

Testimony

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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am Donald N. McClure, Jr. I am a resident of Millerstown in northeastern Perry County where I have resided for more than 25 years. I own a small public affairs and public relations consulting firm in Camp Hill. I have been engaged in the political process for 44 of my 61 years in more capacities than I can list here. But, among them I have been a policy advocate, media commentator, and educator at the collegiate level.

It is my understanding that the purpose of this hearing is to address the preliminary House redistricting maps provided by the Pennsylvania Reapportionment Commission. Indeed, this will be the focus of my remarks; however, I would be remiss if I did not make it clear that my recommendations and observations equally apply to the preliminary state Senate map and the congressional map as passed by the House State Government Committee.

Perry County draws its identity as a unit. Residents don't cite New Bloomfield or Newport as their home. Instead, we identify as residents of Perry County. Other rural counties carry the same characteristic. Juniata County is among them. Consequently, Perry County meets the definition of one

community of interest. Therefore, it should not be broken apart any more than other community of interest.

Regionally, Perry County's orientation is toward Dauphin and Cumberland Counties in significant concrete ways. Consider these common linkages:

- 70% of Perry County's workforce leaves the County for employment and most travel to Cumberland and Dauphin Counties. (I am one of them.)
- Perry County is part of the Tri-County Planning Commission that includes Dauphin and Cumberland Counties.
- Perry County's Economic Development activities are linked to Dauphin and Cumberland Counties.
- Cumberland and Perry Counties operate a joint Housing Authority.
- Perry County's prison system is linked with Cumberland County.
- Perry County receives its health services from UMPC and PSU / Hershey Medical.
- Mental Health Services are linked between Cumberland and Perry Counties.
- Children and Youth Services are shared between Cumberland and Perry Counties.
- Services for people with disabilities are linked as ARC of Cumberland/Perry.
- Domestic violence services including legal aid support are joint efforts with Dauphin, Cumberland, and Perry Counties.
- Perry County is part of the Rabbit Transit system that includes Cumberland and Dauphin Counties.

- Perry and Juniata Counties are part of two different PennDOT districts. Perry is district 8 including Cumberland and Dauphin Counties.
- Perry, Dauphin, Cumberland, and Northern York Counties are shared by the Capital Area Intermediate Unit.
- Perry County is in the Harrisburg media market.

The current 86th state House seat includes all of Perry and part of Cumberland County. As per the list, the present configuration makes perfect sense as a broader community of interest.

The combination of Perry and Juniata in the preliminary map fractures any commonality of interest for the 86th. Instead, it ties two very separate communities together in an arbitrary alliance. Not one of the above items listed is shared by Juniata County. Juniata County has separate service systems for every point listed and all governmental service alliances are with Mifflin County. A legitimate State House district would combine Perry and part of Cumberland Counties and leave Juniata and Mifflin in a district unto itself.

But as we consider these important parochial matters, I have larger observations about the current map. In total, I believe the House map is so flawed that it needs to be fully revised.

First, I am highly concerned that cities like State College, Harrisburg, Erie, Scranton, Lancaster and others are purposely split to engineer the election of suburban candidates at the expense of urban residents.

The circumstance is simply repulsive. This preliminary map is reminiscent of the 1930s practice of

redlining where minorities were pigeonholed into confined neighborhoods to systematically deny access to wealth creation and political influence. The preliminary map creates a near certainty that Harrisburg City will not have majority minority representation for the foreseeable future. This example is not peculiar to Harrisburg. This new brand of political redlining cannot be tolerated by the House Republican Caucus, the Commission, or any fair minded Pennsylvanian.

Second, trendlines in population shifts over the last forty years have remained the same. The west, north, and the Scranton Wilkes-Barre region has yielded population to the southcentral and southeastern portions of the state while the Lehigh Valley has remained fairly constant. This population shift combined with philosophical changes have built a political landscape where Republicans have comprised the majority of the state House membership for 24 of the last 30 years. Most recently, Republicans have held more than 110 seats while losing significant ground in the Southeast as natural voting trends there favor the Democrats.

This preliminary map seeks to reverse four decades of political evolution. It effectively shifts by the stroke of a pen 12 to 15 seats to the Democratic party in open defiance of the will of the people. Even the Philadelphia Inquirer notes that the House map is far more friendly to Democrats than the political landscape warrants.

We may be told that this map is intended to reflect registration or make seats more competitive. This is not the job of a truly independent redistricting commission. The Commission's job is to keep communities of interest together, to treat minority citizens fairly, and to relocate seats where the

population growth or shifts demands them. I don't see evidence of this obligation being fulfilled by the House map.

Third, the country is witnessing an increasingly focused policy debate on the merits of redistricting commissions versus legislatures drawing district lines. One side will argue that commissions are nonpartisan and fairer. The other side argues that unelected bodies will be equally partisan and biased, so legislatures as elected agents of the people must remain in control. The yield in other states shows that independent commissions are more partisan and commit more egregious acts of gerrymandering than do legislative bodies. This is especially true in Maryland and California.

Historically, the Pennsylvania Commission has worked reasonably well. However, I suggest the preliminary House map has fallen into hyper partisanship. What a tragic development. The blatant defiance of community of interest standards, like the case of the 86th district, and of demographic trends should frighten every Pennsylvanian. This map weaponizes the redistricting process to purposely shift the balance of power at the expense of our citizens and the willful disenfranchisement of many. This is not right. It never has been and never will be.

Therefore, I want to appeal to Commission chair Dr. Mark Nordenberg to take the lead in revisiting this whole process. I urge him to reclaim the historic standard of reasonable redistricting.

Finally, it seems to me that Dr. Nordenberg has a choice to make about how he wants to be remembered as chair. He has the opportunity to prove that Commissions can work by issuing a map

that corrects the errors I cite. Or, he can choose the partisan model. Dr. Nordenberg can be forever known as the man who intervened to ensure a balanced approach to redistricting. Or, he can be known as the man who allowed politics to be played with his fellow Pennsylvanians and launched a new era of division and enmity between the parties.

The options are clear. So, Dr. Nordenberg, what is your choice? What will your legacy be?