

Good Morning,

My name is Joshua Siegel, I'm a both a resident of Lehigh County and an Allentown City Councilman. I feel compelled to articulate my disgust with the current division of the Lehigh Valley, specifically Allentown and Bethlehem and the dilution of Lehigh County voters. The map must be altered in a way that achieves optimal outcomes for representation while acknowledging that incumbency will inevitably play a factor in the creation of some seats. First, the present division of Allentown is illogical and unacceptable. In order to provide Senator Browne an outlet to a more favorable district, it's clear that the West of Allentown was divided off in order to ensure that Senator Browne could be drawn into the 18th Senate District. However, this means that Allentown will have 14 of its precincts split off. This will result in nearly 25% of Allentown's population being part of the 16th Senate District and the remaining 75% will be in the 14th. This is simply unfair to the residents of my city and a pathway for ineffectual representation. Those 25% of Allentown stand little chance of having their voice heard, amongst a much larger district that stretches all the way to Berks County. I begrudgingly recognize that incumbency is a tough motivator to overcome, but there are more optimal ways to split Allentown that would significantly reduce Allentown precincts being split into the 16th and put more into the 14th. If the LRC were to start with Pat's precinct and draw south, it could much easier reach the rest of the proposed 18th and do so without significantly undermining representation. I urge the LRC to utilize this approach first and restore most of Allentown to the 14th Senate District. This would also have the added benefit of improving the total number of minority voters in the district and create more opportunity for diverse representation.

Second, I urge the LRC to give West Bethlehem back to the 18th Senate District. West Bethlehem has far more in common with the whole of Bethlehem as its truly part of the whole city than it does the rest of Allentown. Bethlehem does not need to be divided at all as a city.

Third, the LRC needs to make the 14th Senate District more Lehigh County-centric. Lehigh County is the 10th largest county in the state of Pennsylvania. As such it's easier to draw a Senate seat that is more geographically and municipally concentrated in Lehigh County. At present, Lehigh County appears to be an after thought for the 14th, and most of Lehigh County will have their voice overshadowed by Berks County which has much less in common with it. Lehigh County is a far more suburban and urban county than Berks County. I would like to see South Whitehall, North Whitehall Township and possibly Washington Township and Slatington added. There is no excuse for the district to extend out to Moore Township which shares far less in common with the rest of the district.



The current map doesn't even achieve the highest possible level of minority representation and seriously undermines Lehigh County. I recognize no map is perfect and nothing will ever satisfy everyone, but this map doesn't even come close to what a potential compromise could look like. We can do much better and still achieve an outcome that all parties can live with. Senator Costa and Senator Ward, I'm calling you to create a more representative seat for Lehigh County that preserves most of Allentown in 14th Senate District. I understand that Senator Browne's position in the Republican Party inclines the redistricting process to consider that when drawing. I accept that as political reality and I say let's just find a way to work around it than pretend that the outcome is likely to change that much. Fair Districts has even said that incumbency must be understood and acknowledged. Drawing through the South of Allentown will result in fewer Allentown precincts being lost, but would also ensure Senator Browne gets his district. We can also achieve Mr. Nordenberg's goal of more minority influence seats by adding more of Allentown to the 14th. This board needs to take public comment and make changes based on it. The public needs to see that their voices are heard and that concessions can be made on all side towards a more perfect map. While we may never achieve it exactly, we should strive to come as close as possible.

