

PA Senate districts

I live in Bala Cynwyd, Montgomery County, in the current 17th PA Senate District. I have lived in this district over 25 years. I am a white, middle class, suburban woman but I care deeply about proper representation for all people especially those of color and frontline communities.

I have concerns about the overall PA Senate district maps as well as specific concerns about Montgomery County's representation. It is unfortunate that the Senate plan was created with limited interaction and input from the LRC and their mapping team.

Here are my concerns:

- A quick glance at the proposed LRC district map indicates significant gerrymandering. A key principle that must be kept in mind is that voters should pick legislators rather than legislators picking the voters. Unfortunately, gerrymandered districts lead to legislators picking the voters.

- My gerrymandering conclusion is based on our PA Constitution, which requires that:

- o Districts should be drawn compact and contiguous

- o Districts should be drawn without unnecessary geopolitical splits, unless absolutely necessary

- o Districts should maintain 'as nearly equal in population as practical'

- It strongly favors incumbents. It is due to the partisan representation on the LRC as even the chair of the LRC stated.

- o Valuing incumbents as a top priority stifles the democratic process. It denies realistic opportunities for new candidates to emerge and get elected.

- o If the boundaries had been redrawn such that two incumbent officials might have to run against each other, this could have been an effective way for the voters to choose who represent them.

- The overall representation on the proposed map does not reflect the current Pennsylvania population distribution. The Southeast region is growing and is not adequately represented, but the voting power in regions that have lost population is unfairly maintained. Districts that contain prisons still are overrepresented even though they are below the ideal Senate population size even if the prison population is counted. Many districts in the southwest and central Pennsylvania are well below the ideal population size which gives them greater influence and power than they deserve. However, districts in Philadelphia and in the seven collar counties around Philadelphia

are packed with more people in these districts than they should have according to the guidelines. These irregularities in population consistency dilute the voting power of the regions of the southeast regions of the state, especially Montgomery County. These discrepancies should be adjusted in the next version of the map

- The proposed Senate map does not expand minority representation to reflect the census data the census data. Because the Lehigh Valley has been divided into both Allentown and Bethlehem districts it would make it harder to elect a Latino senator in the Lehigh Valley where the Latino community is growing. In addition the Latino community in Philadelphia is split between four districts in the LRC proposed map. Because of both splits it is unlikely that Pennsylvania will be able to elect a Latino senator in the next decade.

- Montgomery County is the third most populous county in Pennsylvania. Thus it should have greater dedicated representation than other counties with less population. Yet, Lancaster County with far less population has greater representation.

- Montgomery County's 2020 census requires us to have four state senate districts, with at least three of those districts wholly within our county borders. We deserve focused representation in the senate. Today, we have six state senate districts – and not one senate district is located strictly within our county borders. The current map divides Montgomery County to such an extent that I consider the proposed maps have sliced the county to diminish its influence. For example, some of the Northern and Western parts of the county are included in Philadelphia districts. Urban and suburban voters have different priorities. Other parts of Montgomery County are packed into Upper Bucks County or Upper Chester County, which are much more rural than Montgomery County.

- o Previously we have been sliced into other districts, the elected official only was interested in courting our money when they were up for reelection but had no interest in in talking to us once they were elected. In fact we felt that we were not even represented in the Harrisburg because they never came to our neighborhood, they never talked to us, and they never addressed any of our issues.

- o I attended the House State Governance Committee Southeast Regional Public Hearing On Congressional Redistricting on Tuesday October 19th. I heard testimony from former elected officials who confirmed my experiences that token sections of their district are not paid attention to or even cared about.

- Communities of interest should be kept intact as much as possible. School districts, townships, municipalities, and cities are strong and natural communities of interest. Yet the proposed maps often split these communities of interest. Local voting precincts should be kept intact. The PA House districts are more fairly drawn than the present

districts because it provides districts that make more sense for the people who live in them. The proposed map splits fewer counties and municipalities and is more compact. I hope that it will allow more minority representation. I also would like to express my appreciation for Chairman Nordenberg's leadership, transparency, honesty, and clarity throughout this process. He served this LDR effectively. I especially appreciate Chairman Nordenberg's remarks that the participation of caucus leaders in the Commission led to more partisan objectives than if there would have been an independent Commission. In the future to be more objective we should create an independent nonpartisan Commission such as has been created in other states

Thank you for allowing me to the opportunity to provide my comments and for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

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