

Testimony of Mike Krzeminski, Emergency Management Coordinator and Volunteer Fire Chief, Harrison Township

I am a resident of Harrison Township, where I serve as an Emergency Management Coordinator and Volunteer Fire Chief. I am employed as a Staff Instructor at the Allegheny County Fire Academy, and also adjunct as an instructor at the PA State Fire Academy. So I have knowledge of these issues at a local, regional, and state level.

The reorganization team should consider more than just the same number of citizens population of each district. That is only one form of equality. The AK Valley has unique geography and bizarre municipal boundaries. Sometimes rivers or valleys make places that are not too far apart, actually different and socially distant. For example, as a fire chief my volunteer fire company rarely works with the Lower Burrell emergency services- though they are close as the "bird flies" we are separated by a river valley. Also, in this region, we work - giving and receiving mutual aid-to three counties, which presents numerous challenges.

Many boundaries in our region were either natural, following mountains, valleys, rivers or streams, or were objectively drawn by surveying crews with low tech transits and measuring chains. These antique often colonial borders make other challenges. The word regional is often difficult to accomplish here. For example students may while riding a bus, pass a regional vo-tech because it is in a different county to receive the same education at their "regional" CTC. I saw this waste of both resources and time as a public school teacher.

Because of this unique geography, which makes some things more challenging, there are also some cooperative efforts in the region. One example is an alliance of 8 volunteer fire companies in 4 Municipalities of this region. Rep. DelRosso knows and supports this effort. Before dropping new lines on a map- perhaps more local level investigation and community discussion would be prudent.

The upper Allegheny Valley is sometimes the forgotten corner of Allegheny County, and much of its industry, which was the foundation of these communities, is gone or has greatly changed. Rep. DelRosso has stepped forward to address the needs and concerns of our region since taking office. We personally worked together with her and Allegheny County 911 to address emergency services radio communication logistics in our region- and her action brought this concern to the front burner of their attention. It is disappointing to see that changes in our district map a designation could lose her as a proactive and energetic representative for my community.