

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NIAGARA FALLS BRANCH

PO BOX OFFICE 529, BRIDGE STATION
NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK 14305

NIAGARA FALLS REDISTRICTING ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND CORRECTIONS OF THE NIAGARA FALLS BRANCH OF THE NAACP

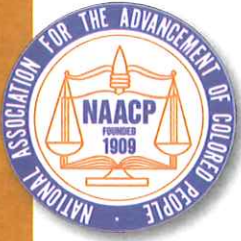
MY name is Shirley Hamilton, I reside in Niagara Falls New York, and I serve as president of the Niagara Falls Branch of the NAACP, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The mission of the NAACP is to ensure the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. I am here to speak against **both** proposed Senate district, which is actually, the current NYS Senate map for the city of Niagara Falls and the Proposed Congressional district maps.

America has a long history of using redistricting as a device to exclude voters of color from politics and diluting their voting power. New York State and Michigan were the **Only 2 northern** states named in the Voting Rights Act. Michigan and New York were required to receive pre-clearance approval prior to changing a voting district. New York State had and has a history of intentionally diluting the votes of people of color. Prior to the separation of the cities of Niagara Falls and Buffalo in the NYS Senate District, we elected, had representation for our communities within the State Senate, and were able to elect 2 persons of color, (2 people of our choice) that responded to the needs of our communities.

Since 2011, after the separation of the two cities for the New York State Senate District, our State Senator has been in our community 2 times, during approximately the past 10 years, and that was when the NAACP asked him for mask for our community during the initial outbreak of COVID and for the opening of a Healthcare Center. African Americans voting power went from approximately 15%-17% of the voting population, down to 2% of the vote.

We were no longer had the ability to elect candidates of our choice within our New York Senate District. We feel the loss of power, the loss of representation, the loss of our voice and most of all the loss of our votes. Currently we have no voice to our State Representatives, they will win whether we vote or not, they do not have to attend to the needs of people of color. And one may, assume that this "new" New York State Senate District, that was created in 2010, could have been the test pattern for the drawing of the current proposed Congressional Maps. To ensure that our voice and our votes remain silent and diluted, not only in the New York Senate, but also in our Congressional district.

The City of Buffalo and City of Niagara Falls are communities of interest. Buffalo controls our Niagara Falls International Airport which is in Niagara Falls New York. Buffalo's Airport, located in Buffalo, New York, is named the Buffalo Niagara International Airport. Buffalo controls our



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Bus Transportation system through the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority. The Convention Center, also located in Buffalo, is named the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center after the Niagara Falls Convention Center was sold, for usage as a casino. The Buffalo Niagara Partnership is the Chamber of Commerce for both Buffalo and Niagara Falls. Niagara Falls is also part of the Buffalo Niagara Riverkeepers. Funding and grants are submitted based upon information for the City of Buffalo and the City of Niagara Falls. We are communities of interest in all other major transportation, job creation, education, poverty, and funding, we should also be considered as communities of interest when it comes to the preservation of our votes.

So, We, the NAACP Niagara Falls Branch ask that this commission break the pattern of disenfranchisement, the passage of discriminatory redistricting and protect our voting rights. We understand how it feels and know the ramifications of a diluted, disenfranchised community. From 2011 to 2021, we have suffered enough with dilution and alienation in our NYS Senate District. We do not deserve to continue to be disenfranchised within our NYS Senate and our Congressional District by the approval of the current proposed Senate and Congressional maps.

We ask that both the NYS Senate and the Congressional District maps be drawn so that the City of Buffalo and the City of Niagara Falls are drawn together.

Buffalo and Niagara Falls are communities of interest, we ask that you comply with the voting rights act, the guidelines which created this Commission and grant us the right to be in a district in which we, the people have a voice and demonstrate that our votes matter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shirley J. Hamilton". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over the printed name below it.

Shirley J. Hamilton