

Written Testimony
Legislative Reapportionment Commission Hearing
July 13, 2021

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Dear Chairman and Members of the Legislative Reapportionment Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this hearing. My name is Jennifer Shultz, and I am the Data Services Manager for the Pennsylvania State Data Center (PaSDC). We are the Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Socio-Economic Statistics as part of the State Data Center Program – a federal/state cooperative program with the U.S. Census Bureau. We were established in 1981 by Executive Order of the Governor and are located at Penn State Harrisburg in Middletown within the Institute of State and Regional Affairs.

The Role of PaSDC in Redistricting

The PaSDC was chosen by Legislative Data Processing Center (LDPC) to provide Geographic Information Systems (GIS) support during the 2020 Census Redistricting Data Program. We began our work in 2017 for Phase 2 of the Redistricting Data Program, the Voting District Project. Phase 2 included three parts: Initial Identification of Updates, Verification of Updates, and Verification of Updates II¹. In addition, we will provide GIS support for Phase 3 of the Redistricting Data Program, Delivery of the 2020 Census Redistricting Data Files and Geographic Products.

Phase 2:

During each part of Phase 2, the PaSDC worked with counties, LDPC and the Department of State (DOS) to collect and verify voting district boundaries, codes and names and submit this data to the Census Bureau. The PaSDC requested a shapefile of the voting district boundaries from each county by contacting the county's election officials and the county GIS staff. ESRI Shapefiles are a geographic data file format that, for our use, represent boundaries such as voting districts and counties. This was the requested format by the U.S. Census Bureau to deliver data for this program.

We compared the files received from the county against the U.S. Census Bureau's to identify areas that needed updating. We verified the updates with the Department of State and updated the shapefiles for submission to the Census Bureau. We also compared the names and codes across the files from the U.S. Census Bureau, the county, LDPC and DOS. We submitted the updated county shapefiles to the Census Bureau. The final submission for this phase was on March 31, 2020.

Phase 3:

Following the final verification, the PaSDC monitored the delays in Census timelines and contacted the counties about anticipated changes to prioritize our work and determine the frequency of contact needed to prepare for receipt of the Redistricting Data Files and Geographic Products from Census. The delays in Census Data releases have been noted and

Census will deliver the Redistricting data to the states by September 30, 2021. The Census Bureau will also provide the data in the “legacy” data format in mid-to-late August.

The PaSDC is preparing for the data release and working with LDPC to identify work that can be completed in advance. The Census Bureau has released the 2020 Census Geographic Data Products. The PaSDC received Pennsylvania’s Geographic Data Products on February 2, 2021. The Census Bureau has also provided a prototype “legacy” summary file. We have developed SAS programs to process this “legacy” file format which allow us to process and format the data more quickly.

As Brent noted, there were four types of corrections made in 2011. To prepare for these adjustments, we are currently reviewing the Geographic Data Products and contacting counties and DOS to identify and verify potential changes. We are developing additional GIS and SAS scripts to preprocess the data and run comparisons between the mid-August and September 30th releases. These scripts will produce the final work product and serve as a final quality control safeguard.

By working with LDPC to complete this advance work, we anticipate completing the adjusted data file by mid-October 2021.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in today’s hearing.

ⁱ Redistricting Data Program Voting District Project - <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/rdo/program-management.html#P2>