
Public Hearing

before

NEW JERSEY REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

“Testimony from interested groups and members of the public regarding the establishment of Congressional districts for New Jersey for use during the 2000 decade”

LOCATION: State House
Room 319
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: July 31, 2001
7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMISSION PRESENT:

Alan Rosenthal, Chairman

Dale Florio
Elizabeth Randall
Candace Straight
Assemblyman Gary W. Stuhltrager

Karen Brown
Zulima Farber
Lionel Kaplan



ALSO PRESENT:

Frank J. Parisi
Office of Legislative Services
Commission Secretary

Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
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ALAN ROSENTHAL (Chairman): I'd like to call the meeting of the New Jersey Congressional Redistricting Commission to order and ask the secretary to take the roll.

MR. PARISI (Secretary): Okay. Karen Brown.

MS. BROWN: Present.

MR. PARISI: Len Coleman. (no response)

James Dugan. (no response)

Zulima Farber.

MS. FARBER: Present.

MR. PARISI: Dale Florio.

MR. FLORIO: Here.

MR. PARISI: George Gilmore. (no response)

Lonnie Kaplan.

MR. KAPLAN: Here.

MR. PARISI: Lisa Randall.

MS. RANDALL: Here.

MR. PARISI: Dana Redd. (no response)

Frank Robinson. (no response)

Candace Straight.

MS. STRAIGHT: Here.

MR. PARISI: Gary Stuhltrager.

ASSEMBLYMAN STUHLTRAGER: Here.

MR. PARISI: Chairman Rosenthal.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Here.

This is the first public meeting of the Congressional Redistricting Commission, which is constitutionally mandated to come up with a redistricting plan for the members of Congress. We will have another public hearing in South Jersey, in Atlantic City at the Convention Center, on Thursday at 7:00, and a third public hearing in Northern New Jersey, in Newark, on August 9th, also at 7:00. And these notices are being distributed through a mailing list, and there are also notices in the newspapers.

We are here to take testimony and to listen to anyone's comments and suggestions with regard to the congressional redistricting and to accept a redistricting plan that might be proposed. If you propose a redistricting plan, or whatever testimony you give, it will part of a public record that will be submitted with a final plan that is adopted by the Commission.

We have one witness who has signed up to testify, and that is Mr. Ira Jersey. Would you like to come forward and testify, please?

I R A J E R S E Y: Mr. Chairman, thank you for hearing me tonight. Members of the board, I appreciate your indulgence this evening, and I appreciate your work for this very important and constitutionally mandated effort.

I am the Chairman of the Jersey City Republican Party, as well as a candidate for the Legislature in the 31st District, but I am here tonight mostly for myself, although also for other members of the community of Jersey City and parts of Bayonne, as well as -- who feel disenfranchised. The reason why they feel disenfranchised is because they live in the 10th Congressional District, which is not in itself bad. However, the area that they live in in Jersey City is in the 10th, which is mostly a district in Essex and Union Counties. And the

people in the district, many of them feel that they're not being properly represented, because it's difficult for the current representative from that district to properly represent them.

Currently, 60 percent of the votes in that district come from Essex County, 30 percent come from Union County, and only 10 percent, or less than 10 percent in some cases, come from Hudson County. In order-- The way that the lines are drawn, and if you look at it on a map and overlay roadways, you can definitively see that you cannot even get from the Hudson County area of the district over to the Newark area of the district -- the Essex County area -- without going into a different congressional district or swimming the Hackensack River. Those are your two options.

I, for one, have lived there a few years now in this district, and I have yet to see the current representative come over. He doesn't have a vested interest, and because of that, people feel disenfranchised. Before you (indicating), I know that you probably have received just some notes from me. I hope you'll take them into account when making your decision on how to redistrict. I know that the 10th Congressional District has to get another 50,000-some-odd votes or people in terms of population. So, hopefully, when you make it-- I don't have a specific plan. I would make either one of two suggestions.

One possibility, obviously, since there's only about 10,000 votes and maybe 30,000 people in terms of population that need to come out of Hudson County, that perhaps when you redraw the lines for the 10th that you can take that into account and move those people out. Or another possibility that some people have proposed to me -- this was not my idea, but I think it's

a good one -- is potentially to make -- expand the 10th in Hudson County, adding most or all of Jersey City and potentially Bayonne and all of Bayonne into the 10th, thereby making over 150,000 to 200,000 people in the district from Hudson County. That way it's more equitable between the three counties involved in that district.

Finally, I also, just for ease sake, would urge you to consider using geopolitical boundaries when creating the district. Right now, parts of a ward are in and others parts aren't. So it would be conducive to the people of Jersey City just for -- so they're not confused with who's representing them -- to potentially draw it along ward lines. We just had ward redistricting in Hudson County where we had significant changes in our wards in Jersey City. And it's possible just to take three of the wards of Jersey City, for example, more or less half the population, and put it into the 10th District, as well as-- And if you add Bayonne, that would equal about 178,000 votes, or people, I should say, and totaling somewhere on the order of a third of the votes in the county.

That's all that I have. I didn't really have anything prepared. I would welcome questions, if that's appropriate, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, it is.

Any members of the Commission have a question to ask of Mr. Jersey? (no response)

I think you've been very clear, and I want to thank you, on behalf of the Commission, for coming down here and submitting your testimony.

Thank you.

MR. JERSEY: Thank you for the brief indulgence.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Are there any other people here who would like to testify? (no response)

Well, if not, I think our work this evening is-- Pardon me?

(Chairman Rosenthal confers with Secretary Parisi)

Any of the members want to comment? (no response)

I think our work for this evening is concluded. Do I have a motion to adjourn?

MR. KAPLAN: So moved.

MR. FLORIO: Second.

MR. ROSENTHAL: All in favor? (affirmative responses)

We will meet again on Thursday in Atlantic City.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

CERTIFICATION

I, Harold White, Hearing Unit Coordinator for the Office of Legislative Services, certify that the foregoing is a complete and accurate transcript of the recording of the New Jersey Redistricting Commission Public Hearing, held in the City of Trenton, on the 31st of July, 2001.

Harold M. White
(Certified Transcriber, AOC Certificate 509)

Office of Legislative Services
Coordinator,
Hearing Unit

Date: _____