

Thank you, Representative Grove and committee members for this opportunity to provide input for the congressional redistricting of Pennsylvania. I've lived in Pennsylvania 46 years, and I now reside in Bucks County. In my professional career, I conducted market research for consumer products and pharmaceuticals, and in doing so I've studied many communities of interest and maps. Since I retired, I've worked as a volunteer and citizen to end gerrymandering and ensure fair voting districts. I've been speaking with hundreds of Democrats and Republicans, meeting with legislators, writing letters to the editor, collecting signatures on petitions, and most recently, I've been studying census data and drawing and sharing maps. My comments today reflect my personal views and conclusions based on that experience.

As you well know, the 2020 census shows that Pennsylvania has grown only 2.4% in the last decade, resulting in the loss of one congressional seat. However, the 7-counties which are the focus of today's hearing grew 5.3%, twice the growth rate of the state overall. The 10-year growth rate was highest in Lehigh county which grew by 7.2%, followed by Montgomery county (+7.1%), and Chester County, also up +7.1%. The population of this 7-county region is currently equivalent to 5 congressional districts. Just as Pennsylvania is becoming less rural and more multicultural, so is this 7-county southeastern region.

In terms of racial composition, the population growth in these 7 counties is driven especially by the growth in the Hispanic population which has reached 406,000, up +48% since 2010. To put that in perspective, 406,000 is more than the population of Lehigh or Northampton counties. It was very interesting to me to learn that the Hispanic population is primarily in the lower tier of Berks, Lehigh and Northampton counties. Specifically, Hispanics represent fully 52% of Pennsylvania's prosperous and third largest city of Allentown, 69% of Reading, 29% of Bethlehem, and 26% of Easton. Many municipalities around these four cities have also had significant growth in the Hispanic population. A Muhlenberg College Spanish professor, Erika Sutherland, says that the Lehigh Valley's growing Hispanic population is increasingly highly educated and actively participates in politics.

I am here today to ask you to prioritize three things when drawing the congressional districts. **First**, we know that the districts must meet the federal requirements of having equal population and having majority minority districts where possible to comply with the Voting Rights Act.

Second, - although the minority Black and Brown communities may not be sufficiently large to constitute a majority district in these 7 counties, much of this population is large, growing and lives in compact areas, and should be fairly represented. I ask that the voting power of the minority communities in this region not be diluted by dividing them.

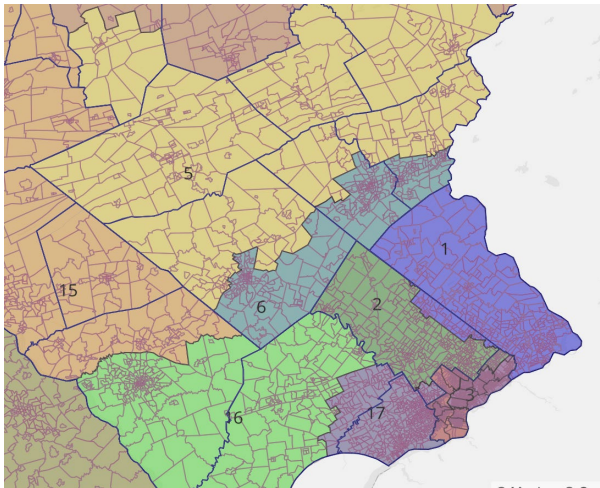
Third, I ask you to draw congressional districts that fairly represent both Democrats and Republicans here and in Pennsylvania overall, versus gerrymandering the districts to serve the interests of a particular candidate or party. It is essential to our representative

form of government that citizens of both parties be represented proportionally. The current congressional districts are a major improvement in partisan fairness versus the 2011 map, so we know it can be done.

To illustrate how we might achieve these goals, I'd like to share a congressional map I've drawn, and focus on 4 districts in this 7-county area. Here is a link to the map. <https://davesredistricting.org/join/4f1c5ae4-d850-42c0-8237-3bfbed3e77ce>

And a snapshot..

First, looking at Berks, Lehigh and Northampton counties, please direct your attention to the teal-colored district (district 6).



This district extends from Easton on the eastern edge of Pennsylvania, through Bethlehem, Allentown and Reading. These cities have much in common in terms their urban and suburban character, cultural attractions such as museums, large seasonal festivals, and institutions of higher education. The cities here also face similar challenges due to rapid industrial and population growth, including challenges to public schools, transportation, and housing. Amtrak is planning two new passenger rail lines, including one from NYC to Allentown, and another from Philadelphia to Reading. These communities are also physically connected by Route 78 and route 222, and it is known as the 222 corridor. It takes a little more than 1 hour to drive from one end to the other. As mentioned earlier, this lower tier of the three counties is home to a very high minority population, most of which is Hispanic. Importantly, 28% of the total population of this district would be Hispanic, which would help ensure fair representation of the large Hispanic community. The district shown would cover 69% of the total population of the 3 counties.

Next, I'd like to focus on the Northern tier of these 3 counties and the district colored in yellow on the map; district 5. This is home to the other 31% of the total 3-county population. This area consists of more rural, suburban, and mostly white communities. To achieve the necessary population of 765,000, this district would need to be combined with neighboring counties. This map shows how the district could include counties to the north which are also more rural and mostly white. The population of the yellow district has grown by half of 1% in the last 10 years.

Now, moving southward on the map to Bucks and Montgomery Counties, the map shows two congressional districts-- one in blue and the other in green. The two counties have a combined population of 1.5 million, equivalent to 2 congressional districts. Both counties tend to have densely populated, suburban communities bordering Philadelphia, ranging from very affluent to low income and blue collar. Meanwhile, the northern most parts of the two counties, which is where we are today, are somewhat sparsely populated with very small to mid-size towns, as well as some rural and small farm areas.

Racially speaking, Bucks County is 80% white, with the other 20% almost equally divided between Hispanics, Asian and Black minority groups. Montgomery county is 72% white, 11% Black, and the balance being mostly Asian and Hispanic. The minority communities in Bucks and Montgomery counties are not as concentrated in a compact and unified area as we have in Berks-Lehigh-Northampton counties.

The Blue district includes all of Bucks County plus some communities in Montgomery County in order to reach the target population. The boundaries are very close to the current district boundaries. The boundaries of the green district which is mainly Montgomery County are also very close to the current lines.

Those are the four congressional districts I specifically want to address today.

To summarize, in addition to meeting the constitutional requirements, it would be very desirable to create a district in this 7-county region that will provide strong congressional representation for the fast growing, multicultural region in the Lower part of Berks, Lehigh and Northampton Counties in order to sustain the vibrant population and economic growth there.

I look forward to seeing a preliminary Congressional map, and another round of regional hearings to allow for public comment.

Thank you for taking my testimony into consideration as you undertake this important process.

Here is a link to an article in the Morning Call, newspaper of the Lehigh Valley.
<https://www.mcall.com/news/local/mcnws-demographic-changes-lehigh-valley-municipalities-20210816-kxzwdirrsbecdpa6r6drbcq2ka-story.html>

Here's a link to a spreadsheet of my demographic analysis.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Uac4-NPQYvmK4YRVQHcQcMIUg1zAg7a979r1UDGgjmU/edit?usp=sharing>

ATalbott 10.19.2021