

Testimony of Michelle Ostrelich, Niskayuna, NY
January 25, 2023

Good evening. My name is Michelle Ostrelich. I am a resident of the Town of Niskayuna in Schenectady County. I am also a Schenectady County Legislator representing the Towns of Niskayuna and Glenville. In the proposed redistricting plan, Niskayuna is split in half between Assembly Districts 110 and 112. I am here to speak against splitting Niskayuna in half, but instead keep Niskayuna wholly within the 110th.

My first point is on this Commission's directive to maintain existing districts and pre-existing political subdivisions. Niskayuna is currently wholly within Assembly District 110. Niskayuna is whole for every other representative district including the districts for Congress, state senate, judicial and county legislature. Splitting Niskayuna in half between two Assembly Districts hasn't been done in at least as far back as 1940. It would confuse and frustrate today's residents and voters. It would make advocacy twice as hard for our town representatives. It would dilute the attention residents of Niskayuna are used to receiving from one assemblymember.

My second point is on this Commission's directive to maintain communities of interest, specifically the fact that Niskayuna and the Town of Colonie, which are both currently together in the 110th, are more suburban, while towns that make up the vast majority of the 112th like Ballston, Charlton, Galway and much of Clifton Park located in southern Saratoga County are significantly more rural.

The population density of Niskayuna and Colonie are at least double the population density of those southern Saratoga County towns.¹ When you drive through the southern Saratoga towns the lots are bigger – measured in acres, not fractions of acres. It is beautiful and pastoral. Think long country roads. A significant portion of these towns is included in Saratoga County's Agricultural District #2. There are agricultural farms and horse farms, all are Right-to-Farm towns and the land plans of Ballston, Charlton and Galway are predominantly zoned "agricultural" or "residential/agricultural".²

¹ According to the results of the 2020 Census, the population density of Niskayuna is 1,654 per square mile and Colonie is 1,529. By comparison, the southern Saratoga County towns in the 112th, are half that or less. Ballston is 400, Charlton is 131 and Clifton Park is 789.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/niskayunatownschenectadycountynewyork/PST045222>;
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/colonietaownsbanycountynewyork>;
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/ballstontownsarotogacountynewyork>;
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/cliftonparktownsarotogacountynewyork>;
<https://www.townofcharlton.org/about> (Charlton is 32.8 square miles);
<https://www.census.gov/search-results.html?q=charlton%2C+ny&page=1&stateGeo=none&searchtype=web&cssp=SERP&charset=UTF-8> (Charlton population is 4,328).

² <https://www.saratogacountyny.gov/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/AgDist-Draft-FinalReport.pdf>

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Niskayuna and Colonie are not rural but suburban with smaller residential lots. There are a couple of farms nestled in neighborhoods but for the most part, there aren't long country roads. Only 1 percent of Niskayuna is part of Schenectady County's Agricultural District. There are no horse boarding operations in Niskayuna. It is not a designated Right-to-Farm Community.³

I propose that it would make sense to move the northern half of Niskayuna back to Assembly District 110 and move Halfmoon, a town in Southern Saratoga right next to Clifton Park into Assembly District 112 which has a population density between that of Clifton Park and Ballston.⁴ Population density is probably just one of the many indicators that show why Niskayuna belongs in the 110th. Supporting data is in the footnotes of the hardcopy of my testimony I am submitting this evening, including citation links.

In summary, Niskayuna is much more similar to Colonie in the 110th than to the southern Saratoga County towns in the 112th. Niskayuna should be kept whole and placed with Colonie in the 110th and perhaps the Town of Halfmoon moved to the 112th.

THANK YOU.

³ <https://www.schenectadycounty.com/sites/default/files/AGDistrict%20ReviewReport%2007-19.pdf>, p. 9-10

⁴ Halfmoon has 787 people per square mile.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/halfmoontownsaratogacountynewyork>