

**Dr. Minewattie Gayadin Ali, Ed.D**  
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**South Ozone Park, NY 11420**

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**New York State-Redistricting Testimony**  
**South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, Richmond Hill Community-Queens, New York**

February 6, 2023

Good afternoon respected Chair Ken Jenkins, Vice Chair Charles Nesbitt, and respected Commissioners of the Redistricting Commission.

I am Dr. Minewattie Gayadin Ali Ed.D., a retired New York City Department of Education teacher with 24 years teaching in the schools in this area. I also live in this district.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before the Redistricting Committee, and submit my testimony, and for your commendable and tedious work, and for fairly drawing a Map, "AL" that keeps us together. The fact that both of the honorable members of the Democratic, Republican and Independent parties agreed on this map, is compelling, and you must keep it whole, as configured as "AL." Well done!

Again, I would like to commend you for Draft Map AL- a State Assembly district in which you kept the Communities of Interest, South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill together. That's a step in the right direction. Words cannot convey the gratitude our community feels for your wonderful efforts. For the very first time, we have been drawn together in any configuration-City, State and/or Federal government. It was a historic effort, and we thank you.

You certainly listened to us, but our representatives preferred to keep us divided, sliced and diced, in their attempt to divide and rule, and hold on to power. This is not fair to the people of our community. They attempted to undo your great work, changed back the maps to continue to slice and dice, but the Court rebuffed them for gerrymandering. Their political actions caused their maps to be thrown out, which brings us back to you. Please do not allow this terrible injustice of dividing us to repeat itself.

South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill are a solid, contiguous, historic and expanding community of interest. We are a largely South Asian, Guyanese, Punjabi, Bangladeshi and Indo-Caribbean population, protected by the Voting Rights Act, and we face the same issues, and have common interests, and solutions.

The outlying communities of Howard Beach, Ridgewood, Kew Gardens, Jamaica, and the Rockaways deserve, and have, their own representation, but have nothing in common with us. We cannot continue to have elected representatives associated with these communities who

do not understand nor address the needs of our overwhelming Indo-Caribbean and South Asian immigrant population of South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill. Previously, we have been used as filler for other communities.

For example, the schools in South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill have a large number of students who are Hindus. Last year, on November 4th, Parent/Teacher Conferences was held on Diwali, a Hindu festival of Lights where families light small Diyas or lamps to pray and celebrate. The schools paid no regard to the students' culture and religious celebration of Diwali.

Also, in schools, parents do not have a voice in many changes that are taking place. Parents do not have a say in keeping the much needed Gifted and Talented Programs for their children. Parents in this highly Guyanese, Punjabi, Bangladeshi immigrant community stress the value of good grades and a strong education. Students with good grades should have programs that would help them to excel and reach new heights. Our nation loses out with these short-sighted actions.

Parents in the South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill community do not have an elected representative who speaks, looks and thinks like the majority, and never had an elected representative who can address the educational and social needs of our children. In fact, our community was cut up into seven Districts, now 4, and we never in history had a representative to address the needs of our community. Furthermore, the issue of making changes in School Safety Presence in schools would leave our children/students at great safety risks. One or two Guidance Counselors, or Social Workers cannot handle the safety and well-being of hundreds of students in a school. An elementary school may have about 800 to 1,250 students or more enrolled.

Furthermore, students in this highly Guyanese immigrant community of South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill who graduated with a degree in teaching should be hired for teaching jobs in our community. In the South Ozone Park, Ozone Park, and Richmond Hill Community, a school with about 1,250 students, and over 60 teachers, may have one, two or zero teacher from our Guyanese immigrant community.

Also, schools still do not have meal menus that address the cultural and religious needs of our students in our community. This all circles back to lack of funding and identification of issues caused by not having a district whose issues and problems are focused on.

Drawing new and fair Redistricting lines will determine how our children or students will progress, and the quality of their schooling in the next ten years. You, the Chair, Vice Chair and Commissioners of the Redistricting Committee have the power to be fair and change the lives of our students for a brighter future. Currently, our parents have economic power but no political power. We have paid our dues tenfold, but continue to be ignored.

Our parents in this immigrant community of South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill do have our share of heart breaks because our children are affected by social issues such as unemployment, loss of self-worth, and suicide. You, collectively, have the power to change this societal problem and injustice in our disenfranchised community by drawing fair Redistricting lines that will give us a chance to elect leaders from our community, leaders who understand our needs, issues, and concerns.

Thank you for your hard work, and for advancing in grouping together South Ozone Park, Ozone Park and Richmond Hill as a community of common interests.

Please see the attached New York Times Article that addresses the sordid inequalities and injustices of the gerrymandering, inequalities that stagnated our children's growth so inhumanely in the past, and why Map "AL" must be approved into law:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/15/nyregion/redistricting-maps-ny.html>

Sincerely,

*Dr. Minewattie Gayadin Ali Ed.D.*

Dr. Minewattie Gayadin Ali Ed.D.

Retired New York City Department of Education Teacher









when was diwali cebrated in new york city in 2021?



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Attachment 2

Diwali / New York / Date (2021)

Thu, Nov 4, 2021

Diwali will be honored as an official holiday in New York City schools. People watch a laser show on the banks of the river Sarayu during Deepotsav celebrations on the eve of the Hindu festival of Diwali in Ayodhya on November 3, 2021. Oct 21, 2022

https://www.npr.org > diwali-2022-new-york-city-schools

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Diwali

Festivity



Diwali, Dewali, Divali, or Deepavali, also known as the Festival of Lights, related to Jain Diwali, Bandi Chhor Divas, Tihar, Swanti, Sohrai, and Bandna, is a religious celebration in Indian religions. Wikipedia

Observances: Diya and lighting, home decoration, shopping, fireworks, puja (prayers), gifts, feast, and sweets, families gather together

Also called: Deepavali

Date: Sunday, November 12, 2023

Featured in religions: Hinduism, Newar Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism

Type of holiday: Religious holiday, Religious celebration

Diwali Books

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Binny's Diwali

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Let's Celebrate 5 Days o...

Baby's First Diwali

Games Diwali

Diwali Crackers Simulato...

Pictionary

Teen patti

Diwali Firecrack... Simulator



Attachment 3

# NYC Department of Education School Year Calendar

2021–2022

This is the 2021–22 school year calendar for all K–12 NYCDOE public schools. If your child attends a private, parochial, or charter school, please contact your child’s school for information about their calendar. Please note the following reminders:

- November 2, Election Day, will be a fully remote, asynchronous instructional day for all students.
- On “Snow days” or days when school buildings are closed due to an emergency, all students and families should plan on participating in remote learning.
- Parent-teacher conference dates are the citywide defaults; individual school dates might differ from those below. Your child’s teacher will work with you to schedule your conference.

DATE	WEEKDAY	EVENT
September 13	Monday	First day of school for students
September 16	Thursday	Yom Kippur, schools closed
October 11	Monday	Italian Heritage Day/Indigenous Peoples’ Day, schools closed
November 2	Tuesday	Election Day, fully remote, asynchronous instructional day
November 3	Wednesday	Evening parent-teacher conferences for elementary schools and K–8 schools.
November 4	Thursday	Afternoon parent-teacher conferences for elementary schools and K–8 schools; students in these schools dismissed three hours early.
November 10	Wednesday	Evening parent-teacher conferences for high schools, K–12, and 6–12 schools.
November 11	Thursday	Veterans Day, schools closed
November 12	Friday	Afternoon parent-teacher conferences for high schools, K–12, and 6–12 schools; students in these schools dismissed three hours early.
November 17	Wednesday	Evening parent-teacher conferences for middle schools and District 75 school programs.
November 18	Thursday	Afternoon Conferences for middle schools and District 75 school programs; students in these schools dismissed three hours early.
November 25–26	Thursday–Friday	Thanksgiving Recess, schools closed
December 24–31	Friday–Friday	Winter Recess, schools closed
January 17	Monday	Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, schools closed
January 25–28	Tuesday–Friday	Regents Administration



DATE	WEEKDAY	EVENT
January 31	Monday	Professional Development day for 9–12 and 6–12 schools, students in these schools do not attend
February 1	Tuesday	Lunar New Year, schools closed
February 2	Wednesday	Spring Term begins for semester-based schools
February 21–25	Monday–Friday	Midwinter Recess, schools closed
March 2	Wednesday	Evening parent-teacher conferences for elementary schools and K–8 schools.
March 3	Thursday	Afternoon parent-teacher conferences for elementary schools and K–8 schools; students in these schools dismissed three hours early.
March 9	Wednesday	Evening parent-teacher conferences for middle schools and district 75 schools and programs.
March 10	Thursday	Afternoon parent-teacher conferences for middle schools and district 75 schools and programs; students in these schools dismissed three hours early.
March 16	Wednesday	Evening parent-teacher conferences for high schools, K–12, and 6–12 schools.
March 18	Friday	Afternoon parent-teacher conferences for high schools, K–12, and 6–12 schools; students in these schools dismissed three hours early.
March 29–31	Tuesday–Thursday	3–8 ELA Assessment administration
April 15–22	Friday–Friday	Spring Recess (includes Good Friday and Passover), schools closed
April 26–28	Tuesday–Thursday	3–8 Math Assessment administration
May 2	Monday	Eid al-Fitr, schools closed
May 30	Monday	Memorial Day, schools closed
June 7	Tuesday	Clerical Day, K–5, K–6, 6–8, and K–12 schools and D75 programs, students in these schools do not attend
June 9	Thursday	Anniversary Day, Chancellor’s Conference Day for staff development, students do not attend
June 15–24	Wednesday–Friday	Regents Administration
June 20	Monday	Juneteenth (observed), schools closed
June 27	Monday	Last day of school for students



## 2 Parties, 2 Maps: Democrats and Republicans Squabble on Redistricting

Two competing proposals advance, and the failure to compromise may pave the way for Democrats to step in and knock out Republican congressional seats.

By Nicholas Fandos and Grace Ashford

Published Sept. 15, 2021 Updated Nov. 10, 2021

New York's new bipartisan redistricting commission got off to an inauspicious start on Wednesday, as its Democratic and Republican members failed to reach an agreement on an initial set of congressional and legislative map proposals.

Instead, the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission, the body empowered by voters to remove politics from the mapmaking process, said it would proceed for now with two competing proposals, one drawn up by its Democratic members and another by Republicans.

With New York slated to lose a seat in its congressional delegation after last year's census, both parties proposed collapsing a district upstate, where the population has declined.

But the Republican plan would do so by rejiggering a handful of Hudson Valley and Capital Region districts that could pit Democratic incumbents against one another, while preserving the shapes of rural red seats in the western part of the state. Democrats propose the opposite, potentially displacing Republican incumbents in central and western New York while shoring up Hudson Valley Democratic incumbents.

Other vast differences were evident. While the Republicans would redraw lines across New York City, potentially imperiling several long-serving Democrats in Manhattan and Brooklyn, they would basically leave intact the Staten Island-based district now held by Nicole Malliotakis, a Republican.

Democrats, on the other hand, would leave city lines more intact, but redraw Ms. Malliotakis's seat to include Coney Island in Brooklyn, which is largely Democratic, a move that would make the district more competitive. Their map also appeared to create a new opportunity for Democrats on Long Island to pick up a seat.

Nothing in the New York State Constitution requires the commission, which is drawing lines for the first time since it was created in 2014, to agree to a single set of maps for congressional, Assembly and State Senate districts at this point in the process. But the partisan squabble over what amounts to a preliminary discussion does not spur optimism that the commission can unite around a single set of bipartisan maps to present to Albany for ratification.

Its failure could pave the way for Democratic supermajorities in Albany to step in to determine the final maps early next year. Party leaders there and in Washington are already quietly circling in case the commission cannot reach a final agreement or produce a final result party leaders like. They hope to use the process to knock out as many as five Republican congressional seats, boosting the party nationwide as it tries to maintain a narrow House majority, and to firm up permanent majorities in the Legislature.

Under the New York Constitution, the redistricting commission leads the way in drawing maps. But if it fails to come to a consensus among itself or delivers lawmakers a map that they don't like, the Legislature can overpower the body and establish almost any map it chooses, so long as the districts meet constitutional requirements and are roughly equal in size.

Republicans in New York and Albany are already balking at the process and could challenge the outcome in the courts, which drew the current congressional map in 2012 amid a partisan dispute in Albany.

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Republican commissioners wasted little time pointing fingers on Wednesday at their Democratic counterparts, whom they accused of cutting off talks in recent days that had been intended to try to reconcile the competing maps. Privately, the Republicans fear that Democratic commissioners have no intention of finding an agreement and would prefer to let the body fail so they can kick the process directly to the Legislature to draw more advantageous maps for their party.

"The constitution is pretty clear in what we are supposed to do: They appointed the commission as an independent body for it to have to work together and find a nonpartisan way forward by actually discussing things," Jack Martins, the commission's Republican vice-chair, said in an interview. "The fact that a portion of the commission has decided to walk away from that is very disappointing."



Democrats argued that the competing maps could be a good thing, allowing voters to provide feedback as to which they liked best. Commissioners stressed that the presentation of two sets of maps Wednesday did not close the door on the possibility that they would eventually find consensus before their January deadline.

“We could either draw these maps in a smoke-filled Zoom in 48 hours or we could put the maps out to the public and let the public weigh in,” said David Imamura, the Democratic appointee who chairs the panel. “In the interest of public participation, we decided to put both sets of maps out.”

Members of Congress in both parties largely withheld comment, though Ms. Malliotakis said she was not worried.

“Regardless of what the final configuration of the district is, I’m extremely confident I will be re-elected next year,” she said.

New York voters created the independent commission by constitutional amendment in 2014, but its contours were the product of a compromise between Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and Republicans, who controlled the State Senate at the time. The idea was to take line drawing out of the hands of politicians in the Legislature eager to protect their party and their incumbents and give it, starting this year, to a bipartisan body that could fairly divide up the state.

But the commission struggled to assert its independence from the start, and critics say its structure — with most appointees designated by the party leaders in the Legislature — makes compromise exceedingly difficult.

The panel did not receive funding from Albany until April, forcing commissioners to volunteer their time for months. The Legislature, in contrast, has continued to fund its own map-drawing task force year after year.

The panel did not receive detailed census data until last month because of national delays; it is still waiting on official data on the state’s prison population that the commission needs to fine-tune its maps. And even as the commission prepared to release the maps, another hiccup emerged: Its website briefly crashed on Wednesday.