

Dr. Eric Lindgren

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My name is Dr. Eric Lindgren. I have a PhD in political science and several published papers on gerrymandering, redistricting, and district elections. I currently teach Data Analytics and Policy online at Johns Hopkins University. My wife and I live on 30 acres near Holbrook, in Greene County. We are in the 50th house district represented by Pam Snyder and the 46th senate district represented by Camera Bartolotta. My family has roots in Pennsylvania going back to 1970 as my father taught at Slippery Rock University for almost 50 years. My wife's family has lived on and owned this property, where I am now, in Greene county for over 100 years. I am here speaking in my personal capacity and I am not affiliated with any organization. I have two points I wish to make before this commission. I urge the commission to construct competitive districts and not gerrymander the districts to artificially advantage any interest or party. Furthermore, I would like to advocate for a different configuration for Greene county's senate district. First, I will briefly discuss my research and the arguments against gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering is fundamentally unfair and leads to voter disillusionment, apathy, less competitive elections, more extreme representatives and loss of accountability. My research and the scholarly consensus suggest that competitive elections are the best way to ensure that voters have their interests represented and to hold legislators accountable to the people. I am urging the committee to create maps with the largest number of competitive districts as it can, and to require competition as an explicit criterion in the creation of all of Pennsylvania's districts. I am including as an attachment to my testimony a copy of my published article entitled "The Effect of Electoral Competitiveness on Ideological Voting Patterns in the US House 2001-2010" (Politics & Policy June 2014). In this paper, my co-author Priscilla Southwell and I conduct a cross-sectional time series analysis of the voting patterns and ideological alignment of US house members for an entire ten-year redistricting cycle. We found that the more competitive the race, the more moderate is the voting record of the winning candidate in the next session of Congress. We also found that a large margin of victory leads to a more ideological extreme voting record, and that more homogeneously partisan districts are more likely to have representatives with more extremely ideological voting patterns. This suggests that competitive elections hold representatives accountable to their district and have a moderating effect overall. The paper used DWnominate scores, which capture the ideological leanings and votes of the legislators and the methodology can be somewhat hard to understand but when we say moderate we mean 'closer to the ideal center of the aggregate democratic will' not some static 'middle'. While our analysis looked at the US House of Representatives, there is every reason to think that these findings would also apply to electoral representation at the state level. Next, I would like to speak briefly about the senate district which will contain Greene county. I believe the current configuration of our senate district does not keep communities with similar needs, interests, and livelihoods together, and includes socio-economic communities which have interests out of alignment with the needs of rural Greene county residents. I am urging the committee to consider combining Greene county with a more similar population located in Fayette county to make a more compact district. As many of you know, Greene county is a very small rural county with a population of around 36,000 residents. So, it is not a question of if Greene will have to be combined with another county to make a senate district, but which county or counties to combine with. The current configuration of SD46 includes populations north of Washington running almost all the way to Aliquippa and including parts of Beaver county. The areas north of Washington have experienced growth over the past 10 years, and now are considered part of the metropolitan Pittsburgh area. They do not share the same infrastructure needs that we do, especially access to rural broadband. Their economy is also not like Greene county's in that they are near the airport and a new natural gas facility. The new

turnpike extension will also add to these growth trends. The county of Fayette shares more with Greene than Beaver and northern Washington. Many Fayette county residents are also in house district 50. There are many connecting roads. We share farming and mining as the dominant industries. Our schools have many competitions. I have compiled some statistics for the four counties, showing that Greene and Fayette share similar demographic profiles:

Statistic	Beaver	Washington	Greene	Fayette
% in Poverty	11.7%	9.9%	14.2%	17.5%
% w/o Insurance	5.6%	5.9%	6.4%	6.8%
% Disabled	11.6%	10.4%	15.2%	14.9%
% w/ BA/BS	25%	30%	18%	17%
% with Broadband	81%	82%	78%	75%
Median Income	\$57.8k	\$63.5k	\$54.7k	\$47.3k

Source: US Census Bureau Quickfacts most data is from 2019. Accessed: 8/3/2021

As this table shows, Greene and Fayette have higher percentages of persons living in poverty, persons without health insurance and disabled residents than Beaver or Washington Counties. It has lower percentages of persons with a bachelor's degree and households with Broadband internet access. A more compact district would also increase voter's perception of legitimacy and make campaigning for the district's interests more coherent and logical, potentially leading to more competitive elections. Our house district is much more compact and 'makes more sense', and it has very competitive elections almost every cycle. In a second published paper "The Effect of Redistricting Commissions on Electoral Competitiveness in U.S. House Elections, 2002-2010", (Journal of Politics and Law, vol.6, no.2, 2013) also with Priscilla Southwell, we found that districts drawn without using gerrymandering tactics and designed to promote competitiveness led to more competitive races over the entire decade, with the margin of victory in those districts 10 to 12 points closer than in districts drawn with unrestricted rules. I have submitted that paper along with my testimony. This combined with the research I mentioned earlier could lead to a 'virtuous cycle', where competitive districts lead to more moderate representation, which leads to better reflections of the popular will in government. Then, the voters can replace legislators who don't reflect that will through competitive elections in the next cycle, or reward those that do. I want to thank the committee for allowing me to speak. I would encourage you to increase the opportunities for the people of the state to have a voice in the process, and I urge you to prioritize competition in your criteria for creating districts.