

My name is Patricia Sibia, and I am President of the Albany County League of Women Voters. I offer this testimony on behalf of the Capital Region's One Person-One Vote coalition, whose 12 organizations are listed below. We have held a number of public programs to promote citizen involvement. We have encouraged participants to draw community of interest maps, and have provided the educational background needed to do so. We truly believe that public involvement is critical to a satisfactory outcome. Hopefully, these hearings, where the commission can hear from the public, will help to achieve that result.

We are concerned that the commission has made it harder to achieve what we are seeking by initially offering two sets of maps, one supported by members who have been associated with the Republican Party and the other by those who have been associated with the Democratic Party. Because the commission has not been transparent in its deliberations, the public does not know why it took this approach. However, looking at this from the outside, it certainly appears that these maps were drawn for partisan purposes. This, of course, is the antithesis of what the creation of this commission was designed to achieve.

We would very much like to see that the end result of the commission's work is consistent with its intended purpose. This would require the commission to withdraw both sets of maps that it has issued and submit to the legislature one set of maps based on the interests of the voters and their communities of interest. There is still time within which to do this, and we urge the commission to listen to those who are advocating for this approach.

We also urge the commission to consider that the current 20th Congressional District is compact and focused on the entire capital region, including the four major cities of Albany, Troy, Schenectady and Saratoga Springs. Both proposed congressional plans fragment the capital region to construct partisan districts in the surrounding areas without regard to actual communities of interest. The Capital District, which grew in population and constitutes a community of interest, has been split up when the population loss was elsewhere in the state, mainly in the rural areas.

The Capital Region should remain as a single district. As we testified at an earlier hearing, the region has common interests, such as development, transportation, combined hospital systems, employment, and arts and culture. We ask that the commission re-examine the lines it has drawn in the maps it has issued and the area should continue to be represented by a single Congressional Representative.

We thank the commission for this opportunity to be heard, and hope that it seriously considers the issues that we have briefly discussed. If all goes as we suggest, it will submit one set of maps to the legislature that includes one Congressional district encompassing the Capital Region.

One Person, One Vote Coalition

Albany African American Clergy United For Empowerment

Albany Latinfest Association

Capital Area Council of Churches

Capital Area Urban League

Capital District Chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionist

Capital Region Fellowship Coalition

League of Women Voters Albany County

League of Women Voters Rensselaer County

League of Women Voters Saratoga County

NAACP Albany

NAACP Troy

One Hundred Black Men - NY Capital Region