.
Linda DuBois
Michael B. Lavery, Esq.
Gary Taffet
Diane T. Testa, Esq.



ALSO PRESENT:

Raysa Martinez Kruger
Office of Legislative Services
Commission Secretary

Jessica Oestreicher
Office of Legislative Services
Commission Aide

*This transcript was prepared using an outside recording not designed for transcription purposes.
Therefore, portions of this transcript may not be completely accurate as portions were inaudible and/or indiscernible.*

Meeting Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS

LeRoy J. Jones, Jr.
Chairman

Cosmo A. Cirillo
Stephen M. Sweeney
Gary Taffet
Diane T. Testa



REPUBLICAN MEMBERS

Al Barlas
Chairman

Jon M. Bramnick
Linda DuBois
Thomas H. Kean, Jr.
Michael B. Lavery

NEW JERSEY LEGISLATIVE
APPORTIONMENT COMMISSION
STATE HOUSE ANNEX • P.O. BOX 068 • TRENTON, NJ 08625-0068

APPOINTED
ELEVENTH MEMBER
Philip S. Carchman

COMMISSION NOTICE

TO: MEMBERS OF THE APPORTIONMENT COMMISSION

FROM: AL BARLAS, CHAIRMAN
LEROY J. JONES, JR., CHAIRMAN

SUBJECT: COMMISSION MEETING – DECEMBER 8, 2021

The public may address comments and questions to Raysa Martinez Kruger, Commission Secretary or make scheduling inquiries to Sophie Love, Secretary, at (609)847-3890 or email: OLSAideAPPC@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the Commission by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The Apportionment Commission will meet remotely via Zoom on Wednesday, December 8, 2021 at 12:00 PM.

The Commission will take oral testimony from members of the public on the establishment of State legislative districts in New Jersey. As required by the New Jersey Constitution, the Apportionment Commission is charged with redrawing the lines of the State's 40 legislative districts, from which the 40 Senators and 80 Members of the General Assembly are elected.

Members of the public may view the live proceedings via the New Jersey Legislature home page at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/> or via the Commission's home page at <https://www.apportionmentcommission.org/default.asp>.

Those wishing to testify must register online in advance of the meeting at <https://www.apportionmentcommission.org/schedule.asp>. Registration is also available at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>. Select December 8 on the calendar and click on Apportionment Commission for the registration link. Registrations must be received by Tuesday, December 7, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Upon successful registration, you will view a printable receipt on screen. At a later date, you will receive an email with instructions for testifying.

(OVER)

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To ensure that all who wish to testify can do so, the Chair will limit public testimony to 5 minutes per person. Extra time will be allotted for those needing the assistance of a translator.

If you require language interpretation services to testify, please contact the Office of Legislative Services at (609) 847-3890 to discuss and arrange for interpretation services in advance of the meeting.

You may also submit written testimony instead of, or in addition to, oral testimony by email to OLSaideAPPC@njleg.org by Tuesday, December 7, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Written testimony will be included in the Commission's record and distributed to all Commission members.

Issued 12/1/21

For reasonable accommodation of a disability call the telephone number above, or for persons with hearing loss dial 711 for NJ Relay. The provision of assistive listening devices requires 24 hours' notice. CART or sign language interpretation requires 5 days' notice.

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AL BARLAS (Republican Delegation Chair): Good afternoon, everyone, to our public hearing of the Legislative Apportionment Commission.

It's nice to start relatively on time; that's a nice thing. We have a lot of folks scheduled to testify today.

So I guess, Madam Secretary, we'll start with the roll call.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER (Commission Secretary):
Commissioner Testa.

MS. TESTA: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Sweeney.

SENATOR SWEENEY: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Lavery.

MR. LAVERY: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Dubois.

MS. DUBOIS: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Cirillo.

DR. CIRILLO: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Bramnick.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Co-Chair Jones.

LeROY J. JONES, Jr. (Democratic Delegation Chair):
Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Co-Chair Barlas.

MR. BARLAS: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Eleventh member Carchman.

JUSTICE CARCHMAN: Here.

MR. BARLAS: Okay, great.

So we'll start with-- We'll go a little out of order, and then I guess, Madam Secretary, if you're good with it, we'll just call everybody in alphabetical order by last name, based on that list you sent out.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Okay, Mr. Chairman.

The first person on my list--

MR. BARLAS: Well, actually, before you start, I just-- Since we do have a member of the Legislature here, I figured we'd just let him go.

So Senator Doherty, if you'd like to begin.

SENATOR MICHAEL J. DOHERTY: Thank you very much, and I'll try to be brief with my comments.

I'd like to just state I fully support a map where the population of each district is as equal as possible, so that they don't deviate. So I think we understand that that is a number one priority.

I would like to state that I believe the Constitution has not been totally eviscerated from the New Jersey Constitution -- the idea of trying to keep counties together, where practicable, particularly counties that have a population that is less one-fortieth of the State population. And I'm referring to Article 4, Section 2, paragraph 3. I believe there's still life in that provision, and I think the Commission should consider why it would be practical to try to keep counties together when you can.

I happen to represent the 23rd Legislative District. My first 10 years in the Legislature it was basically all of Warren County, and just about all of Hunterdon County. And what happened in the last redistricting is, Warren County, a County with a population of about 110,000, was cut into two different districts. Hunterdon County, which has a population of about

125,000, was cut into three different legislative districts. And I agree that cutting a county up is not enough for the court to invalidate a map. However, I think this Commission can consider the reasons why counties should be kept together where you can.

And I'd like to speak for Hunterdon County. People from Hunterdon County -- it's a relatively small, rural county, about 125,000, maybe a little bit more with the new census. When you ask somebody where they're from, they don't say what town they're from; they say, "I'm from Hunterdon County." The County is actually set up with a hub, with Flemington being in the center and the world-famous Flemington Circle that you may have heard of. So people from Hunterdon County -- its very important. They really affiliate. We have the famous Hunterdon County Courthouse where the Lindberg baby trial was held. We have the County Commissioners -- right? -- people look to their County Commissioners; the businesses.

The problem-- What happened with the map is that now the people of Hunterdon County -- they don't know who to go to. Businesses don't know who to go to, citizens don't know who to go to, elected officials and county commissioners don't know who to go to when they want to get things done and they need to contact legislators. So it's been a real problem, and I believe that it's led to inefficiencies. And the people really don't know who to go to when they need assistance.

So I think this Commission should really consider where, if they can-- I'm not talking about changing the number of people in each district. I'm saying that there's still some life in this constitutional provision -- I don't believe it's totally been eviscerated -- where you shouldn't cut up counties

unless you have to. And what happened in my District has just led to a lot of inefficiencies.

So I think the Commission certainly can put forward a map where -- balancing all the priorities, you can keep the counties together, and should consider that when you're drawing the map.

So those are my points, Chairman, and I'd like to thank you for all your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you very much, Senator. We really appreciate it.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Thanks, Chairman.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, for the record, Commissioner Taffet has arrived and will be marked "present."

The next speaker is Ms. Maria Andrade.

MR. BARLAS: Ms. Andrade.

M A R I A J. A N D R A D E: Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Maria Andrade; I've been a resident of Newark for 26 years.

I'm here with a group of my neighbors and my friends from the Latino Action Network.

I would like the Commission to hear a little bit about my community and what it means to me, us, and our way of life.

In the pursuit of the American dream, my parents migrated to America. We arrived, we worked, and I was able to educate myself. I am

now a mother of two teens, and I work every day to create a better community.

There were barriers to my family to pursue a decent way of life. Back in the 1990s, things were a little different and more challenging for our Latino community. From finding safe housing to securing decent work, challenges mounted quickly; and my family was not the only one who faced these challenges.

New Jersey has been moving the needle forward with many initiatives that moved the Latino community forward. However, it's all a work in progress; progress which, at times, seems paused.

I take pride in mentioning how innovative New Jersey usually is; but we must continue to break the barriers to equity for all New Jerseyans. As we know, Latinos have the biggest population growth rate in New Jersey. My District, 29, had an increase of 18.5 in Latino population, and now it's the District with the second-largest share of Latinos in the State. We are also the plurality in this District -- meaning that, even though we don't have over 50 percent of the population, we are the largest single group in the District.

We must continue to make sure we are ahead in fair representation. Having proper representation that listens to our community is paramount to keeping the vibrant Latino community of District 29 moving towards a better future.

For these, and many other reasons, it is only fair that we ensure that our communities are heard and represented fairly by the new apportionment maps. I want a fair district for my community, and fair districts for the 21.6 percent Latino New Jerseyans.

I will end by quoting the census statement from NALEO.

It reads, “The 2020 Census confirmed what we have known for years: the future of the country is Latino. The 2020 Census shows that slightly more than one in four children under 18 years old was Latino -- 25.7 percent.” Will New Jersey lead the way in shaping this Latino future for the country, or will we continue to be the least-represented group in the State Legislature? This is what is at stake today.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Andrade, for very thoughtful comments.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker will be Ms. Francesca Baroni, followed by Christopher Binetti.

FRANCESCA BARONI: Thank you.

Good afternoon. My name is Francesca Baroni, and I’m speaking to you today as a resident of New Jersey’s 38th Legislative District.

Today, I will be sharing with the Commission some details about my community, with an emphasis on the strong and growing Latino presence within this community.

The 38th District spans across parts of both Bergen and Passaic County, with Hawthorne being the only Passaic County municipality in my District. The northern boundary of our District lies across Hawthorne, Glen Rock, Paramus and Oradell; our southern boundary lies at Hasbrouck Heights.

According to census data, between 2010 and 2020 my District has increased from a 16.9 percent to a 21.36 percent Hispanic or Latino population. Such increases are replicated within my own town, Lodi. Going

as far back as 2000, the Latino population in Lodi was estimated to be at 17.9 percent by census data. In 2010, this number experienced a sharp increase to 30.5 percent. Now Lodi stands at the Latino community being 37.9 percent of our population.

But I'm not here to read statistics to you today. I'm here to support the statistics with my own experiences from living in this community.

I was born in 1999, and since then I have lived in Lodi. Firsthand I have seen two decades worth of Latino growth in my local community. In my first few years of elementary school, I recall there being a handful of Latino students within my school. And by the time I began to attend middle school in 2010, this number evidently grew.

There were large groups of Latino students throughout my school, consistent with the population growth. I still recall many students speaking Spanish in the hallways, bringing in delicious Latino foods when we had assignments that involved cultural sharing, or requesting to play their favorite bachata song at the school dances. Around this time, I also began to see more Latino families moving into my neighborhood; whereas, when my family originally moved to our home, there weren't as many Latino families in the immediate area. We now had a Latino family living across the street from us, next to our home, and in the home behind ours.

Even beyond the school setting, I have continued to notice a strong Latino presence, to this day, within our community. For the past three years, I have been working at a pharmacy in Lodi where a large proportion of our customers are Latino. It is rare that a shift goes by where I do not have to assist a customer in Spanish, or where I do not hear a customer talking over the phone in Spanish. I have also listened to many customers express

their frustrations about there not being enough Spanish-speaking employees to assist them as they pick up vital medications.

Many districts and communities throughout New Jersey, such as my own, have experienced increases in their Latino population between the time of current redistricting efforts and the last time that districts were redrawn in 2010. As such, I ask that the Commission take into consideration our strong presence and youth representation. While 20 percent of the New Jersey population is Latino, only 10 percent of our legislators are Latino. The diversity of our State is not adequately represented within our Legislature. Redistricting will be important for the much-needed enhancement of our community's representation and political voice. It is vital that the needs of our community are heard and taken into account by those drafting legislation.

The Latino community needs representatives who can understand and reflect our interests. And I ask that the Commission take this into consideration as they draw their map.

I would like to thank the Commission for your time and consideration.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Baroni, for your personal experiences.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: The next speaker is Mr. Christopher Binetti, followed by Mr. Don Cruz.

CHRISTOPHER BINETTI, Ph.D.: My name is Dr. Christopher Binetti. Some of you may be familiar with me.

I'm going to try to be at the next meeting on Friday, but we'll see. I have trouble-- I don't drive.

I am probably the only one here for Italian Americans. I am the President of the Italian American Movement, an Italian American civil rights 501(c)(3).

One of my big concerns is -- because we don't have official statistics, because we aren't considered a minority group -- we can't really argue with other people's statistics. So sometimes the official -- the closest thing we have to official statistics is the ACS recording of our population in 2019, which says we're about 15 percent of the population and about 15.7 percent of the legal population. If you ask most of the Italian activists, we think it's closer to 20 percent, but because we aren't really included in the stats, we can't prove it. This is a big, big concern of being underrepresented.

We have a real need to be better represented in public academia, in places like Rutgers. It's simply not happening. We need a civil rights law to protect us. And every time I try to get a legislator to talk to me, someone says, "Well, you're not in the district," or, "I'm not Italian," or something like that. In other words, we are not viewed as an ethnic constituency worthy of civil rights legislation.

I am concerned that when we look at representation, we should look at the authorized population. I do not believe it is constitutional -- and I would argue it's not constitutional -- to allow the unauthorized population, which is about 440,000 as of, I think, 2019, according to one pro-immigration group-- And what this leads to is, it leads to inflation. It doesn't necessarily lead to an inflation simply for the Latino community, but it can. But what it often does is it means that Italian communities have less power

than they should, since most of our Italians are not in these areas with high unauthorized populations. And so, what will end up happening is, we will see a decrease in Italian representatives, we'll see a decrease in districts with significant Italian voters, etc.

I am trying to work with Latino activists -- I've written to some -- in order to try to come to some kind of consensus. But at the end of the day, the lack of recognition of Italians as even a community worth considering is the fundamental problem. The fact that the census views us as *non-Hispanic white* is really -- it is very harmful and historically ignorant, frankly, of what Italians have had to go through, including in New Jersey. It holds us back; it holds us back from everything -- from getting jobs, to getting published, to running for office, etc. And we cannot get our laws passed because no one wants to listen to a "non-Hispanic white person," even though we're really not. It also causes unnecessary conflicts with the Latino community, with which we have so much in common.

And so, ultimately, the valid representation issue is just one issue; but it's a really serious issue, because it does hold us back.

And another thing that concerns me is the idea that the community has to be represented by a member of that community. I feel like there's validity to that; I think it is valid. I felt that myself sometimes. But I also think it's important to make sure that each community has representatives that support their interests. And sometimes that's not the same member of your community, right? I mean, that's one of the problems with packing, right? Like, you could pack a community to guarantee a representative there, but then you're actually reducing the number of representatives fighting for that community. So that can be a problem.

And my last concern -- and this is a big concern -- is, in my community we have a lot of people who are of mixed descent; so for example, Italian and Latino. And we've really seen an issue in which those individuals, because Italians are not a recognized minority group, identify entirely as Latino and not as Italian, when they're both. And I think it's very important for the Italian community to survive in such a diverse place where we're all, basically, intermixed -- I am, everyone else is too -- that Italians be recognized as a community worthy of representation. And I think that's really the bottom line.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Dr. Binetti.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker, Mr. Don Cruz, is not in the Zoom room. Therefore, the next speaker will be Mr. Matt Dragon, followed by Mr. Nicholas Garita.

M A T T D R A G O N: Good morning, and thank you to the Commissioners for agreeing to serve in this role, and to the staff facilitating these hearings.

My name is Matt Dragon, and I've been a resident of West Orange in Essex County for the last 12 years.

I want to remind you that you are representing the voters of New Jersey, not the political parties, political machines, or individual machines that have appointed you to serve. As such, we as the residents and voters of New Jersey will be holding you accountable for the decisions this body makes.

We demand an open, transparent, and publicly inclusive process -- from the meetings, and collection of data, and proposed maps to inform your Commission; to the Commission's work product -- from draft maps, supporting data, and documentation. Every effort must be made to ensure all voices are not just able to be heard, but are actively sought out with an equitable frame on everything this Commission undertakes.

We will be watching.

This is a redistricting process like none we have previously seen. Voting rights are under active attack and being rolled back in many states across the country. The census data being used for redistricting was collected during a worldwide pandemic, and suffered from active interference and attempts to undermine the process.

And we're in New Jersey, the only state with a county line on primary ballots -- our own unique form of voter suppression that will be applied in each and every district you prescribe.

So we need to hold our process to the highest standards of transparency, accountability, and public input. This is not a partisan issue; it is a fairness, equity, and accountability issue. The process must include public engagement; meeting people where they are in terms of location, COVID risk, and work and childcare commitments. Public meetings like this one should be announced with at least seven days of public notice; an improved registration process; and you should hold at least one meeting per county, not just the 10 that have been committed to.

There needs to be nonpartisan, clear, and publicly reviewed standards for line drawing that include a prioritization for when all standards cannot be satisfied for a given district.

Particular, specific, and regular public attention is needed to ensure racial equity, aligning with the principles set forth in the Voting Rights Act. We must respect communities of interest to the largest extent possible. And the Commission must engage with community leaders and citizens to determine where district lines must fall to keep those communities from being divided for political gain. Planned districts must explicitly not be allowed to favor or protect incumbents, candidates, or political parties.

Maps proposed by the Commission must be made public, and a process of hearings and public comment must be allowed for at least 30 days before certification. This must include supporting data and written analysis for the basis of the new districts, that is available for the entire comment period.

The website for the Commission should publicly share the data underlying the redistricting process, and allow for submission and public display of all public comment, data, and map submissions that the Commission receives.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Dragon.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Mr. Nicholas Garita.

NICHOLAS GARITA: Hello; good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Nicholas Garita. I've been a resident of Fort Lee and the 37th District for 16 years.

I'm here with a group of my neighbors and my friends from the Latino Action Network. I would like the Commission to hear a little bit about my community and what it means to me, us, and our way of life.

Throughout my District, there are a multitude of Latinos from all different nationalities; and we make up approximately 25 percent of the population in the District, meaning that one-in-four of any constituents in the District are Latinos. Along with Asian Americans, we are the largest minority group in the District.

The high percentage of Latinos in the District is one that should not be overlooked and used as a token for diversity. This District is diverse in its demographics, but is not diverse in power when it comes to government positions, such as councilmen and women, school board representation, and mayoral representation.

Growing up in Fort Lee as a Latino I have not seen Latino representation in terms of mayoral candidates and board of education heads. To many, this representation is menial. A candidate should work for all of its constituents and for the betterment of all of its people, irrespective of their nationality or race. But most often, this is not the case; and the values, beliefs, and needs we share as a community wane.

In Hackensack, the largest city in the District with about 45,000 people, 40 percent of the population is Latino. There, Latinos contribute to the economy and add value to the community, but are left without adequate representation, much like the other areas in our District and throughout New Jersey. This lack of representation is detrimental to the Latino community in New Jersey, and in my District.

At an individual level, schools must do better to meet the needs of their growing Latino population, and provide representation and resources for the communities that need them. This connects people and ensures that people are cared for and adequately acknowledged. To some, this may be frivolous and superficial; but to someone who feels like they matter it would and could propel individuals to higher heights, and boost the community's morale and sentiment towards how the government is working for them.

All in all, as the percentage of Latinos in the 37th District persists at its high levels, I believe further growth is only imminent. To ensure that representation of Latinos is increased in the District and throughout the State, something must be done. However, as of now, the bottom line is that no matter where we are, as Latinos we are almost sure to find ourselves underrepresented.

I want a fair district for my community, fair districts for the communities to which my friends move to, and last, but not least, fair districts for the 21.6 percent of Latino New Jerseyans.

Thank you for your time, and have a good day.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Garita.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next two speakers are not in the Zoom room. They would have been Mr. Cory Garriga and Ms. Arlene Gartenberg.

Therefore, the next speaker is Ms. Yeimi Hernandez, followed by Ms. Virginia Orozco.

YEIMI HERNANDEZ: Good afternoon.

My name is Yeimi Hernandez. I am a student at Rutgers University in New Brunswick.

I have lived in the town of Freehold, New Jersey, for 21 years, which is known as District 11.

For decades the Latino community has remained voiceless and did not have any type of representation in the Legislative Branch of New Jersey. As time went on, we began to grow. Freehold began to see many Latino shops and businesses grow within their community. The streets began to fill up with faces with a similar complexion to mine. All through District 11, you will see the similar pattern.

Our community has grown, and splitting District 11 would undo the progress done within the last few years. In the last decade, the Latino community has grown to 47 percent in New Jersey. Yet, despite this, all Latinos face disparities in the healthcare system. Latinos in my community alone only go to a clinic that is on Park Avenue, due to their low income; they can only go during certain hours, and sometimes they face not going, and taking perilous actions towards their health, which is really bad.

In my town, schools began to have an overcrowding problem. It was solved only six years ago, in 2015, when the problem began in 2000.

There is much to be done, and tearing District 11 apart will only make the events worse. My school did not have many luxuries, and yet I went to college. But at the same time, you feel behind.

My District needs to remain the same. We are being suppressed from everything, and I am simply tired, like any other Latino is.

I can give you statistics and resources to look at, that show how we have much yet to do, but I wish to give you our perspective instead.

We are hungry to achieve more and do more. I am proud of the recent accomplishments done: in-state tuition for undocumented students,

in-state financial aid, driver's licenses for all, and occupational licenses as well. There is much to be done still. The Latino community is growing, and we have much to do.

I wish to one day have someone in our Congress, Senate with a similar complexion as mine. Who knows? It might just end up being me.

Thank you very much.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Hernandez.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker will be Ms. Virginia Orozco, followed by Mr. Herb Tarbous.

VIRGINIA OROZCO: Good afternoon.

My name is Virginia Orozco. I am here with a group of my friends and neighbors from the Latino Action Network.

I would like the Commission to hear a little bit about my community and what it means to me, us, and our way of life.

I'm a lifelong resident of Legislative District 37. I was born and raised in Englewood, New Jersey. I am a veteran, who has served close to 17 years in the New Jersey Army National Guard. I attended private parochial school on scholarship, because the public school system in Englewood was not safe or adequate during my school-age years. While attending private school was a safe alternative, I experienced a lot of racism by my peers and educators.

My family immigrated from Colombia and settled in Englewood in the 1960s. My mother, aunts, and uncle worked at Englewood Hospital for more than 30 years. They all retired from their employment at the local

hospital and continue to reside on Engle Street. They are active participants in every local and State election.

The Latino community in District 37 is currently 24.55 percent. While the population in the community has not grown significantly in the last 10 years, Latinos are an important part of District 37.

Englewood is a place that many Latinos call home. You can see our contributions to the local economy and community. For example, Noches is a popular Colombian restaurant and growing business, and many community members visit in Englewood.

You can also see other small Latino businesses along Palisade Avenue. In addition, Latinos, like my mother and aunt, work at Englewood Hospital.

Today, I ask that the Commission please take into consideration the contributions of Latino voices in drawing legislative maps. Too often, we are counted for the census, but not considered during the elections and the political process. Having a representative who needs to listen to our community is paramount to keeping the vibrant Latino community of District 37 moving towards a better future.

For these and many other reasons, it is only fair that we ensure that our communities are heard and represented fairly in the new apportionment maps. The bottom line is, that no matter where we are as Latinos, we're almost sure to find ourselves underrepresented.

I want a fair district for my community; fair districts for communities to which my friends move to. And finally, fair districts for the 21.6 percent of Latinos New Jerseyans.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Ms. Orozco.

And, by the way, thank you for your service.

Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, the next speaker is Mr. Herb Tarbous, followed by Mr. Brad Van Arnum.

HERBERT L. TARBIOUS: Hi, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify remotely today.

While I'm on the Executive Committee of Voters Choice New Jersey -- an organization committed to the enactment of ranked-choice voting in New Jersey -- my testimony today is based on my personal views.

And thank you to Commissioners for the informative public website. My first comment is to note that while the website states that the Commission is bound by certain legal parameters, it does not seem to list the complete set of parameters by which the Commission will operate. To wit -- the website states that various provisions of Article 4, Section 2 have been modified by subsequent court rulings, but does not seem to indicate which court rulings are being referred to, nor the final configuration of parameters by which the Commission must operate.

Additionally, the website states that there are currently 40 legislative districts with one Senator and two members of the General Assembly elected from each district -- which clearly contradicts Article 4, Section 2, which says that multi-member Senate districts are permissible.

With respect to the mission of this Commission, I would like to believe that, as a whole, and as individual Commissioners, your allegiance to the people of the State of New Jersey, and not your individual political party, will hold. But I'm a realist, and I know that politics as usual has little to do

with the welfare of the people, and much to do with the amassing of protection of political power. In that vein, I see this Commission at a crossroads in the political history of our State. Both on an individual basis, and as a whole body, there is an opportunity to alter the trajectory of politics.

While you may be constrained in the construction of the instant map, I believe there's a clear opportunity, as stated in Article 8 of the bylaws of this body, the Report to the Legislature, which states, "The Commission may submit to Legislature recommendations for modifying existing laws or modifying the State Constitution." I hope you will take this opportunity to make significant democracy-oriented reforms to the system of legislative representation in New Jersey.

According to Professor Julia Sass Rubin of Rutgers, New Jersey currently has the second-largest legislative districts by population, which leads to a dilution of the voices of the people. Increasing the number of legislative districts would simplify the map-drawing process, as well as raising the voices of the people. Other reforms, such as multi-member districts, would lead to true proportional representation; along with the modification of the membership of this body away from political appointments, and put the power of reinforcement into the hands of the people.

In closing, sharing a quote from the former CEO of Hanover Insurance, Bill O'Brien said, "Organizational politics is such a perversion of truth and honesty that most organizations reek with its odor. Yet most of us so take it for granted that we don't even notice it."

I hope that you folks can see beyond the current political environment, and do what's right for the people of the State of New Jersey.

Thank you.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Tarbous, for your comments.
Madam Secretary.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, your last speaker will be Mr. Brad Van Arnum.

BRAD VAN ARNUM: Good afternoon, first of all, and thank you, members of the Commission, for allowing me this chance to speak.

My name is Brad Van Arnum, and I've been a resident of West Windsor for nearly a decade. Prior to that, I lived in Montgomery and Westfield for about a decade each.

I'm here today not only to speak about my part of Central New Jersey, but also to present a potential legislative map for the entire State.

For the last two years, I've been deeply engaged with redistricting, and have spent much time thinking about how our legislative map could be improved without deviating too much from the current district lines.

Yesterday, I submitted my legislative map, along with an outline of what changes I made in each part of the state. Given that the opportunity to rethink our districts comes only once a decade, I looked hard for places to increase competition, improve minority representation, and, above all, better reflect distinct communities of interest. Since members of the Commission have my map and outline available to them, I wish to keep this testimony brief, and I will speak for the next few minutes about just a handful of my districts.

First, looking at South Jersey, one of my main goals here was to avoid county splits, and I started my map simply by having the 1st District

become all of Cumberland and Cape May County, which have a combined population that is just within the acceptable range.

As for my 2nd District, it now contains almost all of Atlantic County, and it's missing only three towns that could not fit due to population.

For my 3rd District, I still have all of Salem County, but I strove to include as much of Gloucester County as possible, and ended up creating a version that contains all but five towns in the County. My 3rd remains a highly competitive district and, as with the 1st District, it ended up becoming slightly more Democratic. All of these changes, of course, effected the adjacent 4th, which is still centered around its four primary towns, but which ends up becoming more Republican and potentially competitive in the future.

Next, although the changes I made to the 5th and 6th do not alter their status as safely Democratic seats, I think these were good examples of where I was thinking about communities of interest. My 5th District, by staying entirely within Camden County, no longer dilutes the area's Black and Hispanic population, and now includes a group of towns that have more in common with Camden itself.

At the same time, my 6th becomes even more of a suburban District with the addition of Evesham.

To finish for South Jersey, I'll mention the District that I changed the most was the 8th, which becomes much more Republican due to gaining the northeast corner of Burlington County, as well as two towns in Ocean County.

Population shifts over the last decade mean that, generally, districts in South Jersey have to expand northward, and it was my 8th that most clearly demonstrated this. But at the same time, I was also trying to keep the Fort Dix area together in one district, and I feel my 8th accomplishes that more effectively than the current 12th does.

In just a moment, I'll conclude by discussing Central Jersey; but first I want to quickly talk about Monmouth County, as I thought I made some interesting changes there. For example, I had the 11th lose the Freeholds and Colts Neck, but gain more coastal towns, turning it into a highly compact Shore District that would still be very competitive.

As for the 12th, my version is still based in Old Bridge, but it's now much more compact and includes the towns along the Raritan Bay, which constitute an important community of interest.

All of these changes then allow the 13th to become more of a central Monmouth district that keeps together the Jewish communities in Manalapan, Marlboro and Freehold, which are currently in three different districts.

Finally, looking at my part of the state, in Central Jersey, I am pleased with the changes I made to the 16th District in particular. This version no longer includes Hunterdon County, and instead my 16th becomes an Asian American-influenced district, gaining West Windsor and Plainsboro, which share a school system yet are currently in two different legislative districts.

Whereas the present-day 16th is only about 25 percent Asian American, mine is 37 percent -- a difference that would make this

community's voice stronger in one district, rather than being diluted across multiple districts, as is the case right now.

Nearby, I have the 17th become a dedicated district for the Rutgers community by having it gain Highland Park which, to my surprise, it currently lacks. Next door, I have the 18th become nearly 40 percent Asian American, with a few minor changes, providing another influenced district in Central Jersey for this community.

Further north, my new version of the 21st adds Bridgewater, while losing Roselle Park and a few other small towns, helping to make the District even more suburban in character.

And finally, I feel that my 23rd District -- which now includes all of Warren County and most of Hunterdon -- does a better job representing the exurban areas of Western Jersey.

In closing, I hope my proposed map ends up being of some use to the Commission, even if only selectively. I've realized there are many considerations behind district lines, but I do feel that I produced a map with elements that both parties could potentially support. I did so by thinking about districts less in terms of their partisanship, and more in terms of the communities and groups of people they bring together.

I would like to thank the Commission once more for its time today, and I wish you all the best in creating a legislative map that our State can be proud of.

Have a great holiday season, and thank you again for your time.

MR. BARLAS: Thank you, Mr. Van Arnum.

And by the way, thank you for this very, very well put together, thought out, and detailed submission to the Commission members. I know we all -- I'm sure we will all find it very enlightening and useful.

So thank you for the effort that you put into that.

Madam Secretary, did anyone else join who we missed before?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: No, Mr. Chairman.

MR. BARLAS: Okay; so we have another public hearing on Friday at 10 a.m., at TCNJ. That is an in-person hearing, so if anyone is watching this, between now and Friday, please sign up to testify or attend, if you'd like.

With that, I don't believe there's any other business that we need to do.

Is there a motion to adjourn?

ASSEMBLYMAN BRAMNICK: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MR. JONES: Second.

MR. BARLAS: Motion by Commissioner Bramnick, seconded by Co-Chair Jones.

All in favor? (affirmative responses)

Opposed? (no response)

Abstentions? (no response)

Okay; thank you, everyone, for participating.

See you Friday.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)