

Interested Parties Memo: Preserving and Strengthening Communities of Interest

TO: Interested Parties

FR: Chairman Sean Patrick Maloney, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee

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Overview

New York is a diverse and vibrant state that has been badly served for the last decade by a map that fails to group like communities together and therefore dilutes the voices of New Yorkers in Congress. The legislature should take action to bring folks with similar needs throughout the state together and correct the errors of the past.

In New York City and the surrounding areas, the current map does a serviceable job ensuring that communities are linked together and that minority representation is strong - as the New York State constitution requires. Of course, communities have changed over the past decade and the new map should reflect that. Ultimately, although lines may shift or expand, the districts must preserve the ability of minority communities to elect their chosen representatives to Congress. Groups like the Unity Coalition have suggested maps that adhere to the state constitutional requirement that maps shall not abridge the voting rights of racial or language minorities. We have used their suggestions below to preserve minority opportunity districts while adding to their work on Long Island where there is a clear opportunity for a new majority-minority district.

Although New York State is home to America's most populous city, it is also home to dozens of mid-sized and small cities. These cities are vibrant centers of culture and education and are often the engines driving regional economic growth. But, like many other urban areas around the country, they have unique challenges, with crumbling infrastructure, high rates of crime, addiction, and poverty. These communities need representation in Congress that understands both their struggles and opportunities and is willing to fight for the tools they need to reach their full potential. Meanwhile, the state's rural and agricultural communities are often set at odds with the needs of the urban and suburban communities - meaning no one is getting the advocacy they deserve.

In correcting these imbalances, the New York Legislature must also deal with some hard facts. New York is losing a seat because it did not grow as fast as other states in the past 10 years, adding only 823k people. The population growth was not evenly distributed, with nearly all of it (+828k) occurring in the 12 "downstate"

counties from Mid-Hudson through Long Island. Meanwhile, all but 11 of the 50 upstate counties lost population. Within those counties, there was also a shift toward urban and suburban centers – for example, the city of Syracuse grew for the first time in 70 years, while the populations of surrounding upstate communities decreased dramatically.

Western New York, the Finger Lakes, and the Western Southern Tier

For generations, the population centers of Western New York and the Finger Lakes region have clustered around four predominant water features – Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, the Niagara River, and the Erie Canal. The cities and towns that grew up along the water are certainly the largest in the region and larger than nearly every other city outside of the New York City media market.

In fact, these communities, from the biggest cities of Buffalo and Rochester, to the smaller towns like Greece, Tonawanda, Niagara Falls, and Lackawanna are too big for a single congressional district. There should be two seats to represent these lakefront communities.

New York's 26th Congressional District:

The first should follow the lake from just north of Silver Creek up through the northern border of Buffalo city, and include the Buffalo suburbs Eggertsville, Cheektowaga, Harris Hill Clarence, West Seneca, Lackawanna, and the southwest lake communities of East Aurora, North Boston, and Lake Erie Beach. This compact, metro Buffalo district is a clear and obvious community of interest.

New York's 25th Congressional District:

The second district should reunite the old Erie Canal towns of Rochester and Tonawanda with the industrial and tourism communities along Lake Ontario and the Niagara River, drawing in the City of Rochester, and the Monroe County towns of Irondequoit, Clarkson, Brockport, Hamlin, while heading north and west along the lake to Lockport, and then over to Niagara Falls, and the aforementioned towns of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda. This district would resemble the previous iteration of the congressional maps before the 2012 redraw, which recognized the urban centers of these lakefront communities have shared communities and needs.

New York's 23rd & 27th Congressional Districts:

Due in part to similar planting hardiness zones and soil composition, the agricultural industries of Chautauqua, Wyoming, Genesee, Livingston, Allegany, Schuyler, and Steuben Counties generate billions of dollars in annual revenue. These breadbasket communities are dominated by farmland, producing dairy, grains, hay, corn, and

other specialty vegetables and fruits. Along with Seneca and Yates Counties, these counties are leaders in New York State's hog, pig, sheep, cattle, and calf production. This region also claims some of New York's biggest grape and wine producers. It is also home to some of the largest swaths of public and private forestland and hunting grounds, centered in the Pennsylvania border communities of Allegany, Cattaraugus, Steuben and western Chemung Counties. These counties are also very sparsely populated, with only two or three cities like Batavia and Bath claiming more than ten thousand residents.

Ideally, all of these communities would be joined together in one district, so their representative in Congress can be laser focused on their issues.

This more rural district could include the outer suburban and exurban areas as well as the farmland and forested areas of Orleans, Niagara, and Monroe Counties to unite agricultural interests. These areas would add to the agricultural profile of this combined district, picking up some of the most important fruit and horticultural producers in New York State and making this single district responsible for roughly 1/3rd of the state's agricultural sales.

Central New York, Eastern Southern Tier, and the Mohawk Valley:

This region of the state is often the hardest to classify. Looking at dozens of organizational maps, from NYISO, Empire State Development regions, the SUNY system, statewide nonprofits, and even high school sports leagues one can see quickly that unlike the Hudson Valley or the North Country, regional boundaries here are not always clear. A new map should not be solely bound to these old classifications, but again seek to join similar small and mid-sized cities to unite New Yorkers in this region who have similar interests.

New York's 24th Congressional District:

As noted above, the city of Syracuse, in Onondaga County, has grown in the last decade, for the first time in 70 years. At the same time, the four counties surrounding Onondaga County all lost population: Cayuga (-4.7 percent), Oswego (-3.8 percent), Madison (-7.4 percent) and Cortland (-5.1 percent). This population loss means that the current mapping configurations must change. The Central New York seat, now known as the 24th, should ideally tie together similar urban and suburban communities. These communities are more diverse than the surrounding areas and share many important educational institutions like SUNY Geneseo, SUNY Oswego, and Syracuse University. To unite these communities of interest, this district should have a westernmost edge starting at the Irondequoit Bay. The district should then extend east along the Lake Ontario shoreline to Oswego County, and then follow down the Oswego River to Onondaga Lake and the city of Syracuse.

The district should also cross over the top of the Finger Lakes, uniting the tourism industries of the lakeside cities and towns of Skaneateles, Auburn, Seneca Falls, Geneva, and Canandaigua. The district would also include Geneseo and the SUNY Geneseo campus.

New York's 22nd Congressional District:

The cities of the eastern Southern Tier region, the Mohawk Valley, and the Central Leatherstocking region should also be united to form a district stretching from the eastern Syracuse suburbs up the river to Oneida Lake. This district, which would roughly take the place of the current 22nd district, would contain these communities, which are driven by the manufacturing and logistics industries, along with the professional support services that accompany these economies. In the outlying communities, retail, agriculture, and hospitality are more common. Similar to the urban/rural divide in the other parts of the state, there is a significant difference in diversity as well.

The district should extend out along the southern lakefront and – unlike some iterations of the commission maps – draw in the entirety of the Oneida Nation to keep that community of interest whole.

Because the neighboring 21st district to the north needs to gain 72,000 voters (and can only go south) the city of Rome should be the northern border of the 22nd district and the outlying areas should be the southernmost border of the 21st.

Rome would continue to be grouped with the nearby city of Utica, given the shared economic and cultural interests of those two cities, but the 21st would need to gain neighboring Herkimer County. The 22nd district could also extend south, picking up the counties of Madison, Chenango, and Cortland, and adding in the nearby lake communities around Cayuga Lake and Seneca Lake.

New York's 20th Congressional District:

The Capital Region should have a district situated around Albany, to the west of the Hudson River that includes all of Albany, Schenectady, and all of Saratoga Counties. This is similar to the existing 20th seat and may only need to add small portions of neighboring Montgomery County to balance out the population.

New York's 21st Congressional District:

As stated above, the northernmost New York district now called the 21st must grow south, extending into eastern Oswego, northern Oneida (along the lake), all of Herkimer, Fulton, Montgomery, and northern Rensselaer counties. This scenic district should retain the rural quality of its communities, even as it expands

geographically. This Adirondack Mountain seat is home to the largest forestland in New York State, and the areas we suggest are similarly forested regions just outside the current lines. The communities around the Mohawk River Valley should be the southern border since those communities would share similar economic drivers in the tourism and agricultural industries – particularly the dairy industry.

The Hudson Valley:

New York's 19th Congressional District:

The 18th and 19th Congressional districts should be Hudson River districts, and group together the communities that have grown around the water. These communities share similar priorities and assets, namely environmental conservation, tourism and cultural cultivation, educational institutions, Revolutionary War landmarks, and significant freight, commuter and passenger rail lines like Metro North and Amtrak. They also all struggle with infrastructure challenges, economic revitalization, and in some cases crime and poverty.

The Upper Hudson, Catskill Mountain, and Mohawk Valley seat, now the 19th, would go south of what is now the 21st on the eastern side of the Hudson River. This seat would take in nearly all of Columbia County, allowing the district to encircle Albany County. The 19th would connect the northern Hudson Valley river communities to the east by travelling south between the mountains that border the river (roughly Route 9) and the Hudson River itself, uniting the voters on both sides of this important natural feature. The Walkway Over the Hudson should be the southern border of the district, which then continues over the river and to the city of New Paltz, Woodstock, and SUNY New Paltz. Again, these communities would be united in their shared comparative diversity, their historical cultural connection to the region, as well as educational and economic assets.

On the western side of the Hudson River, the 19th would still include all of Schoharie, Delaware, and Greene, but would also connect all of Binghamton and surrounding Broome County to Ithaca and the southern half of Tompkins County. This would unite technology and educational hubs around Poughkeepsie in the Hudson Valley with some technology hubs in Binghamton and the Capital Region.

This district would stretch from the Hudson Valley to Tompkins County, through the Catskills and along the communities around the Susquehanna River just as the late Rep. Maurice Hinchey's district once did.

The communities and urban centers of Tompkins County are similar to the communities in and around Kingston, New Paltz, and Poughkeepsie and grouping

those areas is a smart way to find similar communities without breaking up other communities of interest in nearby districts.

Population growth from the lower Hudson and the suburban New York City counties means the 19th cannot grow south – those lower districts are already growing upward to find similar populations. And, as we have stated before, the northernmost seat (the 21st) must grow because of population loss, and cannot grow north into Canada. In order for the 21st to pick up similar communities of interest it needs to grow south, because growing west would mean disrupting the communities of interest that make up the 24th and 22nd seats.

In sum, the 19th is being pushed by population changes from below and above its existing borders and must reach west to put similar communities of interest within the same district.

New York's 18th Congressional District:

The Mid-Hudson seat, now known as the 18th, should largely be a Hudson Highlands seat, existing among and between the mountains that surround the Hudson River, and then out into the surrounding farming communities. The 18th does need to pick up some of the current 19th. The best option is to add the dairy farming communities in the outlying areas of Ulster County, thereby uniting them with the blackdirt farming communities in Orange County. Nestled in this Orange County farmland is the Orthodox Jewish community of Palm Tree. This community's infrastructure needs are closely connected with the river towns, so keeping them together makes the most sense.

As in the 19th, this seat would also seek to unite the river communities on the east and west of the Hudson. In the western portion of the district along the river, the lines should match the current district's configuration stopping at the Orange/Rockland border.

On the eastern side of the Hudson, the district would roughly follow along the North-South thoroughfare of the Taconic Parkway that distinguishes between the Highlands towns along the Hudson in the western parts of Westchester, Dutchess and Putnam Counties. The eastern parts of those counties that are more sparsely populated Connecticut and Massachusetts border communities should be in the 16th because of their shared concerns with other people in that district.

Uniting these riverfront communities along the mountains will allow their Representative in Congress to focus on best representing their transportation, energy infrastructure, water, environmental protection, historical preservation, and economic development needs.

On the east side of the river, the 18th should grow south into Ossining. This would unite the cities and towns along routes 9 and 9D like Peekskill, Montrose, Buchanan, and Croton-on-Hudson with the very similar communities like Beacon, Wappingers Falls, Cold Spring, and Garrison to the north. The eastward lines should include Chappaqua, Katonah, and Mt Kisco – roughly following the Saw Mill River Parkway or the Metro North's Harlem line to the New Croton Reservoir, keeping those commuter line properties together. The district would then use the Taconic Parkway as the eastern border, up through Westchester and Putnam Counties. The Taconic is an important regional dividing line in the region and serves as a main north south route of travel to New York City.

New York's 17th Congressional District:

This congressional district must grow north and west from the suburban Westchester County cities of Yonkers and White Plains and into Rockland via the Mario Cuomo Bridge. Therefore, we believe that those Westchester towns should be connected to the densely packed communities in Rockland County, like Stony Point, Ramapao, and Haverstraw which should extend up to the smaller urban centers like Port Jervis and Callicoon along the Pennsylvania border up the western half of Orange and Sullivan Counties.

This district would be similar to the district represented by former Congressman Maurice Hinchey, albeit more southerly. These communities in Westchester, Rockland, Orange and Sullivan are closely matched urban and suburban communities with outcroppings of forestland, camping grounds, suburban hideouts, and tourist spots along the Lower Catskills and Callicoon Hills and the Upper Delaware River Basin.

New York City:

Ultimately the goal through much of the city should be that of least change since the courts designed these districts with communities of interest in mind during the last redistricting cycle. A new map should align those previously defined communities with the shifts in population, allowing the new map to reflect the priorities of the old. This goal means preserving or expanding the ability of minority communities to elect the Representatives of their choosing without packing like-voters into one seat or another and reducing the overall number of members these voters can send to Congress.

New York's 16th Congressional District:

The 16th district must grow north to keep whole the communities of interest in the Hudson Highlands in the Hudson Valley. Like the New York redistricting commission,

we believe this district should retain the culturally important community of Co-Op City and then move north immediately across the Bronx border to the similar cities of Mount Vernon and Yonkers. These cities should be paired with the city of Port Chester, a predominantly Hispanic/Latino community along the Connecticut border via Bronxville.

The district should continue moving south of and to the east of Scarsdale and White Plains to continue north, drawing in another Hispanic/Latino city in Brewster in the more sparsely populated areas of eastern Putnam, west of the mountains. In order to create a Hudson Highlands district in the 18th, the 16th should pick up the more rural areas in the Taconics, along eastern Dutchess. Drawing these communities together will help unite these border towns and farming communities to the east of the mountain ranges that border the river.

New York's 13th Congressional District:

NY-13 must move north to the Westchester border, accounting for the expansions of districts in southern New York City. The 13th should maintain its Western border with the 15th between the Bronx and Manhattan. The 13th is pushed slightly north of Central Park to Harlem, while allowing the 10th to take parts of Morningside Heights in order to keep Columbia University whole. Because we want to maintain the strength of communities in this and neighboring districts, the 13th would need to go around the 15th and pick up like communities in the East Bronx. The growth of this district to the east of The Bronx River Forest would unite important New York City Housing Authority properties in Gun Hill, Parkside, and the East Bronx. The border should run along Gun Hill Rd as the Northern border of the 16th, up to Pelham Pkwy and the Southern border with the 14th.

New York's 15th Congressional District:

The 15th district, a long-established and extremely compact majority-minority district, should be the least-changed seat in any configuration. The only change would be to pick up voters in the Bronx along its Southern or western border to help balance the population. The 15th should be kept whole to maintain its border with the 13th to the east and 12th on its southern border.

New York's 12th Congressional District:

The 12th district will also largely remain the same, expanding slightly north beyond the Upper East Side into Lower East Harlem, to account for the loss of some voters

in the Lower East Side as a result of expanding districts in the south. This growth north would also keep the majority of the 12th's voters in Manhattan. As a result, the 12th would lose all of Brooklyn but keep most of the neighborhoods in western Queens along the East River, only losing the neighborhoods to the south and east of Jackson and Northern Boulevards.

New York's 14th Congressional District:

Again, the 14th district should also remain largely the same, maintaining its borders to the east with the 12th and the 15th to the North and west. Just as in the other New York City seats, population shifts in the south will naturally push the 14th north, growing into Westchester County. The communities of Pelham, Pelham Manor, and New Rochelle would help to balance the population in the district and are very closely connected to neighboring communities. These predominantly Black and Latino communities are vibrant, densely populated cousins to the New York City neighborhoods just across the border. The growth of neighboring congressional districts pushes the 14th to below the Pelham Parkway.

New York's 6th Congressional District:

The 6th district is the heart of the city's AAPI population and must remain so. The seat should largely maintain its current configuration but may lose portions of Queens to the east because of the need for population expansion in the districts on Long Island.

New York's 7th Congressional District:

The 7th district should also largely maintain its current configuration, keeping its western Brooklyn community whole, adding some voters in the Lower East Side, and largely maintaining its border with the old 12th district to the north. The district needs to add a few thousand people, so it can grow into the neighborhoods just east of the Greenwood Cemetery.

New York's 9th Congressional District:

The 9th district should also be a least-change district, maintaining its borders with the 7th and 8th districts to the east, west and north, but adding some voters just west of Homecrest along Ocean Avenue serving as a dividing line for business and transit communities between the 10th and 9th districts.

New York's 8th Congressional District:

Similarly, the 8th district should barely change, maintaining its borders to the west with the 9th and north with the 7th. The 8th will lose some voters in the east to the 5th district because the districts along Long Island must gain population and move west.

New York's 10th Congressional District:

The 10th district should continue to be a Manhattan to Brooklyn district, connecting Lower Manhattan to Brooklyn via the Brooklyn Bridge given the shared interests of those two communities on each side of the bridge. The 10th starts just north of Central Park, including all of Columbia University and the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. It would then extend down to Lower Manhattan between the 12th and 11th districts, to include the 9/11 Memorial and NewYork-Presbyterian Lower Manhattan Hospital.

To better connect the Brooklyn communities that are now divided across districts, the district should follow the enacted map's vision, extending this seat from Borough Park down to Dyker Heights and south, along Ocean Parkway to eastern Gravesend by Coney Island Hospital.

New York's 11th Congressional District:

The seat in Staten Island must grow by nearly 11,000 people. There are only two ways to grow, either into Brooklyn or into Manhattan. Growing further into Brooklyn presents several obstacles, namely diluting minority voices in Sunset Parks or Coney Island. Instead, the map should try to reduce the district's Brooklyn footprint and grow into the west side of Manhattan. The 11th will keep its core communities in Staten Island and better serve the district by connecting the island to Lower Manhattan, via the ferry lines, where there is a natural shared interest. The 11th should then extend along the Hudson River, adding communities west of the 9/11 Memorial and up, taking in important transportation features like the Lincoln and Holland tunnels and all of the piers up to 59th street. This district would capture many of the ferry routes that tens of thousands of New Yorkers travel every day and the bridges and tunnels traversed by thousands more. These Hudson River and New Jersey border communities share many of the same transportation and housing needs and are intimately connected to one another.

The seat would still need some parts of Brooklyn, following along the Verrazzano Narrows Bridge and keeping the shoreline communities around Bay Ridge, Bath Beach, and Dyker Beach Park. These communities are connected by their shared

interest in combating climate change and mitigating damages from natural disasters and rising waters.

New York's 5th Congressional District:

As the Long Island seats grow west, the 5th district can now be wholly within New York City. The communities on the eastern border of the district in Nassau County would be added to the new 4th Congressional District, to help that seat pick up needed population. This change on the easternmost border of the district necessitates adding some neighboring communities on its western border with the 8th – nearly extending to Brooklyn – and the northern edges of the 6th – likely the southern portions of Flushing and Hollis Hills. These changes would keep these neighboring communities together, rather than linking residents of Nassau County with New York City residents, and maintaining the power of minority voices in the city.

Long Island:

New York's 4th Congressional District:

Continuing along the Atlantic Ocean, the southwestern Long Island seat now called the 4th should keep Long Island whole, and pick up only a tiny piece of easternmost Queens around the Belmont Park racetrack, extending up to the Queens Children's Psychiatric Hospital to Route 495 and down the county line to New Hyde Park, again making the 5th an entirely New York City district.

New York's 2nd Congressional District:

As one of the largest cities in New York, this map would give Hempstead two representatives in Congress, with the western part of the city in the 4th and the eastern part of the city in the 2nd. The district would then continue along the south shore, including the shoretown neighborhoods in Freeport, Merrick, Massapequa, Amityville, and Copiague.

The district would reunite the larger Nassau County towns of Roosevelt, Levittown, and East Meadow. Depending on how map drawers design the western edges of the district, these changes allow for the potential of a new majority-minority seat in the New York delegation, if not today, then certainly by the end of the decade.

New York's 1st Congressional District:

The easternmost Long Island seat now called the 1st would be very similar to the enacted map, only losing communities like Smithtown and Nissequoge, while adding Ronkonkoma, Great River, and East Islip to its western edge.

New York's 3rd Congressional District:

The northwestern Long Island seat should also remain largely the same, extending east to add similar Long Island Sound communities like Port Jefferson, Stony Brook, and Smithtown.

Like the Unity Map, we believe the 3rd should unite the Long Island Sound communities of interest on both sides of the estuary, linking the shoreline towns of Mamaroneck, Larchmont, and Rye to Kings Point, Sands Point, and Bayville. These communities are closely connected to the water in terms of culture, economy, tourism, and leisure activities. They are also most closely related in their infrastructure, environmental conservation, and pollution mitigation needs.

The western edge should add sister communities in the northern edge of Queens around Little Neck Bay and the Little Bay like Bayside or Little Neck.