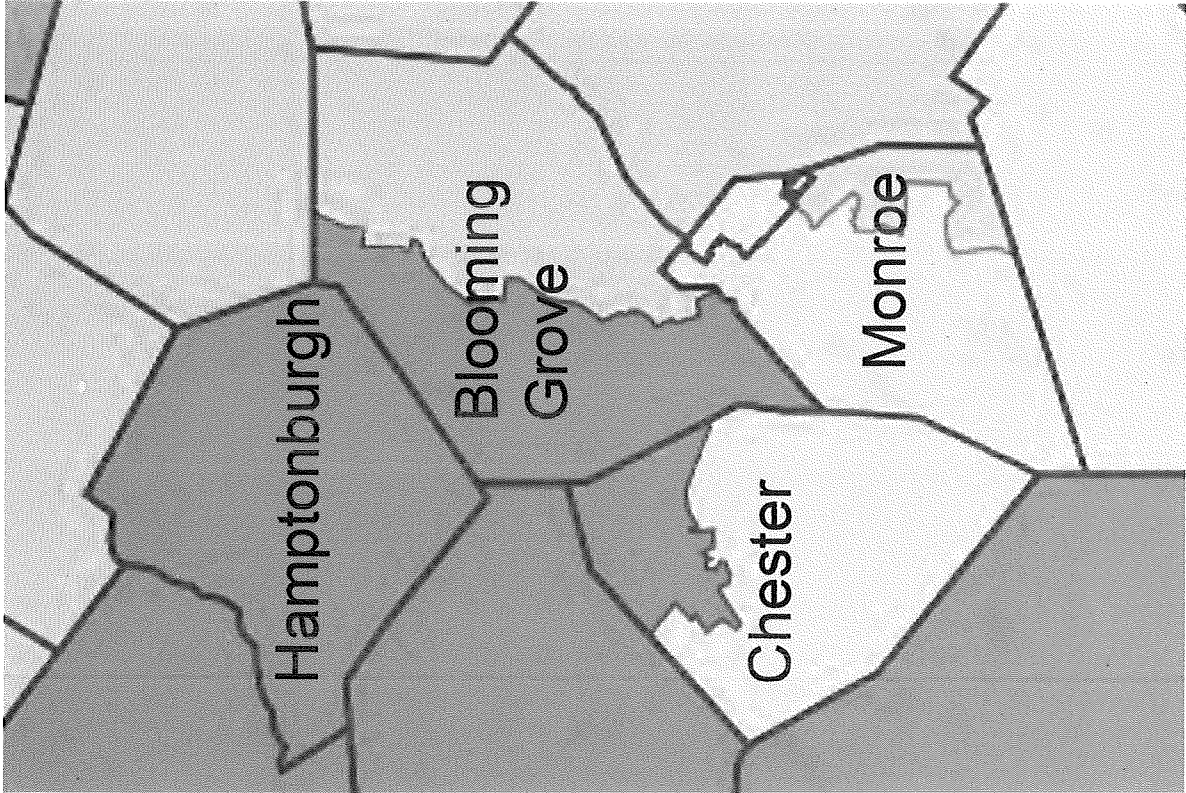


My name is Joshua Koff. I'm a proud resident of the town of Chester in Orange County. 16 years ago tomorrow my family and I packed our bags and moved to Chester. But today I'm here out of a sense of obligation and duty to that community, my home, because I believe that the Commission has made a mistake in drafting its map regarding Chester. Based on the draft map, the town of Chester would be split in two, with the village of Chester and all of the town north and east of Route 17 in the proposed 101st District and everything south and west of 17 in the 98th District.

Cutting Chester in half isn't rational line-drawing; it's unnecessary. I have submitted a revision to your map that leaves Chester intact, while simultaneously lowering the population deviation of the 98th District from 2.18% in the current draft to only 0.39%. This revision would see all of Chester in the 101st District, while adjusting the placement of the towns of Blooming Grove, Hamptonburgh, and Monroe to offset the population change.

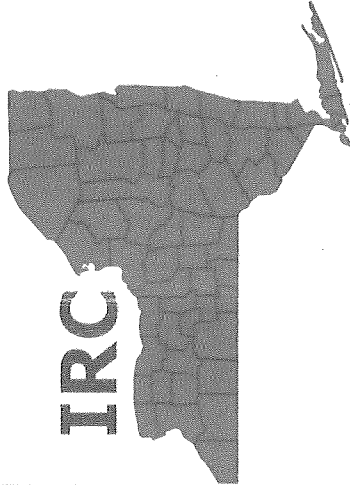
In many cases splitting communities, while unfortunate, is unavoidable, but with Chester this is very much avoidable. As of the 2020 Census, the population of Chester was 12,646, well below the target median population for Assembly district size. I live in the portion of Chester that, in your draft, would be in the 98th District. I went to high school in the draft 101st District. It's also where my primary library is located, where I most frequently shop and socialize, and where many of my friends and family live. While separating this part of Chester from not just the rest of the town where our Black Dirt farmers work and live but also from other communities of interest may seem to work on paper to even out the population, it makes very little sense for legislative purposes when you spend time talking to people who live there.

Please consider my revision to achieve a map that keeps Chester united and better reflects your stated aim of more effective and fair representation. Chester already struggles from decisions made by people drawing maps who didn't realize how we would be impacted. Currently, our small town is split between two local police department jurisdictions, three fire districts, four public library tax districts, and five school property tax districts. A growing number of enthusiastic people have been moving here from Brooklyn and other boroughs, surprised to find their new home needlessly split on maps, suffering the negative consequences of disconnected representation like in their old communities. With this new influx from the city Chester has a unique opportunity to grow and thrive, but by diluting the voice of the community between two Assembly districts we lose much of that opportunity to inefficiency and placing an unfair burden on the town, having to fight for support from two members of the Assembly when other communities would only have to appeal to one. Keep Chester united, prevent the mistake of another needless dividing-line on a map from being carried over into your final draft and our lives.



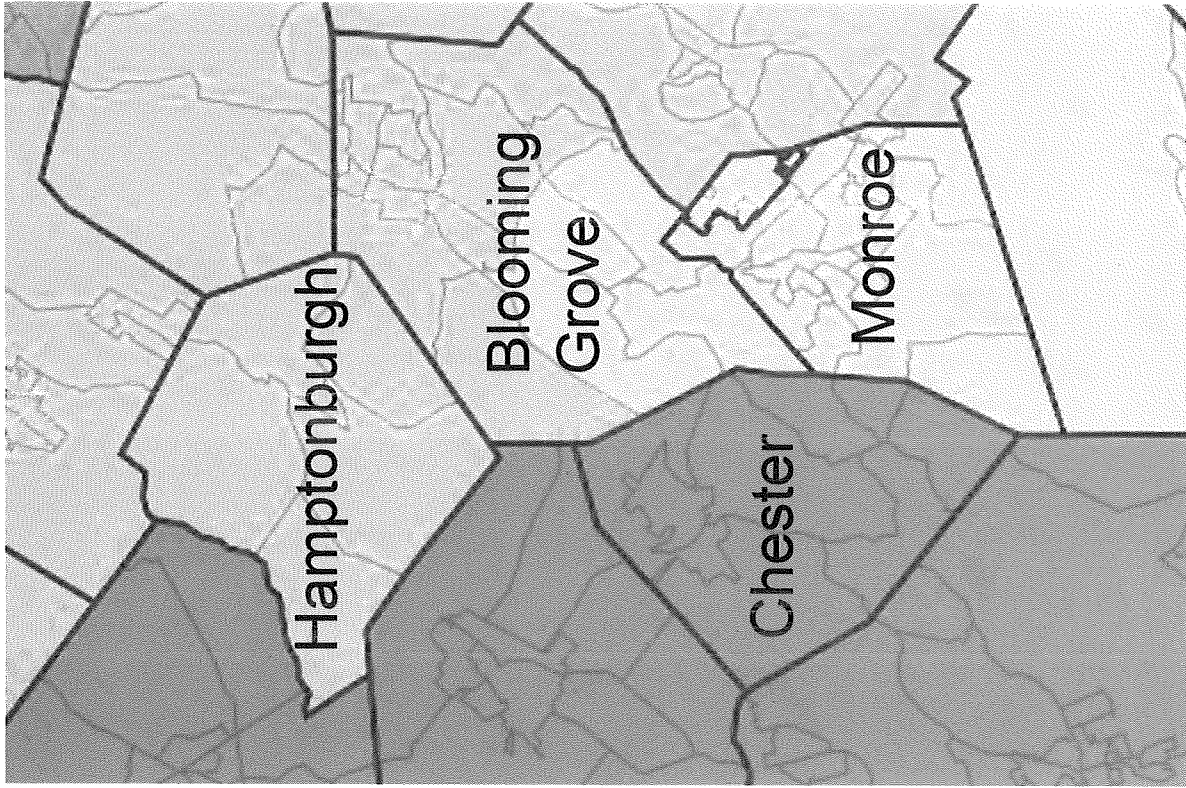
← Commission Draft

Proposed change →



Yellow- 98th District
Green- 99th District
Red- 101st District

Submitted by Joshua Koff to
the Independent
Redistricting Commission,
1/30/2023



Good afternoon, my name is Bishop James A Rollins Sr. I am here this evening to give my remarks on the Independent Redistricting Commission's proposed district maps for the New York State Assembly.

I Appreciate the opportunity to be heard by this respected and august bipartisan redistricting commission.

I am a resident of Middletown, New York where I have lived with my family for nearly 30 years. I have served as a City Councilman, as the former president of the Middletown NAACP, and founded and planted a multicultural church and ministry in the City Of Middletown.

Demographically, Middletown has the largest population of any city in Orange County, and is one of the top ten fastest growing cities in New York State. The Last census, 2020, Middletown grew by over 10%. We are doing an awful lot of things right in our city, but one thing we have always struggled with is voter participation in elections. Those of us who believe that "voting is the currency of democracy" work hard to convey to the residents that it is important for all of us to be counted in the census because of its impact on our representation by elected officials. The ministry that I lead, and the residents of Middletown are working equally as hard to protect our interests when it comes to representation on the State level.

I understand that you have many factors to consider when drawing up these legislative districts. However, Preserving communities of color and in this case, specifically the black community is where I would like you to reconsider when deciding the 100th and 101st Districts.

Although much of Sullivan County is rural, it has significant population centers along the Rt. 17 corridor that share many common interests with the Middletown / Wallkill area. These communities have similar challenges, and need representation that will not be diluted for partisan purposes.

For example, our current 100th District represented by Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther contains four urban centers, Middletown, Wallkill, Monticello and Liberty. The Black population in Middletown is 23.2%, Wallkill, 20.1%, Monticello, 22.4% and Liberty 14.4%.

These urban centers with minority populations have common interests. They share social, cultural, racial and economic concerns.

interest

Our newly proposed Middletown / Wallkill District, the 101st, removes Monticello and Liberty from the District. This new 101st district will have 15,810 black residents with 13,216 black residents or 84 % from Middletown / Wallkill.

The newly proposed districts urban centers besides Middletown / Wallkill black populations are as follows Goshen, which has a 1.52% black population , Florida, which has a 1.87% black population, and Warwick which has a, 0.80% black population.

The benefit of our common interest in the current 100th district are not being considered with the proposed changes of the new 101st district. We need that common interest. We need to continue to work with Sullivan County as both Counties are experiencing tremendous growth. Moreover, we need to continue building on the successes that we have shared.

I opened my comments highlighting the importance of voter turnout in cities. I reiterate, that "voting is the currency of democracy". Therefore, I strongly urge this bipartisan independent commission to "ensure" that urban residents, Monticello, Liberty, Middletown / Wallkill area vote at the levels of the rural and suburban parts of the State.

When Black voters feel that their votes do not matter, our community's political influence is dramatically weakened, which stifles our ability to develop solutions to problems created by density, such as affordable housing, and public transportation which are not as important to an overwhelming portion of the newly proposed District. When black voters feel that their vote will not make a difference in State elections, voter turnout will suffer.

Middletown / Wallkill have been in the same Assembly District for decades and it would be a mistake to remove us from that relationship.

I urge you consider my comments regarding this critical issue of social justice, and remove both Middletown and Wallkill from the proposed 101st and place us back into the 100th where we belong.