

Independent Redistricting Commission  
250 Broadway, 22<sup>nd</sup> FL  
New York, NY 10007

Re: Proposed Assembly district lines –Greater Rochester area

Dear Commissioners Jenkins, Nesbitt, Brady, Collado, Conway, Cuevas-Molina, Flateau, Frazier, Harris, and Stephens:

Please allow me to begin by thanking you for your service and work on the Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC). I am the former Monroe County Commissioner of Elections, having served for 17 years, retiring in 2019; and was Deputy Commissioner for 3 years as well. I've been involved in politics since the late 60's. Through my tenure I have experienced redistricting many times.

With that experience, I was somewhat stunned when reviewing the IRC proposed maps for the upstate Rochester region as it does not reflect our communities of interest. Over the past 30 years I have been involved in trying to ensure that communities of interest were considered when redistricting the Rochester area. I have seen time after time Monroe County/Rochester becoming the place where maps from the west and maps from the east are made to fit, with Monroe County dealing with the leftovers. The IRC proposed map under consideration is problematic as it does not fully recognize the importance of communities of interest in the city nor how the surrounding towns relate to the City.

During the redistricting of 2021, after a misstart by the redistricting commission the Assembly lines as I understand it were drawn beginning from the Rochester area and were pushed out. This created a chance to finally make right communities that had been divided for decades –the current Assembly lines indeed have corrected this history. Attached please find a list of the Rochester communities of interest along with a map of the current Assembly lines with communities of interest lines overlaid. This shows how, with very limited exceptions, communities of interest have been kept together in the current Assembly lines. In cases where some very minor divisions were carved out the community had asked for those sub-divisions. The School of Arts, the University of Rochester, Winton Village and Browncroft communities of interest to name specifics.

Also, the suburb communities that share interests were put together. Perinton, Pittsford and Penfield, as we locally refer to as the “P – towns” share many common interests and could in many ways be one community. Although it is impossible to bring all suburban schools districts totally together consideration was given where there were strong ties; in particular, the Churchville-Chili School District keeping the towns of Riga and Chili together were put together given the families and students in those two towns have a strong connection because of the unified school district.

Unlike the Assembly drawn maps, the IRC proposed map has failed on so many levels. To start with, putting our city south-east core with two strong towns, Irondequoit and Brighton undermines the importance of the efforts that have been and are being made to strengthen the city and ensure its success as an alive vibrant community standing on its own. The city's efforts in growing housing, businesses, community services for city neighborhoods are so important to the families of the south-east. These two towns will inevitably draw resources away that are needed so much.

Particularly, putting the whole south-east side of the city with these two towns diminishes the importance of those city rebuilding efforts as well as the arts in the city. The IRC proposal cuts the Neighborhood of the Arts in half without understanding the various elements of it. The Neighborhood of the Arts has a very strong sense of unity and is led by strong neighborhood and business associations. The renaissance of this area with an emphasis on the arts is a tribute to the unity of this community.

On the northwest side of Rochester, the IRC proposed map has cut the Maplewood Community into pieces. Like the south-east area, Maplewood Community has worked together in a unified way to improve the quality of life for its residents.

Additionally, the IRC proposed map places a small section of an Assembly district in the city near the river on the northside that cuts it off from anything surrounding it and there is a small section of another Assembly district going into Irondequoit without a clear reason. I can only assume these strange elements were some of your leftover parts.

Finally, the current Assembly lines provide similar communities that crossed city suburban lines with a link through their Assembly lines. For example, Gates and the city and Henrietta and the city.

I believe the IRC can fix this by taking a closer look at what was set in place under the current Assembly lines –looking, in particular, with how the City communities of interest have been kept together and how certain towns link with parts of the City. Please understand the community did have a strong voice in what was ultimately put in place and the lines repair, if I may, the sins of the past.

Tom Ferrarese  
Former Commissioner of Elections,  
Monroe County Board of Elections