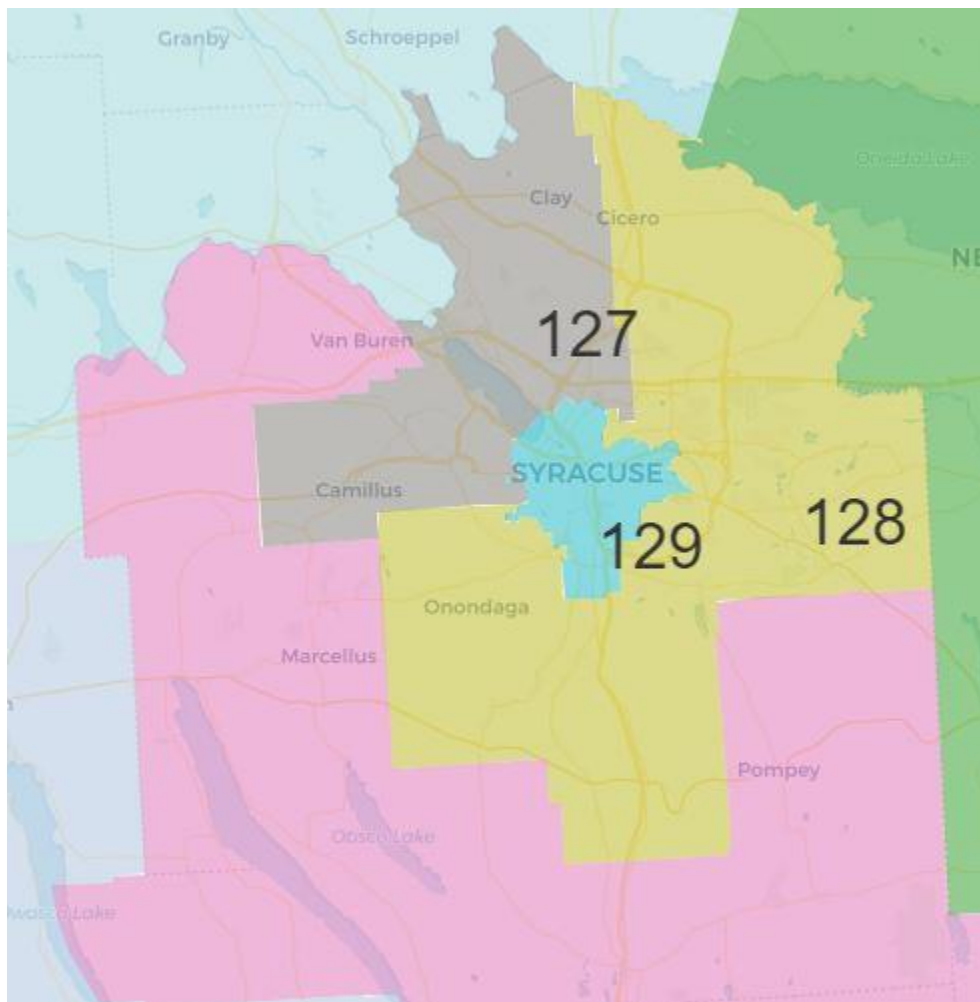


Submitted Testimony to New York State Independent Redistricting Commission.

Draft Assembly Maps

March 8, 2023

I am submitting testimony today on the NYSIRC draft assembly plans to redraw NYS Assembly districts for the 2024 election. I was unable to attend the live hearings in Onondaga County in February due to work obligations. I have been the Democratic Elections Commissioner in Onondaga County since 2013. I have also been intimately involved in redistricting on the local level in Onondaga County and the City of Syracuse. I am submitting this testimony today as a resident of Onondaga County; however, I am drawing on my experience as elections commissioner and fair maps advocate. For the most part I will center my testimony on the divisions proposed in Onondaga County.

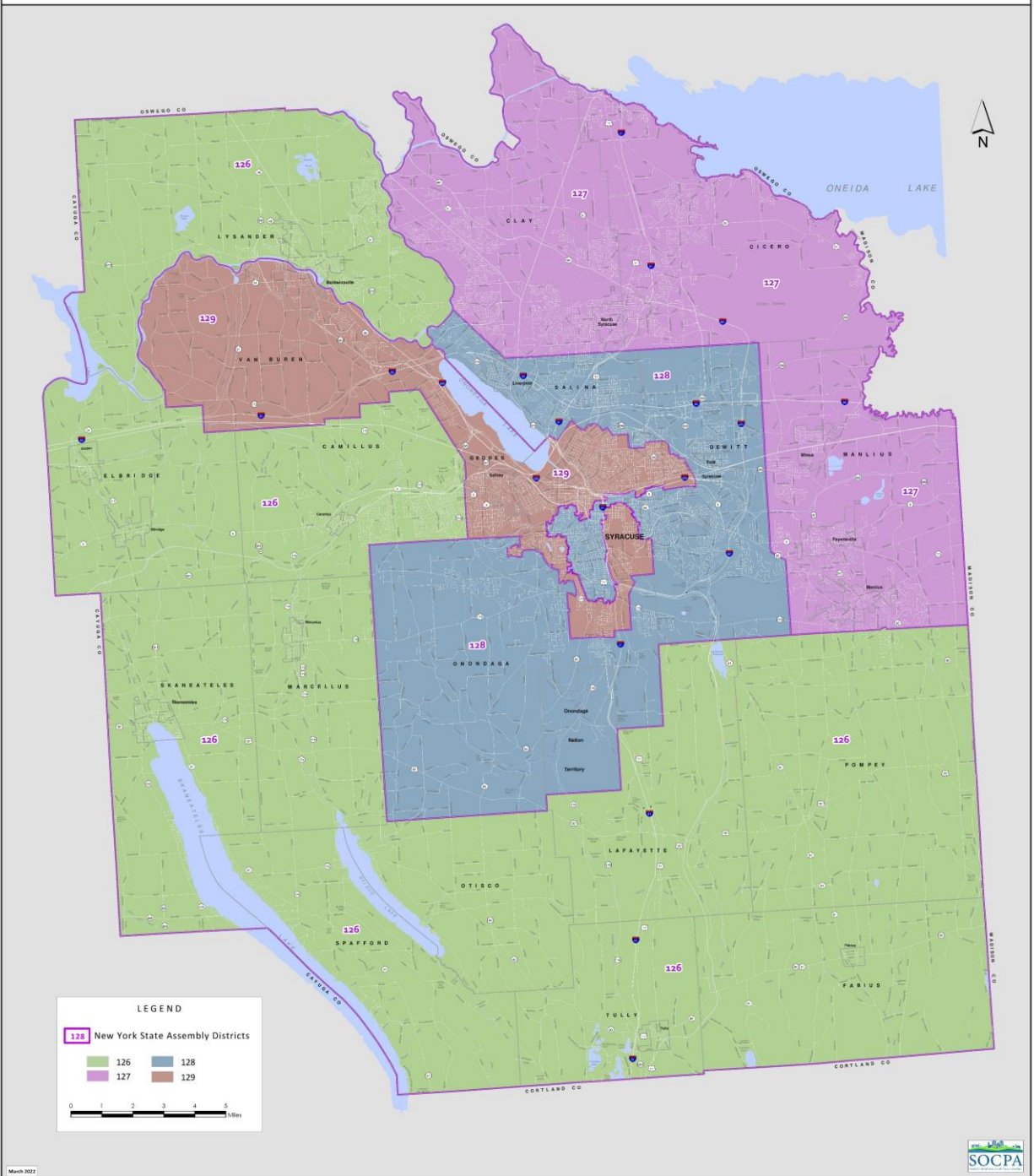


The NYSIRC should take a least change approach to Redistricting from the existing Assembly Maps.

The original NYS Assembly plan differs from the other maps passed by the NYS legislature during the 2022 redistricting process. Though the court has found that there was a process violation of the NYS

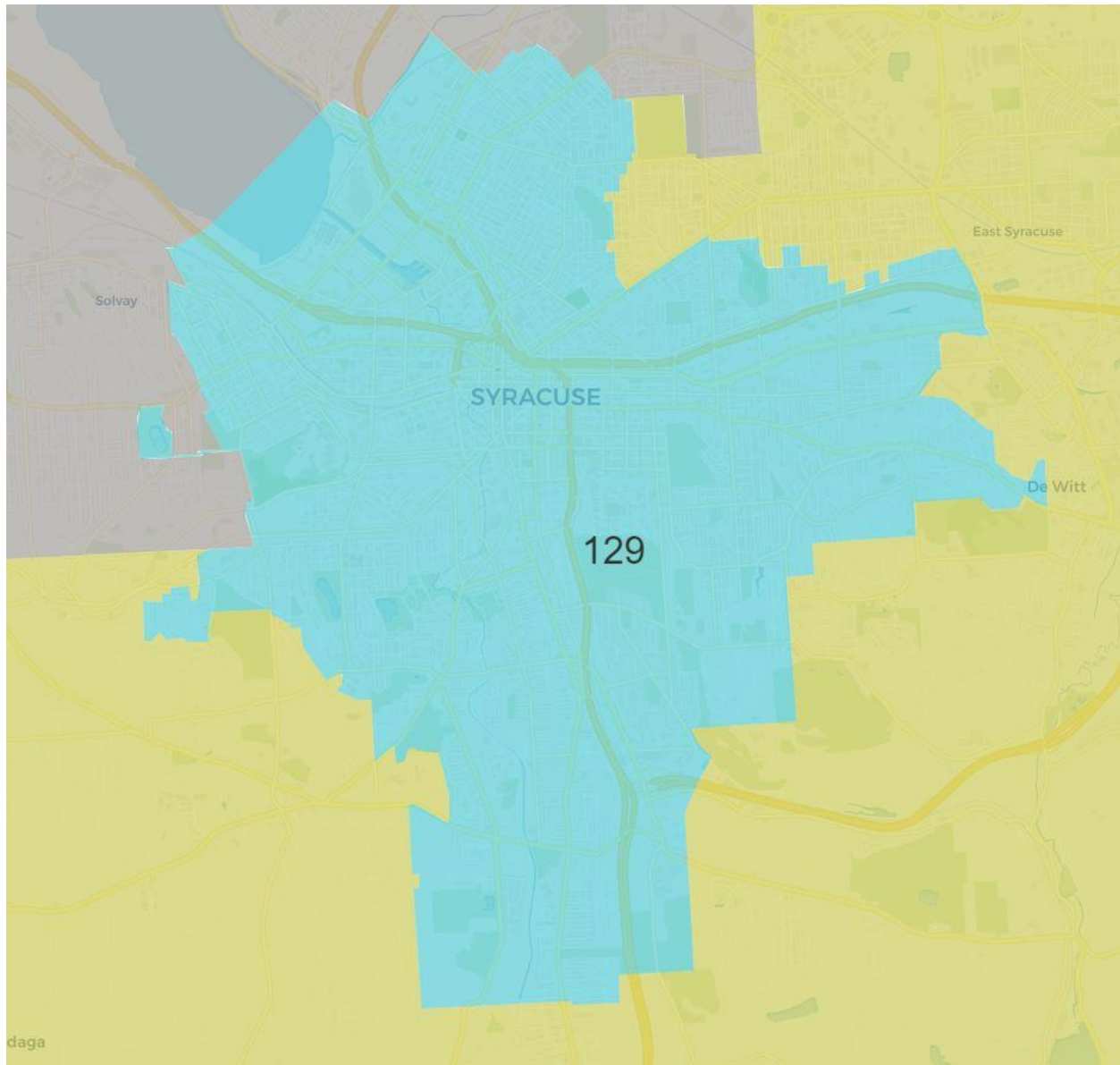
constitution as the INYSIRC failed to submit second draft plans to vote on, they did not find the plans partisan in nature. The Assembly plan received bi-partisan support in its vote in the legislature. In practice in last year's elections the minority party did not lose any seats, in fact the minority party gained seats in the 2022 election on the new lines.

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICTS IN ONONDAGA COUNTY



Given the absence of any proof of partisan intent or effect of the Assembly districts passed by the legislature in 2022, the NYSIRC should adopt a least change map. New Yorkers have been confused by the tumultuous redistricting process in the NYS Senate and Congressional lines last year. I believe the

court realized this when adopting to send this back to the NYSIRC instead of adopting a special master. The maps proposed in the draft map for Central New York is a radical unnecessary change to the NYS Assembly lines from 2022. This will once again cause confusion in 2024. If the court or evidence showed partisan intent in redrawing these lines, I would be in favor of a radical redraw. Since it did not, I believe the changes to the districts in Onondaga County are unnecessary.



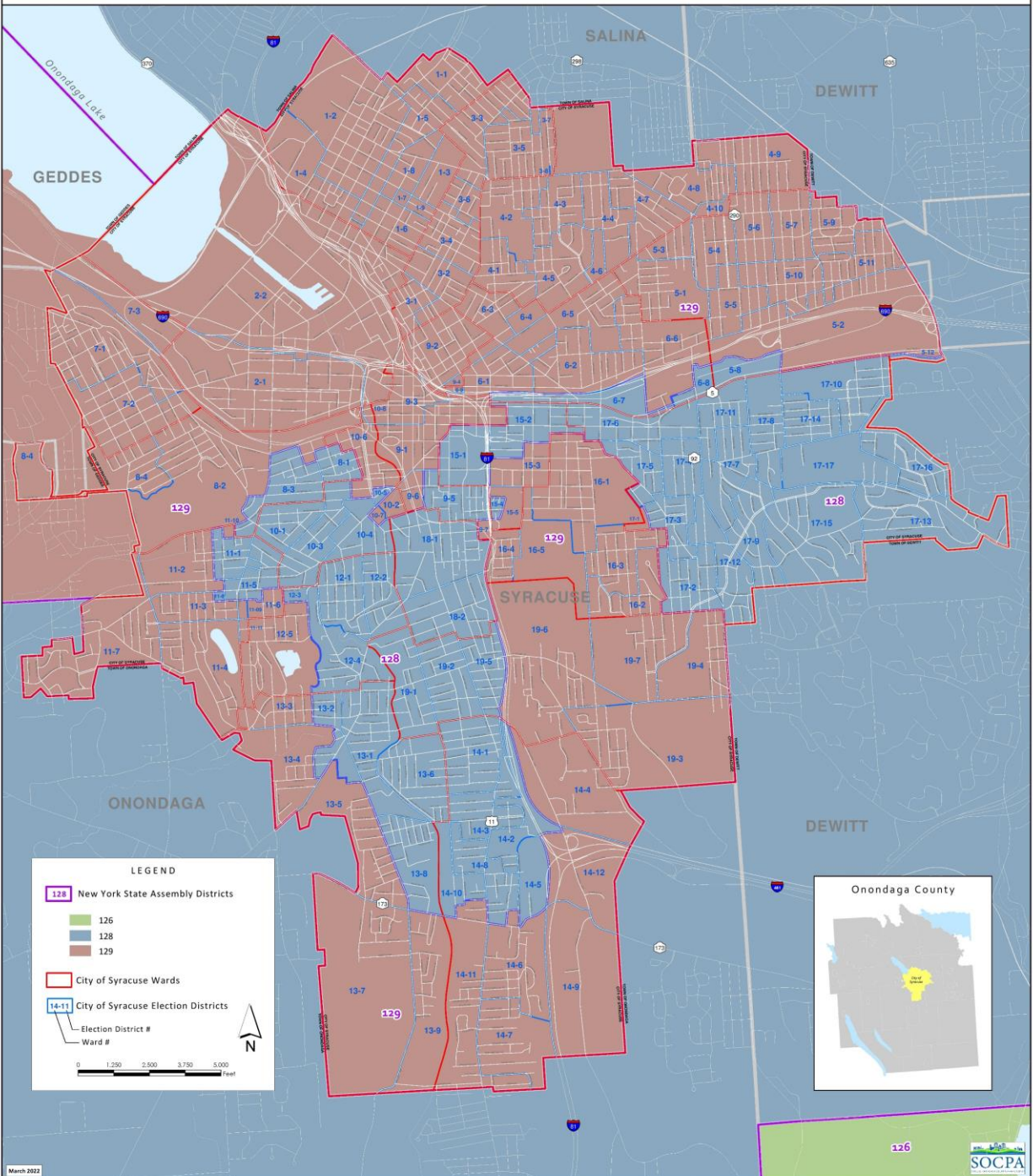
Division of Syracuse

The NYSIRC map changes the way Syracuse is divided into two assembly districts. The City of Syracuse must be divided into two different Assembly districts due to its large population. For at least the last 20 years the City of Syracuse has been divided into two nearly equal portions population wise and paired with suburban towns. The NYSIRC chose to handle this division by having one Assembly district wholly inside the City of Syracuse and then a small portion of the city paired with some suburban towns and

some rural towns. The division the NYSIRC made in Syracuse puts that portion of the city in a district so divided it could be lost in Representation.

Urban populations have drastically different needs than their suburban and rural counterparts. It is much preferred to pair equal parts of Syracuse with the Towns that share borders with them, like Dewitt, Onondaga, Geddes, & Salina. The new proposed 128 does pair the Eastwood portion of the City with Dewitt, however including Cicero & Manlius, exurban towns, and Lafayette a rural town, joins the city residents with disparate and different communities that will drown out the city residents. The Town of Onondaga does share a border with the city, but it is on the complete opposite side of Syracuse than the small section of the city it is paired with.

NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY DISTRICTS IN THE CITY OF SYRACUSE



While I believe the City of Syracuse is better served with being equally divided and paired with towns that share the borders, if the NYSIRC insists on taking a small portion of the city to par with these towns, the Southeast corner of the city in the 17th Ward would be a better match to share with the

communities in Cicero, Dewitt, Lafayette, Manlius, and Onondaga. If the NYSIRC wants to improve on the City of Syracuse division from the Assembly map it could look at a different division. Instead of having one Assembly district take inner city neighborhoods with a small connection through the east side to the suburban communities while the other district loops around, the commission could use more of the neighborhoods in the east side or university area giving a more cohesive and compact shape to the districts inside the city.

Division of Towns traditionally paired together will split up communities of interest.

Unfortunately, outside the City of Syracuse the draft map by the NYSIRC also misses the mark. While I commend the NYSIRC effort to keep towns whole in Onondaga County. Removing Lysander from an Assembly district that has other neighbors in Onondaga County will in effect less those citizens voices as it is paired with rural smaller Oswego County which has different needs from their representative. Splitting up the towns of Clay and Cicero ignores that they not only share the village of North Syracuse but will have common interests going forward with the introduction of the Micron development and the residents that will be coming here in the next ten years. As stated in the section above, Lafayette being paired with larger towns and the City of Syracuse threatens to put that town as the odd man out in that district.

In conclusion the NYSIRC should scrap its draft map and adopt a least change Assembly map based on the bipartisan maps passed in 2022. The maps in 2022 were not found to be a partisan gerrymander and elected representation that gave more power to the minority party in 2022. Keeping the 2022 legislatively drawn map with minor changes is the best option so far into this cycle. This would resolve the technicality found by the court while keeping the communities together that have already elected representation.