

## Testimony of Jayne Drake- Executive Director, Renaissance Mechanicsburg

This legislative redistricting process is, I realize, a complicated, unpleasant, and wearisome job. Even with the purest, best intentions, efforts undertaken to make our districts better—to correct inequities or to metaphorically smooth out a wrinkle or rub out a spot—can perpetuate that flaw or create new spots. Every change made to accommodate area demographic shifts, or any other proposed change has consequences--consequences for you as legislators and for constituents. From my vantage point, this redistricting exercise—let's just go ahead and call it gerrymandering—is about votes and party advantage. It more about gaining or retaining republican or democratic seats—and less about the real lives and needs of the people in our boroughs, townships, cities, and counties. It places politics above people. Where this becomes particularly troublesome is with redrawing the legislative map lines that cut through our municipalities. I'm thinking in particular of Mechanicsburg here but include all the other affected municipalities.

Reshaping our districts will create confusion and major frustrations for school districts, police and fire protection, and other public services. I'd like to offer several specific examples of how redistricting by slicing through our boroughs will lead to frustration and confusion. These examples are not front-page worthy; they are small examples, but they are typical. Our 88th district representative, Sheryl Delozier, regularly offers shredder events, dinners for first responders, veterans' recognition dinners, car seat safety checks, just to name a few. With a new legislative line carved along Market Street in Mechanicsburg, such events will now not be open to those who live on the other side of the dividing line. "I'm sorry. We can no longer invite you to this 88th district event even though you have attended many times in the past. You may want to check with Representative X on the other side of Market Street to see if she/he is interested in this." Splitting Mechanicsburg apart will likely also have a negative impact on business development in the Borough. As the immediate past president of the Downtown Mechanicsburg Partnership and the Executive Director of our preservation and revitalization project, RENAISSANCE Mechanicsburg, I can tell you that the downtown businesses on the west side of Market Street that we promote and support will continue to receive county and state funding as they have in the past while the Mechanicsburg businesses east of Market in the newly formed district just next door may not be, depending on the priorities of the 87th district representative.

In terms of our preservation and revitalization project, RENAISSANCE Mechanicsburg, we rely importantly on the 88th District for financial and other support. Should this split along Market Street stand, we would then need to double down on our efforts for funding to complete a critical part of phase I, Center Square at Main and Market, as well as phase III, the rehabilitation and streetscaping from Market to Walnut Streets.

At the very least Borough businesses and non-profits must inevitably serve two masters. Organizations such as The Partnership, Simpson Library, the Mechanicsburg Museum Association, Mission Central, New Hope Ministries, to name just five of many in the Borough, who depend at least in part on government support to sustain themselves, will of necessity

need to lean on the good will and resources of two district representatives instead of one in order to serve the entire downtown and the new districts 87 and 88. That does not bode well for our future.

The solution? It seems clear to the citizens and elected officials of our charming Borough. Do not draw the line through our streets and wrench our downtown apart. Doing so may serve some political agenda, but in the end, it will inevitably sow the seeds of resentment, frustration, and confusion with constituents instead of finding ways to succeed together to sustain each other and work in harmony.