

February 14, 2023

**To:** New York State Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC)

**From:** Tim Monti-Wohlpert: 21 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St. #1

**RE:** 44<sup>th</sup> AD - Windsor Terrace / Kensington (appeal to remain in 44<sup>th</sup> AD)

Greetings and, as an active resident of Windsor Terrace since 2008, **I join the vigorous appeal to maintain our portion of Brooklyn within the current 44<sup>th</sup> Assembly District (AD), as opposed to reapportioning within the 51<sup>st</sup> AD.**

This effort goes beyond a mere appeal to maintain continuity. It is a practical appeal to maintain the wisdom of recognizing the Prospect Expressway as what it is, a roadway, not a dividing line between separate neighborhoods. We recognize that there were other recent changes to our 44<sup>th</sup> AD; however, here, we respectfully request that the IRC's current, added proposal for redistricting be withdrawn.

As others have rightly shared with you, our portion of Brooklyn that constitutes a large area of our neighborhood lies between Prospect Park and Greenwood Cemetery. However, my own appeal to citizens included areas of our neighborhood on both sides of the Expressway. Areas of Windsor Terrace and Kensington linked by multiple footbridges and non-highway roads. This was vital to my launching of a human and civil rights campaign in 2015.

More specifically, my grassroots [petition](#) was launched to restore appropriate legislation in Albany with the ultimate goal of restoring unrestricted access to original birth certificates for all adult adopted persons. Though the [appeal grew](#) to over 10,000 supporters over several years (before declaring victory), the early stages included [appealing to hundreds of neighbors in the 44<sup>th</sup> AD](#), on both sides of the highway, in order to help us approach Assemblymember Brennan. And then, to work with incoming Assemblymember Carroll to move forward, with his support. In 2020, our new [law](#) went into effect, partially aided by the vital efforts of caring neighbors. Now, [many thousands](#) of those touched by adoption in New York, people all over the world, have benefitted from the restoration of this basic human and civil right. The 44<sup>th</sup> AD was the launching pad for this progress.

Had our portion of Brooklyn been a relatively isolated part, or satellite, of another AD (centered on separate Sunset Park) it is very unlikely that we would have had a reasonable opportunity to organize to make this important change. As such, I have witnessed the importance of the 44<sup>th</sup> AD and I am specifically aware of how our placement in it has directly benefitted myself, those around me and those very far away, from all walks of life, incomes, and political sensibilities.

It's my hope that the IRC will recognize the above and ensure we will remain a portion of our neighborhood where our representation is concerned. Our neighborhood, and the entire State of New York, have specifically benefitted from this arrangement and I am very confident it will continue to do so.

**Links (hyperlinks above):**

- "petition": <https://www.change.org/p/enact-clean-ny-law-of-adoptee-rights>
- "appeal grew": <https://www.amny.com/opinion/new-york-adoptees-1-31939040/>
- "appealing to hundreds..." <https://bklyner.com/windsor-terrace-man-leads-fight-for-reform-of-nys-adoption-law/>
- "law": <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/PBH/4138-E>
- "many thousands": <https://www.change.org/p/enact-clean-ny-law-of-adoptee-rights/u/29481218>

**Other specifics of the appeal:**

We ask that you make Greenwood Cemetery along 20th Street the western border of the 44th AD not the Prospect Expressway as in the draft plan, and Greenwood Cemetery along McDonald Avenue and Fort Hamilton Parkway out to 39th Street the Northern boundary between the 44th and 51st ADs.

This is a shift of only a few blocks but makes complete sense geographically. Without this change the portions of Kensington and Windsor Terrace cut out of the 44th AD will be a small after thought in the 51st AD divided from that district by the hundreds of acres of Greenwood Cemetery.

The 51st AD contains the entirety of the thriving neighborhood of Sunset Park and that neighborhood historically dominates that district. The inevitable result of the draft plan is that the few blocks of Windsor Terrace and Kensington attached to the vast bulk of Sunset Park will be underserved. The proposed plan also dilutes the ability of vital neighborhood institutions to advocate on behalf of their respective constituents.

Two local Elementary Schools PS 130 and PS 230, several local places of worship such as Immaculate Heart of Mary RC Church, The Flatbush Jewish Center, which despite its name is in Kensington, and the Darul Jannah Masjid and Masjid Nur Al-Islam will all see their catchment areas, now wholly within the 44th AD, divided between the 44th and the 51st AD. This is especially troublesome with respect to the Mosque's which serve the growing South Asian community in Kensington and will now have to petition two different Assembly Members rather than having a single point of contact.

Historically the entirety of the two discrete, cohesive and well-defined neighborhoods of Kensington and Windsor Terrace have been in the same Assembly district. This is true since at least the reapportionment following the 1970 census. Indeed, it's understood that the phone number for the local Assembly District Office has remained unchanged since 1974. And that many have it memorized or on their speed dial (I have programmed into my phone). This is not just an interesting but irrelevant tidbit; it is testimony to the fact that at least in Brooklyn the Assembly District is the smallest unit of government and traditionally the most responsive to local needs.

In the 1950's Robert Moses built the Prospect Expressway and inflicted a still obvious scar on Windsor Terrace and Kensington. The people of Windsor Terrace and Kensington banded together and protested Moses' plan but unlike more affluent neighborhoods such as Brooklyn Heights and Greenwich Village they lost, and the Prospect Expressway was built. Moses' wound however drew the Windsor Terrace and Kensington communities closer together and over the following decades they jointly fought and defeated repeated ill-advised rezoning proposals to first permit large scale manufacturing and then residential over development in these thriving working-class neighborhoods.

We ask that you not reopen the wound Robert Moses inflicted. Please make Greenwood Cemetery, not the Prospect Expressway the boundary between the 44th AD and the 51st AD. Please keep Windsor Terrace and Kensington intact.

Thank you for your consideration.