

Good evening, Chairman Nordenberg and members of the Commission, and thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you today. My name is Kyle Hynes and although I've worked with Fair Districts Centre County and work with Draw the Lines PA, here I'm speaking for myself and my own views, not attempting to speak on behalf of any organization. I'm currently a freshman at Carnegie Mellon University and I'm from State College in Centre County.

I've spoken at prior meetings about my more general thoughts for how to map the state, so I won't spend much time on that. To put it very simply, I hope the Commission makes every attempt to maximize competitive districts in every part of our Commonwealth, because, in my mind, a seat with a representative who can sit on their laurels is a seat with disenfranchised voters.

I don't want to spend too much time deep in the weeds, so I'll try to be concise. But today, I want to zero in on the State House map in Central Pennsylvania, particularly the areas around State College, my hometown. As I see it, there are two potential ways to draw a fair map in Centre County.

The first would prioritize preserving municipal boundaries and communities of interest, which, despite my personal disagreement with using them, are the traditional strategies. All of the townships and boroughs north of the Bald Eagle Mountains – except for Taylor, Worth, Huston, and Port Matilda – would be included in one district, as well as the somewhat similar areas in the Hublersburg area and eastern Penns Valley. That seat, with only 30,000 residents, would have to be combined with another area – most likely in Clinton County – to complete a full district. In the lower part of the county, a western district and an eastern district would be drawn, with the dividing line running near Atherton Street through State College. This will maintain the Nittany Valley's community of interest and minimize municipal splits to the greatest extent possible. I'm happy to attach the visual of the map if the Commission wants.

The second would prioritize competitive districts, my preferred way. In this plan, the bulk of the county's area would be divided into two districts, one in the western part of the county and one in the eastern part. The eastern district would include Bellefonte, Boalsburg in Harris Township, and the southern part of State College; the western district would include Philipsburg, Milesburg, Patton, Benner, and most of College Township, as well as much of the Penn State campus. Finally, a third, incomplete district would cover western State College and Ferguson Township, with about half its population required to go in Huntingdon County to the south. In this plan, the two main districts would be near tossups, while the smaller, southern district, although heavily Democratic, would be easy to connect with rural areas of Huntingdon County to create a third purple district. I'm also happy to attach this if the Commission wants.

Either of these outcomes would be better than the status quo. Right now, our county is divided into four districts, with most following no rhyme or reason. One seat covers the Borough of State College and Rush Township in a snake-shaped pattern, convoluted enough that Route 322, one of the main highways through the region, crosses the district line eight times, while one which should be more familiar to some on this Commission surrounds State College before consuming a giant swath of Centre and Mifflin Counties' rural areas. The third pulls away a small area of State College suburbia before covering rural Huntingdon County, and the fourth takes over the remaining rural areas and combines them with Lock Haven. Overall, the current map combines constituents with few shared interests into four seats – three safely Republican, one safely Democratic – in a county that hasn't voted Republican in nine years.

Of course, there are ample fair ways to split up Centre County when the Commission comes forward with its final State House map. The solutions I've proposed are only a subset of the possibilities, and there are undoubtedly many more. I hope and trust that when the final map for Centre County is proposed, it will be in a transparent process that involves lots of feedback from the voters in our neck of the woods, so that our votes will matter and our representatives can serve our real communities.

Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

*Appended maps: Top map is the communities-of-interest drawing and the bottom is the competitive map*



