

Testimony of **Libby Blackburn**, Vice President, North Allegheny School Board

I have traveled to 46 states and over 30 countries, one thing I realize is that the Constitutional Republic of the United States makes us the greatest country in the world. We hear leaders of our country use terms like "Make America Great Again" and "Build Back Better." What that tells us, is that at the highest level, both Republicans and Democrats realize America is not as great as it was, and certainly not where it should be. They are saying we need to build our country BACK to greatness. So let's look at what made our country great. Our forefathers fought for independence because they were taxed without representation. Therefore, when the greatest minds of the world wrote the Constitution for our country, they declared communities were to be represented by elected officials, who would make decisions based on what they felt was best for the needs of their community. So, how can these redrawn districts be fair when you are dividing those aforementioned communities?

Children are our future. If we want to make sure our country remains great, we must make sure they are educated. School districts are the key in every community, and I would say it is the school district that actually forms and defines the various communities. School districts must remain together wherever possible in any redistricting plan; as they form critical boundaries and in some cases, substantial policy differences to be voted upon by their government representative. As a school board member for the past ten years in my community, I am quite familiar with the process of redistricting. We have done this several times within our school district, and I personally voted against one of our previous plans because of several reasons, including the division of neighborhoods. The Pennsylvania redistricting is similarly not ready for approval in that it divides a community. For this and other reasons, I am against the current proposed map.

I want to emphasize this should not be about Republicans and Democrats. The drawing of maps should be about fair districts. Dividing communities is not fair.

I live in North Allegheny School District. Currently we are represented in the PA House by one representative. Under the new plan, not only did you divide our District, you actually even divided a township and elementary school within the District! The very township I live in – McCandless Township - will have two different representatives. As a matter of fact, the poll where I vote and the children attending Ingomar Elementary School will have two different representatives. How is it possible that families attending a small elementary school would be represented by both the 28th and 30th House of Representatives? This is obviously not a fair redistricting plan. Can you imagine how confused voters will be in this area? Isn't one of the goals of redistricting to make sure lines are drawn where communities are not divided? Knowing how completely unfair the current plan is in my community makes me question the legitimacy of this plan across the entire state. North Allegheny is small enough that the entire

school district is less than the population goal of 63,000, so why is this community not in the same district? Why did you divide it? There is never a legitimate reason to divide a community. Apparently someone wants to divide and confuse our voters. Having two representatives in one school district is ludicrous, let alone having two different people representing the community attending a small elementary school. Purposely confusing voters is tantamount to fraud. There can be no legitimate reason for this redistricting map.

Sincerely, Libby Blackburn

Testimony of Mike Krzeminski, Emergency Management Coordinator and Volunteer Fire Chief,
Harrison Township

I am a resident of Harrison Township, where I serve as an Emergency Management Coordinator and Volunteer Fire Chief. I am employed as a Staff Instructor at the Allegheny County Fire Academy, and also adjunct as an instructor at the PA State Fire Academy. So I have knowledge of these issues at a local, regional, and state level.

The reorganization team should consider more than just the same number of citizens population of each district. That is only one form of equality. The AK Valley has unique geography and bizarre municipal boundaries. Sometimes rivers or valleys make places that are not too far apart, actually different and socially distant. For example, as a fire chief my volunteer fire company rarely works with the Lower Burrell emergency services- though they are close as the "bird flies" we are separated by a river valley. Also, in this region, we work - giving and receiving mutual aid-to three counties, which presents numerous challenges.

Many boundaries in our region were either natural, following mountains, valleys, rivers or streams, or were objectively drawn by surveying crews with low tech transits and measuring chains. These antique often colonial borders make other challenges. The word regional is often difficult to accomplish here. For example students may while riding a bus, pass a regional vo-tech because it is in a different county to receive the same education at their "regional" CTC. I saw this waste of both resources and time as a public school teacher.

Because of this unique geography, which makes some things more challenging, there are also some cooperative efforts in the region. One example is an alliance of 8 volunteer fire companies in 4 Municipalities of this region. Rep. DelRosso knows and supports this effort. Before dropping new lines on a map- perhaps more local level investigation and community discussion would be prudent.

The upper Allegheny Valley is sometimes the forgotten corner of Allegheny County, and much of its industry, which was the foundation of these communities, is gone or has greatly changed. Rep. DelRosso has stepped forward to address the needs and concerns of our region since taking office. We personally worked together with her and Allegheny County 911 to address emergency services radio communication logistics in our region- and her action brought this concern to the front burner of their attention. It is disappointing to see that changes in our district map a designation could lose her as a proactive and energetic representative for my community.

1/4/22

To the PA Legislative Reapportionment Commission: I want to express disappointment for the redistricting of the House District 33 currently represented by Carrie DelRosso. For me, this is not a partisan consideration. I am a life-long Democrat and Commissioner in Harrison Township but have been impressed by Rep. Carrie DelRosso's demonstrated understanding of the needs of communities in the 33rd House District.

The 33rd District has included communities primarily along the upper Allegheny River corridor. These communities have similar historical relationships; shared development challenges and opportunities; similar population demographics, especially with similar household income; and many have shared membership in the Allegheny Valley North Council of Governments. There is logic for having communities on both sides of the Allegheny River that share commonalities rather than contiguous land boundaries. Grouping the new House District 33 to be contiguous along one side of the river connects communities that have negligible historic relationships and present more discordant economic and community development issues.

In the times of intense partisan rancor, it is important to rise above those differences to secure real improvement and resolution of deep local issues that impact the quality of people's lives.

Rep. DelRosso has made a serious and successful effort to bridge the partisan divide by bringing together the common issues and concerns of the communities in the current District 33. I urge you to respect the value of Rep. DelRosso's commitment to the residents of the current District 33 and the bi-partisan commitment of residents to retain the current continuity of the House 33rd District.

Thank you kindly for your consideration.

Charles Dizard
Commissioner, Harrison Township
1008 Oregon Avenue
Natrona Heights, PA 15065
724-681-3194

Cindy Kirk, Allegheny County Councilwoman's Testimony
for the Southwest Hearing on Legislative Redistricting

I am here today to testify on behalf of the residents of Allegheny County and specifically those who I represent in Allegheny County Council District 2. The growing areas of this region currently served by Republican representation in the House, are being disenfranchised by this gerrymandered map. Decades of legislative relationships will be unnecessarily severed under this plan.

To be clear, the purposeful legislative division of common interest urban areas to combine with disparate suburban area interests for political advantage, at the expense one over the other is clearly gerrymandering. As a practical matter, this map will result in the election of a number of representatives, largely on the support and strength of the urban core voters and their interests in the City of Pittsburgh. This effectively disenfranchises their suburban constituents of representation; voters who already voted with their feet, moving to these high-growth areas served for decades by Republican leadership.

Redrawing lines to combine shrinking areas with growing areas is necessary to rebalance represented areas every ten years, but the spoke and hub district approach approved on this map, goes against the very intent of fair districts. This spoke and hub approach will corrupt this region's state representation. The average person finds it absurd that municipalities are divided and surely would frown upon splitting of school districts. This map violates the basic principles of fair map making with this excessive fragmentation of municipalities and school districts.

This map effectively does an end-run, a plan B if you will, toward metropolitanism in our region by creating a map guaranteed to elect a City of Pittsburgh centric group of legislators with much broader influence than the City of Pittsburgh's shrinking population warrants.

Our voters have repeatedly pushed back against the elitists and academics of this region who envision a singular all-powerful centralized Allegheny County government, sweeping aside the importance of local issues, in favor of sole support for the elite interests of the urban core.

In Allegheny County District 2, splitting the common interests of the Quaker Valley School District, the Pine Richland School District, the North Allegheny School District and the Town of McCandless in pursuit of this gerrymandering spoke and hub approach is unfair to all, and I strongly urge the LRC to reconsider this map.

Jason Singer

Member of Council, Town of McCandless Ward 4

8314 E Van Buren Dr.

Pittsburgh, PA 15237

January 4th, 2022

Southwest PA Policy Hearing on State Legislative Redistricting

I am speaking on my concerns about the redistricting of the statewide legislative districts. As a local elected official, I will explain how this redistricting will affect my local municipality and my constituents. I live in The Town of McCandless, for the previous 10 years my township in whole has been represented by the same legislative districts. In the proposed changes, my ward and another from my township has now been carved away from the other five wards. We are now to be divided between two state house districts. As I look at the proposed changes, this will do a disservice to my community. The township itself must go through a redistricting of its own local wards. This will add to the confusion to residents and stakeholders as lines continue to change in the future. No township should be split unless necessary. The ability to work on local projects that span over different state house districts now becomes more problematic. Where walking trails between two wards was a simple idea before, it now requires degrees of communications and state funding support over multiple districts to achieve the same. The ability for state level representation to look at a local community will be fractured. No longer can we say that something will benefit McCandless as a whole, but we will now say that it benefits this part or that part. Dividing a township breaks its sense of community. When my Ward seeks statewide support for an initiative in the township but is a minor stakeholder in a larger state district, the residents lose. It allows focus to be taken on individual parts and not on the whole of the community. State representatives have a respect to stay out of other state representative's districts, and with this creates a problem as the minority stakeholder in a split township will get less representation than the majority stakeholder. The ability to work within my own local government now can have friction because of the differing support at a state level. When a township is split, especially not equally in size, part of the township will feel underrepresented. I speak to the redistricting plan on a community level and how it will impact my ability to carry out my duty as a local elected official. The splitting of townships in ways to achieve lines on maps and numbers on a spreadsheet do a disservice to the people who live in these communities.

Sincerely,

Jason Singer