

## **To the Senate State Government Committee. Nov. 9, 2021**

### **Chairman Argall, Chairman Street and committee members**

I appreciate the opportunity to submit formal testimony to the committee on congressional redistricting. I want my testimony to be considered no less than the 3 people who were invited to testify. I have concerns about the process and the actual maps.

#### **Process:**

I applaud the public hearing. I request that the preliminary congressional maps be released with time for the public to review the maps, participate in hearings and comment. I also request the committee prepare to edit those maps from the public comments before submitting them for legislative approval.

Public input and discussion were sorely lacking in the 2011 redistricting, conducted by the House and Senate state government committees. In 2011, the Senate SGC presented a "shell" bill (SB 1249) for both first and second consideration on the Senate floor. The actual text of the bill, with the district descriptions, was released 14 hours before the final senate vote. This violates, in my view, our state constitutional requirements that a bill be considered on 3 separate days before a vote. A representative cannot consider a shell bill.

Following Senate approval, the House voted the bill through its committee and held all 3 considerations in less than 5 business days, just prior to the Christmas holiday. There was no effort to solicit input from the citizens of PA and no visual maps were available to anyone. In 2021, I expect that the Senate SGC will transparently share the bill and associated map of the 17 districts with the public and give time (a week minimum) for comment and review **prior to committee considerations and a floor vote**. I expect the committee will also transparency share who drew the maps and what data was considered as well as the reasoning behind any county, city, and municipality divisions.

#### **Mapping comments: Montgomery County**

I am a retired physician living Elkins Park, in Montgomery County. Montgomery County was severely gerrymandered in the 2011 congressional redistricting process. We were divided into 5 congressional districts, though we had enough population to have our own congressional representative. None of the 5 representatives lived in our county. Our commissioners had to deal with 5 not too interested representatives when our county experienced issues related to the federal government. These representatives had no accountability to our county or its citizens. This is not the way our government is supposed to work. Please do not repeat this.

I request that the committee start with blank maps. In the past district lines have been drawn to protect specific incumbents and parties. This is unacceptable. The districts do not belong to incumbents. Nor are incumbents entitled to a safe district or to particular neighborhoods. The districts belong to the people of Pennsylvania and should be drawn to enable fair representation of citizens in Washington DC.

The 2011 congressional gerrymandering created a series of "safe" districts, drawn to be safe for one or the other political parties. Incumbents of both parties benefitted. This included the many districts in my county and my region. These safe districts create a deep partisan divide, where only the primary counts. This paralyzes problem solving. As a PA citizen, I do not want my state to participate in such

**gerrymandering. We are a moderate nation governed by extremists from both parties, thanks to gerrymandering.** We need competitive districts, and elections where voters have choices.

No perfect map exists and all maps must be drawn with a set of values and in compliance with state and federal legal requirements. Please explain the values you chose and rate your maps with standard measurements including number of splits, compactness, proportionality, minority representation, and competitiveness. Please also respect natural boundaries of rivers and ridges in PA.

My part of the state, southeast PA, has grown in population and thus we should not lose representation: areas of the state that have lost population should lose a district. I request you align prisoner counting with the LRC. It is fair to count prisoners where they last resided as that is how PA defines their residence. This deeply effects my region, as the current counting disproportionately reduces Philadelphia's voting power. Strong cultural, economic and social interactions connect Montgomery and Philadelphia counties. We function as the southeast region of PA, and thus the prisoner apportionment affects all of us in this part of the state.

In 2011, PA voters were handed "Goofy Kicking Donald" and other bizarre district lines, many of which ran through Montgomery County. Montgomery County needs to remain mainly whole in accordance with the state constitutional requirements to not divide counties. I also request that you avoid splitting precincts and school districts when possible. Do not try to hide partisan gerrymandering behind a belief the federal district's must be exact to the person on proportionality. This is not how it is done in other states. Small deviations are tolerated to help make sensible maps for communities.

I, like most PA citizens, want congressional districts that are fair, that do not favor a political party and that support competitive elections. Right now, 37% of all PA elections lack an opposition candidate. PA can do better and fairer congressional districts will stimulate more election competition.

Thank you for your work

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