

The primary guidance for this Commission should be the PA Constitution which states that:

“Unless absolutely necessary county, city, incorporated town, borough, township or ward shall not be divided in forming either a senatorial or representative district.”

The citizens of the Commonwealth should fully expect and adamantly demand that any redistricting map reflect that unambiguous and straightforward direction.

The fact that Democrat and Republican elected officials on the Commission are split 2-2 on the legislative map indicates that it ignores this Constitutional requirement and, instead, is drawn for political advantage. Unfortunately, Chairman Nordenberg cast the deciding vote for the proposed map.

In interviews after the release of the map, Chairman Nordenberg was quoted as saying that he did not have complete knowledge of all areas of the state and that he would listen to testimony that would give him a better understanding.

I have been a resident of Lehigh County for over 40 years and have served as a Lehigh County Commissioner. My purpose in testifying today is to provide Chairman Nordenberg with the knowledge needed to develop legislative districts in Lehigh County that meet the requirements stated in our Constitution.

As an overview, Lehigh County can be looked at as a microcosm of the Commonwealth. Lehigh County has a dense urban area, older towns that are no longer in their heyday, commercial areas, suburbs, exurbs, rural areas, and farmland - much like the Commonwealth. While Lehigh County is relatively compact it has quite different and diverse demographics. The legislative districts should reflect that while following the Constitution. However, the districts proposed for Lehigh County fail on both counts.

For example – looking at the new legislative districts:

- The 133rd takes one of the six precincts in North Whitehall - an exurb/rural area and combines it with precincts that are urban including the City of Bethlehem – which, by the way, is on the other side of a river from North Whitehall. In addition, as constructed the 133rd includes all or part of four different school districts.

- The 131st is in the southern part of Lehigh County but also goes into Northampton County and into Montgomery County and includes all or part of five different school districts.
- The 132nd takes three of the eight precincts in Upper Macungie - a suburban area and combines them with the City of Allentown. The 132nd also has part of two large and hugely different school districts – Parkland and Allentown. And it takes the idea of increasing minority representation and turns that on its head as it reduces the minority component from 39% Hispanic to 18% Hispanic. This cuts the Hispanic population and opportunity in half.
- The 187th combines Lynn Township - a rural and farmland area with Lower Macungie – a commercial and suburban area all while splitting Upper Macungie. And contains all are part of three different school districts.

In looking at some of the townships in Lehigh County there are other examples:

- Salisbury – which has five precincts, and less than 10,000 voters - is split between three different districts with one precinct in the 131st, one precinct in the 134th and three in the 22nd. The greatly diminishes the chances that residents of Salisbury Township will receive focus representation.

Clearly , the new districts for Lehigh County are incompatible with the Constitutional and were drawn for incumbent protection and partisan advantage.

Specifically:

- The 22nd was originally created as a minority-majority district. However, since its inception has not been represented by a minority even though it is 55% Hispanic. The Democrat incumbent nearly lost a primary to a minority challenger in 2020 and would have a contested rematch in 2022. As a result, the incumbent was “moved” to the newly drawn 134th which has a reduced minority component as it is only 39% Hispanic.
- The 132nd is currently an Allentown centric district but has been moved into Upper Macungie and South Whitehall partly due the shift in the 134th but also to provide a safe seat for the Democrat incumbent who moved from Allentown to South Whitehall in the fall of 2020.
- Meanwhile, the 187th combines Lower Macungie and part of Upper Macungie – two of the fastest growing townships in Lehigh County - thereby forcing two Republican incumbents into to run against each other.

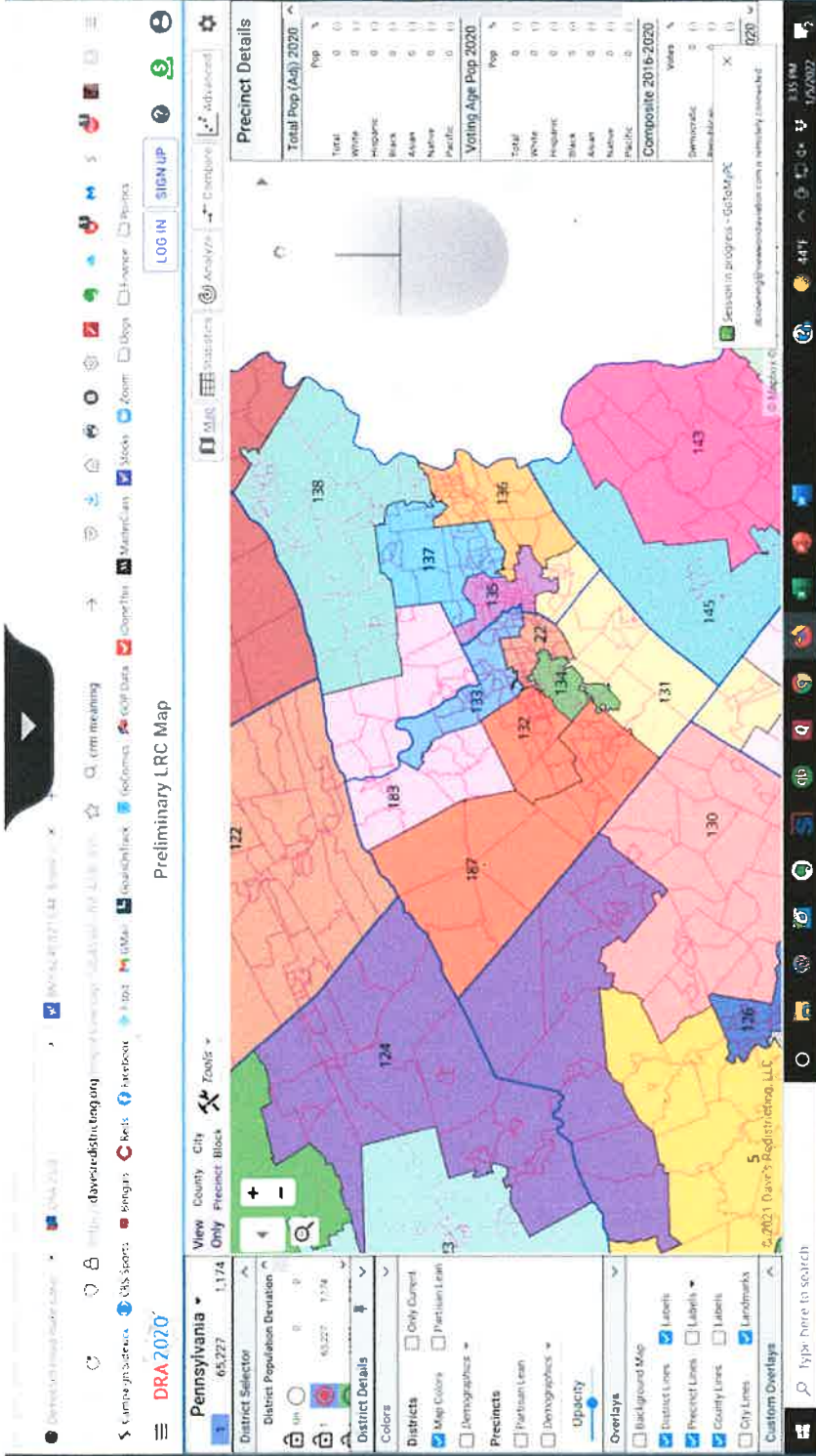
Again, the new districts are incompatible with the Constitutional direction against dividing counties, municipalities, and townships unless absolutely necessary.

Without question the districts in Lehigh County have been drawn:

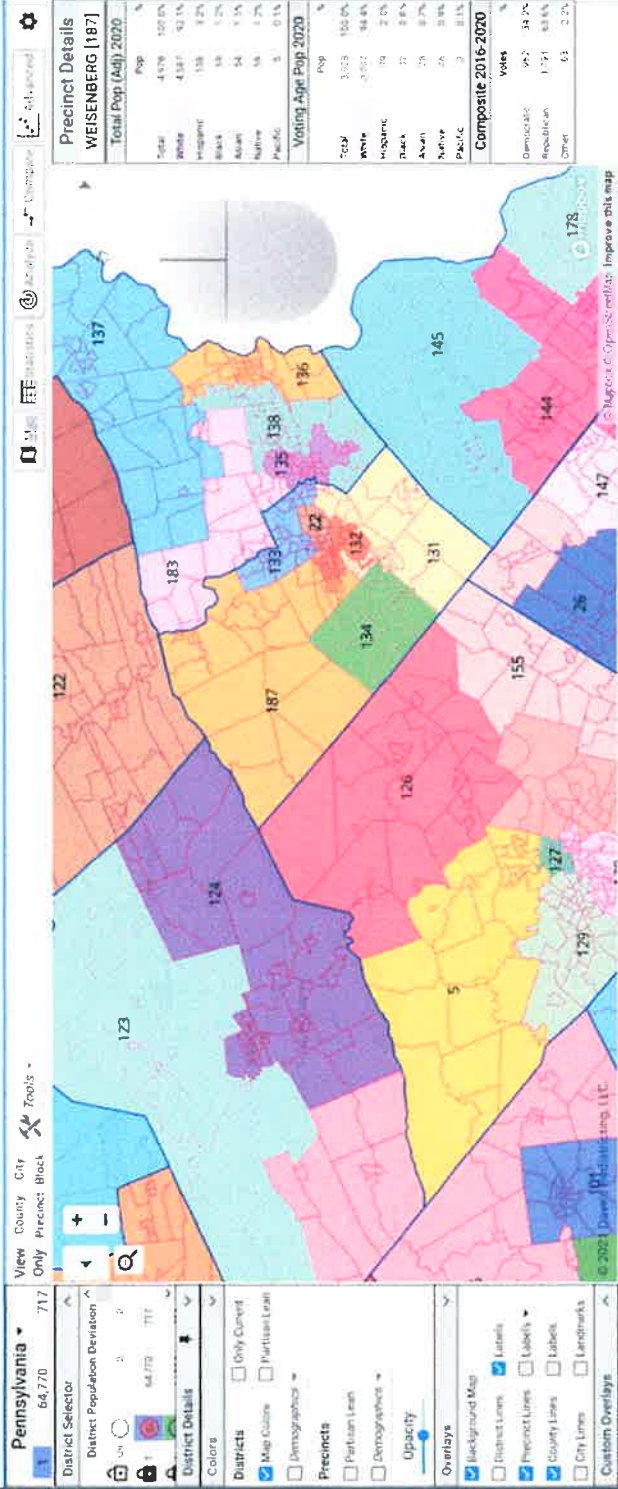
- for partisan advantage by forcing two Republican incumbents to run in the same district, and
- to protect the Democrat incumbents in the 132nd and 134th districts.

Anyone who claims otherwise is not being honest and is perpetuating the public's distrust of and disillusionment with our government in Harrisburg.

Chairman Nordenberg - I urge you to not let this stand. I respectfully request that you follow the Constitution. If you are looking for a map that would do that for Lehigh County and provide for minority opportunity, I would recommend the one submitted by Amanda Holt.



Proposed Map



Holt Map

