

**PA House Majority Policy Committee**  
**Southwest Hearing on Legislative Redistricting**

January 4, 2022

Alex DiClaudio | Oakmont, PA

Members of the House Majority Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, regarding my concerns over the proposed legislative redistricting map.

By way of introduction, I am a lifelong resident of Oakmont, a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University with a degree in economics and a master's in management, served a term as an elected school board member for Riverview School District (which serves Oakmont and Verona), and am a founding partner in a Pittsburgh-based private capital firm with an investment strategy in sustainable infrastructure.

My concerns chiefly relate to how the proposed redistricting would affect my hometown of Oakmont, however I believe that it is very possible to extrapolate a broader theme from the issues that I will raise and apply them to the process at large.

For context, Oakmont is currently part of the 33rd House District. Oakmont is a town of slightly less than 2 square miles, with a population of roughly 6,500. We are grouped with other boroughs and townships of roughly similar size and scale, lining the Allegheny River Valley in the northeastern corner of Allegheny County, and including several communities in the northwestern most edge of Westmoreland County. These communities have a common history, having grown up in the expansion of industry in the Alle-Kiski valley over the last hundred and fifty years.

We share many of the same challenges in terms of growth and population trends. We have common economic concerns and closer cultural ties due to the nature of our situation along the river. We are part of the same transit corridor into Pittsburgh. Our towns have small, independent school districts with many similar issues.

With the exception of New Kensington, our communities are largely suburban in nature, small business districts surrounded by residential neighborhoods, edged by the beginnings of more rural ex urbs.

In sum, the ongoing concerns of Oakmont and her sister communities lining the Allegheny River are similar enough, our history and cultural and economic ties shared enough, and our scale related enough to warrant being joined together in one legislative district, that our state representative in Harrisburg is able to effectively represent our concerns and issues, and advocate for our voices effectively in the Legislature.

The newly proposed redistricting map would, inexplicably, move Oakmont to join Verona and part of Plum into the 32nd house district, which is dominated overwhelmingly by Penn Hills. Penn Hills, with an area of over 19 square miles, and with a population of over 42,000 people, is the second largest municipality in Allegheny County by population, after the City of Pittsburgh, and one of the top fifteen largest in the Commonwealth. While Penn Hills does geographically abut the Allegheny River, no part of that community is materially along the riverbanks, and the center of gravity of the city is significantly south and west of the river.

The economic and cultural ties between Penn Hills and Oakmont (or Verona, for that matter) are weak at best, and the scale of these respective communities are dramatically different. It is unrealistic to expect that a state representative might be able to effectively tend to the needs of communities that are among both the largest and smallest in the county, and who's history and future trajectory are not closely related.

It is not obvious to me what benefit the proposed map offers by joining Oakmont with Penn Hills in the 32nd House District. It seems to me that the best we could hope for is to be the forgotten community on the edge of a district, whose chief concerns are largely unrelated to those of our own.

I would propose instead that the borders of the 33rd House District as they have existed most recently be maintained - and should any changes be made that those changes be in the inclusion of other, similarly small river communities such as Verona or Blawnox. It is in our best interests, economically and culturally, to be joined with our sister communities in size and scale, in one district which can best represent us and our needs.

If any broader lesson can be drawn from this I would propose it is as follows: a district with somewhat haphazard borders is not automatically gerrymandered for political advantage - it is possible that the realities of geography, history, and economic and cultural ties lend themselves to a district which is not compact in shape, but is unified in spirit and purpose. A district with borders that *are* geometrically even is not immune from being drawn for political advantage, and does not automatically endow equal benefits to all residents of such a proposed district.

I strongly encourage the Legislature, and the Legislative Redistricting Commission, to reconsider their proposal to move Oakmont out of the 33rd House District, and rather to keep us grouped with those other small river towns with which we are most similar. I would likewise strongly encourage the drawing of a map which more closely considers the importance of historical, cultural, and economic ties of communities across Pennsylvania, which the current proposed map, by my reckoning, manifestly does not.

Thank you.



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**PA Majority Policy Hearing**

**Testimony**

**Joseph Hughes, Springdale PA**

My name is Joseph Hughes, I am 48 years old, born and raised in Harmar Twp-PA District 33. I grew up attending the local public schools and graduated from Springdale High School of the Allegheny Valley School District. After graduating high school and attending college for a couple years I decided to move back to Allegheny County (Blawnox Borough) and work in the union building trades. I settled in Aspinwall Borough where I lived for approximately 22 years. I decided to move back to Springdale where I currently reside and bought a commercial building to renovate.

My lifelong ties to the region are important, however so is my party affiliation. I am a Democrat and served on multiple democratic committees in leadership capacities.

Professionally, I have been a member of the International Union of Painters & Allied Trades District Council 57 for almost 23 years and I currently serve as the Director of Government Relations for IUPAT DC 57. I have been on staff as a full-time union representative for nearly 6 years. This information is relevant because I have worked with and I am now a representative for members in 32 counties including many members in the Allegheny River Valley. I have also extensively canvassed the region during multiple campaigns (federal/state/local) which has further increased my vast understanding of people of these communities.

Recently I have testified at the PA House Urbans Affairs Bi-Partisan Committee hearing in Brackenridge Borough (PA District 33) to address blight. I specifically made the valid point that blight remediation is not a partisan issue. I cited 3 different life stories of DC 57 union members who live in Brackenridge. This is yet another example of my extensive grasp on the people of the region's best interests.

Re-districting should be viewed as a (comprehensive) opportunity to provide better representation of people and never to advance a partisan political agenda.

I have multiple issues concerning the proposed new map of the PA House 33<sup>rd</sup> district from the legislative redistricting commission. The map was drawn with a suspicious reluctance to cross the Allegheny River. This has resulted in a proposed district that is saturated with inequity on many levels. The severe socioeconomic imbalance combined with the geographic challenges will result in decreased, unfair and inefficient representation of the people living in this proposed district.

The socioeconomic and historic differences between some of the communities within the newly proposed 33<sup>rd</sup> is at a level that can best be described as absurd. The preponderance of disparity within this proposed map is very unsettling to me. There is no doubt in my mind this map was drawn by someone who is completely lacking knowledge of the region and it's people. If not a lack of knowledge, then I would suspect

a blatant disregard for the people as well as an intentional gerrymandering effort which is actually worse. Regardless of intent, I foresee small river towns built on PA manufacturing with coal and steel being overshadowed by one of the wealthiest communities in the country.

My entire life experience has been spent living in and representing fellow Union members within the current and newly proposed 33<sup>rd</sup> legislative district. Therefore, I believe it is both my professional and personal duty to protect the integrity of the people who live in the PA House District 33.

Thank you for your time.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Joseph Hughes

Springdale PA



**January 4, 2022**

**Testimony to the Majority Policy Committee from  
City of Lower Burrell Treasurer Brian Eshbaugh**

**Chairman Causer and esteemed state representatives:**

**As an elected official of the City of Lower Burrell, I thank you for this opportunity to express the disappointment and outrage at the proposed redistricting maps announced last month.**

**As a 55-year resident of the city and a 27-year elected official, I have taken great interest in the political climate of the area and the state.**

**I was a registered Democrat for 42 years, and recently changed to Republican. Instead of trying to gerrymander their way to power, perhaps the Democrats should change their policies to be more in step with the average Pennsylvanian.**

**Our third-class city will have its voting precincts split among two state representatives.**

**Our Burrell School District, consisting of Upper Burrell and Lower Burrell, will be split among two state representatives.**

**Our two fire companies will be split among two state representatives.**

**And our city will be shifted to district with the majority in a new county.**

**I ask you—where is the fairness??**

**None of these changes benefit the residents of Lower Burrell or Upper Burrell in any way. The only beneficiaries will be major population areas where the Democratic party will have a stronghold.**

**I understand that change is required every 10 years with redistricting. What I do not understand is why we need to accept such a radical, gerrymandered, and partisan effort to change the balance of power in Pennsylvania. There isn't even an honest attempt to hide what the goal is!!**

**The only reason one precinct of Lower Burrell (755 votes) was gerrymandered into of new district was to provide contiguous access to Democratic strongholds in New Kensington and Arnold. There was no good legislative purpose to that move.**

**When municipalities and school districts are split, funding for projects is jeopardized because large population centers will receive the lion's share of grants. Communications between government entities will suffer because of split interests among representatives.**

**Lower Burrell officials will have to develop new lines of communications with two new representatives. Our major question is if money is awarded from one representative, can that money be used for the benefit the whole city?**

**Not only does splitting the city of Lower Burrell negatively affect Lower Burrell itself, but it has further ramifications at the other end of the Armstrong County district. While no municipal lines are split, the new map breaks up the whole Kittanning "community of interest."**

**Kittanning Borough, the county seat of Armstrong County, will be placed in the Clarion County district. It also divides the community area by separating Kittanning Borough from West Kittanning Borough, and Kittanning Township, East Franklin and West Franklin Townships.**

**These splits are ridiculous and are only being done to take away power bases of existing legislators or do away with them altogether.**



**I have heard that Chancellor Mark Nordenberg is responsible for this proposed redistricting map. He was supposed to be an arbiter between the Democrats and Republicans, but he took on a whole new role as the mapmaker. He was never elected by the people of Pennsylvania to be a power broker. He was never elected to anything. How can one man determine the fate of Pennsylvania politics for generations to come?**

**Redistricting should never be permitted to change the will of the people. The proposed new map does just that.**

**I implore this committee to do everything within their power to stop this charade.**

**I propose two words be added to the goal of redistricting—  
**COMMON SENSE!!****

**The proposed map does not pass the smell test for fairness and lacks common sense.**

**It needs to be re-done.**

**I thank the committee for your time and wish you a healthy and successful 2022.**

Good Evening,

I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Westmoreland County. My name is Sean Kertes and I am the Chairman of the Westmoreland County Commissioners. As a County Commissioner, the residents of Westmoreland County expect me to govern responsibly, listen to their concerns, and be a voice when I see an injustice. That is why I am here this evening.

Westmoreland County has a population of 348,000 residents, which is the second largest population behind Allegheny County in Western Pennsylvania. As a Pennsylvania resident, I'm equally concerned for the rest of the Commonwealth. I feel that the current maps presented do not equitably represent Westmoreland County, demonstrating a blatant gerrymandering of the commonwealth that negatively affects the citizens that we all serve. The unconstitutional dividing of districts such as Murrysville and North Huntingdon, the loss of not one not one but two voices from my county in Harrisburg due to the shifting and elimination of seats, as well as a broader overall attempt to change districts for what clearly looks to be partisan reasons must be addressed.

Dealing with state and local governments day in and day out, I understand the importance of continuity between each level. Splits such as these make everything from funding to repair pot holes, community development projects, to getting answers to questions more difficult. Officials at each level often work for years to get funding for much needed projects. Many of these projects I can only assume will now be delayed further, funding fought for once again, and citizens further frustrated. Before the maps were redrawn, the majority of municipalities in Westmoreland County were represented by a single State House Member. Since the redrawing, several municipalities are



now represented by more than one State House Member, thus creating more red tape and confusion when municipalities look to state funding. These splits in communities also are confusing for residents when they vote and when they need the state to intervene on their behalf. I know that the people of my county have been generally happy with their representation. They are aware of who represents them and know who to call when they have a problem. As we are ALL elected by the residents in counties we live in, election integrity has become a major topic in Pennsylvania, and I fear that the splitting up of districts will cause confusion on Election Day in May and in November. Residents could not be aware of the map change, been away seeing family, and now may go and vote in a Primary and General election and not see the state official who has represented them for years.

In conclusion, the maps presented (both the house and senate) appear to be drawn not only to favor a particular party, but look like change for the sake of change. There is no good reason in my mind that roughly four and half million Pennsylvanians should have new representation. The electorate, many of whom I have no doubt do not know this process is taking place, will be equally displeased if this is to occur. I respectfully ask that you take my concerns into consideration and think long and hard before approving the changes presented in the preliminary maps.