

TESTIMONY

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at

Independent Redistricting Commission
New York County Public Hearing
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Hunter College (CUNY)

Good afternoon/evening Chair Jenkins and Commissioners. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the Commission's proposed assembly district maps that were released for public comment on December 1, 2022.

My name is Robert Kulikowski and I reside at 36 Sutton Place South, located in current assembly district 73, where I am the president of the building's coop board.

I would like to direct my remarks today primarily to two requirements stated in the Constitution of the State of New York – specifically Article III, Sections 4(c)(3) and 4(c)(5) that require that:

- Each district shall consist of contiguous territory.
- The commission shall consider the maintenance of cores of existing districts, of pre-existing political subdivisions, including counties, cities, and towns, and of communities of interest.

The proposed preliminary map puts the neighborhoods of Beekman Place, Turtle Bay, Sutton Place, all on Manhattan's East Side, as well as Roosevelt

Island, also in New York County, into a proposed assembly district 36 that lies predominantly in Queens County. I will illustrate that the preliminary proposed map of assembly district 36 fails to achieve the requirements of contiguity stated in the constitution by creating a proscribed non-contiguous district, and further does not meet the mandate of keeping existing district cores, pre-existing political subdivisions, or neighborhoods and established communities of interest intact.

Let me recap. The dictionaries I've consulted – including law dictionaries – define “contiguous” as “connected or continuous, usually with reference to real estate parcels.” The requirement is to create a contiguous district. However, Queens is contiguous neither with Manhattan nor with Roosevelt Island being physically separated by the East River. In addition to not being contiguous, travel between the various areas of the proposed district are challenging at best, particularly for the abundance of senior inhabitants.

- Queens and Manhattan are connected by the landmarked Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge. You cannot reach Roosevelt Island from the Queensboro Bridge.
- Roosevelt Island is connected to Manhattan by the Roosevelt Island Tramway. There is no way to get to Queens via this tramway.

- Queens is connected to Roosevelt Island by the Roosevelt Island Bridge at 36th Avenue. There is no way to use a motor vehicle to travel directly between Roosevelt Island and Manhattan.

It is clearly not acceptable to create assembly districts that do not provide ease of physical connections between and among its various areas.

In addition to creating both a non-contiguous and severely disconnected district in violation of the constitutional requirements, the Commission's plan also violates the requirements for maintenance of existing district cores, pre-existing political subdivisions, (counties in this case), and keeping communities of interest intact. Specifically,

- The core of the existing assembly district 73 would be split between Manhattan and Queens, adding to the disruption of socioeconomic demographics that was shown to occur when a similar remapping of city council districts occurred last year.
- Pre-existing political subdivisions are ignored. Roosevelt Island is located in New York County, as is Manhattan. These have historically been kept together. As proposed, this small area of New York County would be subsumed into Queens County.
- Communities of interest, such as numerous medical and academic institutions, would suffer separations by being split between Manhattan and Queens assembly districts.

It is abundantly clear from these few examples that the very basic of requirements set forth in the constitution have been ignored.

Therefore, with the strongest possible emphasis, I request that the Commission seriously revisit its preliminary scheme for assembly district 36 to address the multiple, severe deficiencies embodied in it and propose revised maps that meet the criteria specifically enumerated in the state constitution – as well as the spirit of the federal and state constitutions and statutes – with respect to establishing a contiguous, compact district that respects the integrity of existing district cores and the pre-existing political subdivisions, as well as keeping communities of interest and neighborhoods intact prior to the required submission to the legislature.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.