

Chairman Nordenberg and members of the Commission:

On behalf of the County of Lebanon, its citizens and the membership of the Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce, we want to express our appreciation for your giving us the opportunity to address the important decisions that you will be making.

Our home is the County of Lebanon.

It is located in the southeast corner of Pennsylvania, the area of our state that has seen almost all of the state's population growth<sup>1</sup>. Over the past decade, Lebanon County's population increased by 9,689 people, or 7.3 percent – making it one of just six Pennsylvania counties to grow by more than 5 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Out of the 50 seats in the Pennsylvania Senate, 16 counties can lay claim to at least one member of the body (or more) based simply on population. As our attached exhibit shows, Montgomery County, for example, has sufficient population to justify three senators, Lancaster two, Cumberland one.

Another nine counties can lay claim to a resident senator based upon having at least 51 percent of a full Senate seat. This includes Lebanon County at 55 percent. This leaves half the Senate to be divided among the remaining 42 counties, none of which have at least one half of a seat by population.

Surrounding Lebanon County are larger counties which, when combined with the House, have sufficient population to justify substantial delegations (Berks and Lancaster), one county of similar size (Schuylkill), with a comparable delegation, and Dauphin, with sufficient population to justify its own Senate seat and a larger overall delegation.

Thus, we come to the General Assembly adjacent to delegations that exceed us in size and power.

Since 1953, when the legislature adopted a law that established nine county subgroupings, called 'classes', for the purpose of legislating and regulating county affairs, statutes have been written using these classifications to drive out either rights or responsibilities to local governments. These classes range from First to Eighth, with two types of Second class counties, where the most populated counties are grouped into the lower classes (i.e. First, Second, Third) and the least populated in the higher classes (i.e. Sixth, Seventh, Eighth). The counties that make up each class are determined by the population figures reported by the U.S. Census. Lebanon County (143,257) is near the top of the class for Fifth Class Counties – 90,000 to 144,999. Its neighbors, Dauphin to the west, Berks to the east, and Lancaster to the south, are all Counties of the Third Class; not to mention other nearby counties like Cumberland and Chester. These larger counties, because of their size and the one-man-one-vote rules, bring a lot of firepower to the legislative table. Without, at least, a home senator and two representatives, Lebanon will find itself constantly outgunned as a smaller county.

Only two Fifth Class counties – Adams (2.4%) and Lebanon (7.3%) – grew in the last decade.

Whether this fast growing region of our state, as a whole, is hurt or benefitted by the new map depends in part upon how Lebanon County is drawn. There are two options:

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<sup>1</sup> Misinco, John, The Morning Call, "MAP: Which Pennsylvania counties gained and lost the most population in 2020 Census?", August 12, 2021. Map attached, interactive map available on line.

<sup>2</sup> The others are Centre, Chester, Cumberland, Lancaster and Lehigh counties.

- A. Lebanon County can be divided in such a way so as to use its population as “filler,” completing Senate seats in other areas based in surrounding counties, which need not be adjacent. This could result in outcomes such as Montgomery controlling four districts, or Lancaster controlling three districts, or Berks with two. Under this scenario, Lebanon County would – for the first time since the 1960s – be without a resident state senator to be its advocate while each of its neighbors would have at least one, and perhaps two, such legislators with larger House delegations.
- B. Keep the entire population of Lebanon County in a single district that is completed by including smaller parts of neighboring counties such as Berks, Lancaster or Dauphin. This has been the model used since the 1960s – for example, in the 80s, the 48th District included all of Lebanon County along with portions of Berks and Lehigh counties.

**The issue presented is this: While Model B is obviously best for Lebanon County, the real question is which model best supports the entire region and its population of the area encompassing the fastest growing region of our Commonwealth?**

We suggest it is Model B.

The rationale is simple and straightforward. With Model A, none of the neighboring counties gain any additional strength in advocacy based on the way the map is crafted. Lancaster would have two senators, as it does now, and Berks, Dauphin and Schuylkill would likely be limited to one, as they are now. However, residents of Lebanon County would know that they are being represented by a “tail-end Charlie,” someone who knows that they are only a small portion of the population represented; he or she does not want to offend but isn’t as strongly driven to be a strong advocate for Lebanon because his or her district is centered and driven by another county.

Adopting Model A also results in shifting our resident senator to another one of the state’s fastest-growing counties.

On the other hand, with Model B, those counties that include the “Lebanon” senator would, in a larger struggle, have an additional member of their delegation to help pull the wagon.

This is not just a theory; it has happened over the last 40 years, time and time again. Some examples:

- In the 1980s, the Governor controlled the Federal Small Communities funding that came from the National government. Lehigh County, which included Slatington Borough, was denied participation by a GOP administration because, they were told, it was “part of a rich county.” The senator who represented Slatington was not from Lehigh, but from Lebanon, and he was able to build a bipartisan consensus that created a formulary approach using hard data to win an annual appropriation for this Lehigh County community based on its demographics.
- In the 1990s, Berks County leaders wanted to construct a convention center and needed legislation to enable it to adopt a hotel tax. The lead senator from Berks was apparently reluctant to create the new tax and these local leaders called upon the “other” senator – one from Lebanon County who also represented northern Berks County – to take the lead. He did, and the Berks Convention Center is still going strong today. Both senators cooperated in this effort.

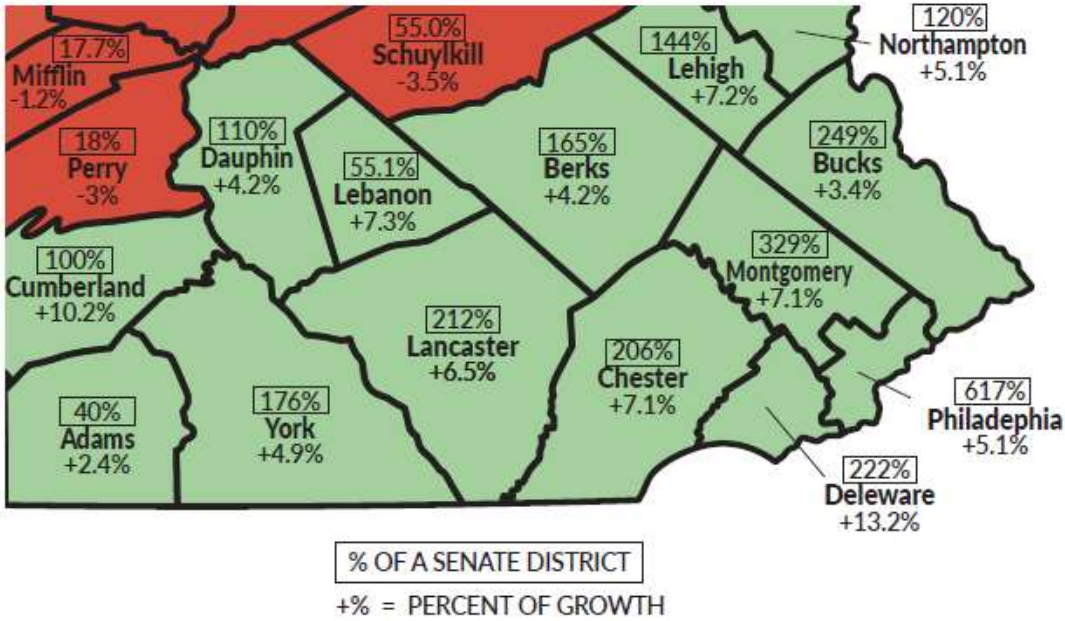
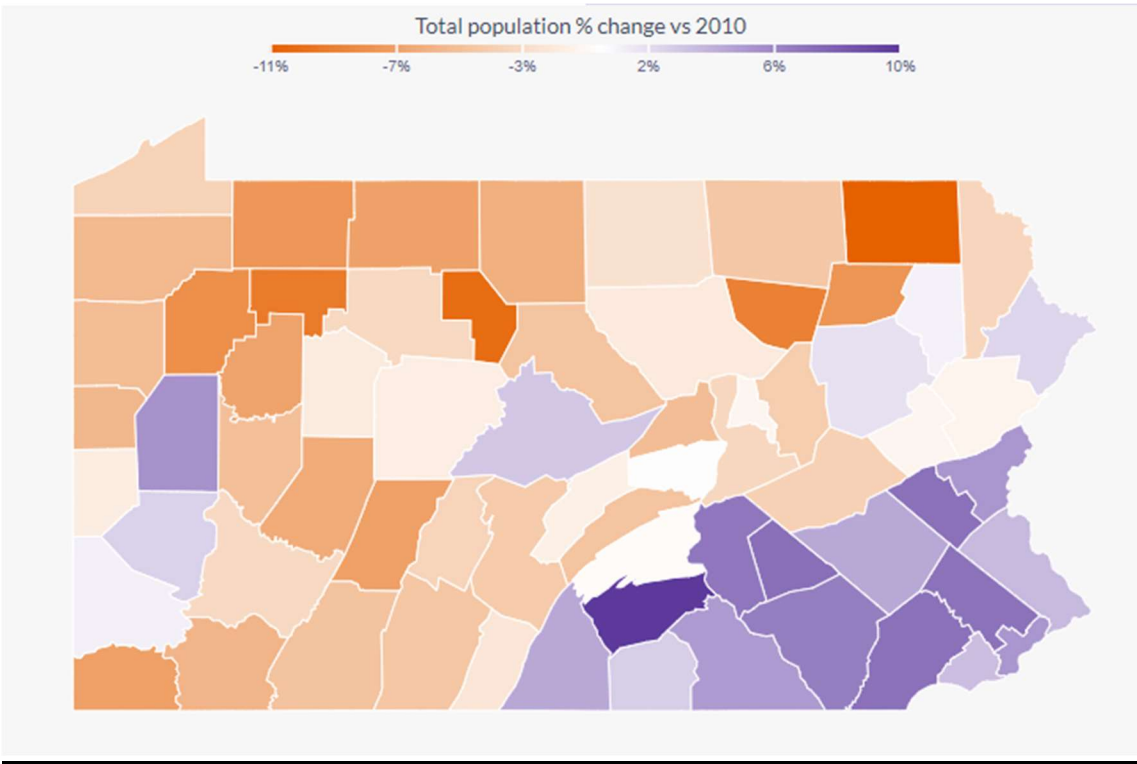
- In Northern Lehigh County, the Pennsylvania Turnpike wanted to eliminate a bottleneck created by the existence of a single two-lane tunnel through a small mountain. It decided to expand one set of lanes by going over the mountain. This greatly displeased local residents, and the Lehigh House delegation was able to insert a provision to create a second tunnel. In the Senate, with the Lebanon senator assuring bipartisan support, it passed. Again, Lebanon's member supported Lehigh County and provided a voice in each caucus.
- A similar but less dramatic scenario occurred during the construction of the Lancaster Convention Center after the year 2000. The County's Senate representation included two from Lancaster and one from Lebanon, who happened to be the majority leader.
- When Hershey Foods (based in Dauphin County) and Sovereign Bank (based in Berks County) needed important amendments to the law to carry out their missions and be able to succeed as strong local businesses, it was a Lebanon County member who was able to provide the Senate leadership for legislation in both instances. At those times, his district included part of the impacted county.
- In a successful Senate fight to authorize a change in the liquor laws to allow Pennsylvania brewers to make apple cider based on the desire of a Northern Lehigh brewery to use locally grown apples, Lehigh County had the resources of a bipartisan delegation – one from each party.
- Finally, in the early part of this century, when a rogue mayor of the City of Lebanon tried to take over the water authority that served not just the city, but also its surrounding townships, it was the single Senator, who represented the entire county, who pushed through a carefully crafted bill to stop him. This protected the surrounding municipalities. Had the county been divided as with Model A, there is a strong likelihood that the senate would have been split, because of competing interests, between the city mayor and the surrounding townships.

Had the Legislative Reapportionment Commission historically adopted Model A, in none of these situations would the extra support been there from the Senate representative from Lebanon, since none would have existed and Lebanon County's impact would have been totally diluted and nonexistent. This would have had a negative impact on the adjacent counties.

Some might argue that the examples above are rooted in the approach taken by individual senators, rather than the way maps were drawn. However, the fact that Lebanon County's population is 55% of a Senate district means that any senator from Lebanon County must strongly advocate for the portions of his or her district outside of Lebanon County – put simply, a senator from Lebanon cannot ignore 45% of the district.

Lebanon County has been a regional player since the 1960s with its Senator consistently displaying a strong willingness to work with the team and constituencies representing its neighbors. It is in the best interests of the entire Central Pennsylvania region that this continue.

We respectfully ask that you follow the precedent – one that has worked well – and keep Lebanon County whole as the heart of the Senate 48th.



Respectfully Submitted,  
 Karen Groh  
 President and CEO,  
 Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce