WRITING AND PRESENTING COMPELLING REDISTRICTING TESTIMONY

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NYS
AGENDA

1. What is Redistricting and how does it work?
2. What is a testimony?
3. How do I testify about Redistricting?
4. What makes an effective Redistricting testimony?
5. How do I get started?
6. Pro Tips!
What is Redistricting?
Redistricting is the process of drawing legislative districts. By federal law, redistricting must occur following the census (every 10 years).

- Redistricting happens at the congressional, state, and local levels;
- New districts represent how populations shift; and
- New districts should ensure each person’s represented vote counts equally.
How does Redistricting work in New York State?
NEW YORK STATE
CONSTITUTIONAL
RULES AROUND
REDISTRICTING

Required

- Compact
- Contiguous
- Preserve Political Subdivisions
- Preserve Communities of Interest
- Preserve Cores of Prior Districts
- Competitive

Prohibited

- Intentionally Favor or Disfavor Incumbent, Candidate or Party
Compact

• The extent to which a district's geography is dispersed around its center. People within a district should live near each other.

Contiguous

• Each district should be a single connected component.

Preserve Political Subdivisions

• A district should not cross county, city, or town, boundaries.

Preserve Communities of Interest

• Groups with a significant shared interest should be kept together in order to boost their voice in government.
**Members shall represent the diversity of residents of this state with regard to race, ethnicity, gender, language, and geographic reference.

1. Commission holds hearings.
2. Commission introduces draft maps.
4. Commission edits maps and sends to legislature for approval.
5. Legislature votes to approve to reject maps.
6. If rejected, second set of maps is introduced to be voted on.
## OUTLINE OF REDISTRICTING COMMISSION ACTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>GOVERNMENT ACTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>2020-2021 NYS budget proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Commission Appointed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March - June</td>
<td>Census</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Population Count to President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>2021-2022 NYS Budget Proposals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Census Geographic Data to states</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>Census Apportionment Data to States</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July &amp; August</td>
<td>Commission Public Hearings: Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, White Plains,</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Bronx, King, New York, Richmond, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. (Hearings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>will also happen after release of maps in Fall of 2021)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maps must be available 30+ days before first public hearings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Maps available no later than Sept 1-15</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Remainder of Year</td>
<td>Potential for additional hearings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>Must submit plan to legislature by January 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February</td>
<td>If first plans are rejected, Commission can submit second proposal in February.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## INDEPENDENT REDISTRICTING COMMISSION HEARING DATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Tuesday, July 20, 2021** | 2:00 PM | Nassau and Suffolk counties  
Location: Virtual |
| **Thursday, July 22, 2021** | 2:00 PM | Queens County  
Location: Virtual |
| **Monday, July 26, 2021** | 2:00 PM | Bronx and New York counties  
Location: Virtual |
| **Thursday, July 29, 2021** | 2:00 PM | Kings and Richmond counties  
Location: Virtual |
| **Monday, August 2, 2021** | 2:00 PM | Mid-Hudson Valley and Capital Region  
Location: Virtual |
| **Thursday, August 5, 2021** | 2:00 PM | North Country and Mohawk Valley  
Location: Virtual |
| **Monday, August 9, 2021** | 2:00 PM | Southern Tier and Central NY  
Location: Virtual |
| **Thursday, August 12, 2021** | 2:00 PM | Finger Lakes and Western NY  
Location: Virtual |
HOW TO REGISTER:

- Visit NYIRC.gov
- Click on “Meetings”
- Click on “Submit Testimony” or “Sign Up to Attend”
- Will need to submit written comments
- Create an account and register to submit testimony or testify “in person” (virtually)
What is a “Testimony”? 
Testimony is defined as: a declaration or statement given in evidence

- **Written** document
- **Content** of what will be said during a hearing or submitted in writing
THE WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHEN, & HOW

Who are you?

What is your issue?

Why do you have this issue?

When and How would you like the issue to be resolved?
How do I testify about Redistricting?
Elected officials make the laws and policies that impact:

- Schools
- Roads
- Public transportation
- Housing access
- Waste/garbage pick up
- Water quality
- Taxes
- Green space (parks, trails, etc.)
- Utilities
- Business regulation
- The list is endless!

You and your neighbors likely have common values and interests in relation to these issues – you would be considered part of a “community of interest”.
COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST IN NEW YORK STATE

- **Communities where most residents work in similar fields or for the same company/agency/organization:**
  - Professors and Staff that work at SUNY schools throughout the state (e.g. SUNY Fredonia);
  - Medical professionals and personnel that work at major medical centers (e.g. Albany Medical Center);
  - Engineers working for factories or for major manufacturers (e.g. General Electric in Schenectady);
  - Agriculture workers (e.g. farm workings in Herkimer County)

- **Communities that have similar economic or environmental concerns:**
  - Towns, villages, and cities impact by poor water quality (e.g. Hoosick Falls);
  - Areas with high property taxes (e.g. Long Island);
  - Areas with high rates or unemployment and/or poverty (e.g. Bronx).

- **Communities with similar values and belief systems:**
  - Amish community in Mohawk Valley;
  - Native American tribes in Oneida;
  - Shared churches and religions.
Shared Issues and Values of Your Community of Interest

Elected Representation
An Example of Redistricting’s Impact on a Community of Interest
Water Quality Issue

Town District 1

Town District 2

Town District 3

Town District 4
The school district is our community of interest.
Legislator doesn’t care about my communities needs

Legislator may not have office near you

Legislator may never visit your neighborhood

Legislator may not show up in emergencies

Legislator is unfamiliar with who lives in my community

Impact of Unfair Redistricting
How do I analyze my district lines?
ANALYZING CURRENT LEGISLATIVE MAPS

https://latfor.state.ny.us/maps/

The New York State Legislative Task Force on
Demographic Research and Reapportionment

View District Maps

2012 District Maps
- 
  Congress
  Senate
  Assembly
  View 2012 redistricting legislation

2002 District Maps
- 
  Congress
  Senate
  Assembly
  View 2002 redistricting legislation

1992 District Maps
- 
  Congress
  Senate
  Assembly
  1997 changes pursuant to Diaz vs. Silver, 378 F. Supp. 96 (E.D.N.Y. 1997)
# 2012 Assembly District Maps

View the *Documentation for Population Reports*

- Statewide
- New York City
- Long Island

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Albany</th>
<th>Buffalo</th>
<th>Lackawanna</th>
<th>New Rochelle</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ramapo</td>
<td>Rochester</td>
<td>Schenectady</td>
<td>Syracuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troy</td>
<td>White Plains</td>
<td>Yonkers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Go to nysenate.gov or nyassembly.gov
Select your Legislator under “Senators and Committees” or “Assembly Members”
On their page select “Our District” or “Map and Offices”
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20th District
New York State Elected Officials
List of Elected Officials
2012 District Maps

Accessing Representative Information

- Use the layer icon to show or hide electoral districts (Senate, Assembly or Congressional).
- With a layer visible click on a layer region to display information about that district, including state representatives.
- To find the elected officials for a given address:
  1. Use the "Find address or place" search field in the map to zoom the map to the specific location.
  2. The map application will display the search result.
  3. Clicking on the empty space adjacent to the search result will select the district in the visible layer and will display the elected official information.
  4. Remember to use the layer icon to toggle the layer.
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WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?

- Hooks/wiggles
- Neighborhoods or blocks cut in half
- “Skinny” districts or “Bridges”
- “Ear Muffs” or “Hats”
- Where is your neighborhood within the district?
- Where is your representative’s office?
MAPPING SOFTWARE

Representable: https://representable.org/

Dave’s Redistricting: https://davesredistricting.org/

District Builder: https://www.districtbuilder.org/

DistrictR: https://districtr.org/
Gerrymandering is silencing communities.

Make your voice heard with Representable and put your community on the map.

GET STARTED

Are you the leader of an organization?
Many organizations have partnered with Representable.org to collect community maps.

JOIN AS AN ORGANIZATION
Step 2

What unites your Community of Interest?

Community of Interest Definition in New York

Respond to at least one of the sections below. There are no wrong answers. Click on each category to see helpful questions and examples.

Community Activities and Services

ex. My community is made of the people who go to St. Peters Catholic Church. The church provides child care and charity services for the less fortunate in our community.

Cultural or Historical Interests

ex. My community is made of the Latinx community in east Brooklyn. The community has been in the neighborhood for 20 years and is affected by gentrification.

Economic or Environmental Interests

ex. My community is located near a river. Fishing is the main industry. We experience seasonal unemployment. Water pollution of the river is a common concern of ours.

Community Needs and Concerns

ex. My farming community extends over two counties and we hope you can put the community together in a single State Senate district.

What are the main topics relevant to your community?
What makes an effective testimony?
EFFECTIVE TESTIMONY

- Establishes testifiers **credentials**
- Identifies the **critical point**
- Tells a **story**
- Provides **evidence** & list **consequences**
- Specifies an **“ASK”**
I. CREDENTIALS

Name

Where you live

Personal Background
*For verbal testimony try to keep it brief!*

Contact Information

Affiliation, if appropriate
II. CRITICAL POINT

Why are you here?

What is your purpose?

What is your issue/concern?

What is the ONE thing you want remembered from your testimony?
II. CRITICAL POINT EXAMPLE

- I live in Assembly District 1;
- My children’s school is split between 4 Assembly Districts, AD 1, 2, 3, & 4;
- I am here because I want to ensure my community’s school district is not split.
III. PERSONAL IMPACT – TELL YOUR STORY

Community Split

Less funding for school

Bad outcomes for students
IV. PROVIDE EVIDENCE

Data and Facts

- Prior census data
- Demographic data
- Data from the source (school budgets, voter turnout data, city budget)
- Use data from other organizations

Maps

- Use existing maps
- Create maps using free mapping software

Anecdotal Evidence

- Stories from neighbors and friends
- News articles
- Comparisons to other legislative districts
IV. PROVIDE EVIDENCE EXAMPLE

- Look at maps of current legislative district
- School budget compared to other school budget
- Look at graduation rates of school compared to other schools
IV. PROVIDE EVIDENCE – CONSEQUENCES FOR INACTION

What will happen if nothing changes?

How is the community benefited by the proposed change?
V. THE ASK

What do you want the Commission to do?

What do you want the Commission to consider?

What do you want to Commission to change?
1. Credentials
2. Critical Point
3. Personal Impact – Your Story
4. Evidence
5. The Ask

- **Credentials**
  - Introduce Self

- **Critical Point**
  - What is my Issue?

- **Personal Impact**
  - Why I care

- **Evidence**
  - Facts Supporting Position

- **The Ask**
  - What you want done

- **YOUR STORY**
How do I put it on paper?
• Use simple, clear language

• Arrange in order of the 5 essentials

• Use the templates to guide your writing
Quick and Easy Testimony Fill-in

Thank you for allowing me to speak to you. My name is ______________________. I vote in the _____ District in _______ (city).

I would like to draw your attention to the issue of _____________________________.

In my neighborhood, (tell your story)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

This effectively means
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Facts, etc.
1.
2.
3.

The consequence of not fixing this problem include
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

I ask you to
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

Name __________________________ Email __________________________
Address __________________________ Phone __________________________
City __________________________ WA Zip __________________________ Date __________________________
### Writing a strong testimony – a quick guide to telling your story

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The basics...who are you? Name, where you live, any affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Why are you here?  |
| (What made you decide to testify? What put a fire in your belly? What difference do you want to make?) |

| What is the most important thing you want the Commissioners to hear and remember?  |
| (After you speak, this is the one point you want people to remember about your testimony.) |

| What evidence do you have to illustrate your point? (Researched and fact-based, please.) |

| Do you have a story that illustrates your point? Can you tell it in 1 minute? |

| So what? Why does this matter? What will happen if nothing changes? How will this benefit the community? |

| Finally, what do you want the Commissioners to do, or consider, or change? What is your ask?  |
| (Say it clearly as your conclusion, then say thank-you.) |
Understanding Communities of Interest

People Powered Fair Maps™ is a national redistricting program of the League of Women Voters focused on creating fair political maps nationwide in all 50 states + D.C. One key component of assessing the ‘fairness’ of maps is by judging, to the extent possible, the preservation of communities of interest. Several states have constitutional provisions, laws, and/or redistricting guidelines that require keeping communities of interest intact as much as possible when drawing maps. Below we answer frequently asked questions about communities of interest.

1. What are communities of interest?

Communities of interest are groups of individuals with comparable legislative and community concerns based on similarities, and who therefore would benefit from cohesive representation in government. Another way of understanding a community of interest is that it is simply a way for a community to tell its own story about what neighbors share in common, and what makes it unique when compared to surrounding communities. Communities are defined by the local community members and are typically suburban, urban, or rural interests.

2. Can a community of interest be defined by race alone?

No. The Supreme Court decisions on racial gerrymandering make it clear that “race” by itself does not constitute a community of interest. Communities of interest can connote a racial, ethnic, or linguistic group but race and ethnicity cannot be used as the sole definition. The affinity group could be based on geographic, governmental, regional, social, cultural, historic, socio-economic, occupations, and/or lifestyles interests and may not reside in a county or municipal boundary. Shared interests could relate to transportation, school funding and administration, or public safety issues like fire and water or first
Tips for Preparing to Testify
KEY IDEAS

- Keep my community together
- Eliminate weird lines/wiggles/hooks/shapes
- Balance/separate low and high-income areas
- Don’t split defined groupings
- Make my district easier to travel
- Make my district more competitive
BEST PRACTICES

- Show your specific map & be specific about your Legislative District numbers
- Keep it brief and to the point – especially your bio/background!
- Practice and time yourself – you only get 3 minutes
- Close with a specific ask
- Provide a copy of your written comments to the Commission
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DO’S AND DON’TS</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visual appeal – bullets rather than paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use key words</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Know your facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Thank the Commission for their thankless task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don’t</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be accusatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Partisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Go over your space or time limits</td>
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RESOURCES

- Current State and Congressional Legislative Maps: [https://latfor.state.ny.us/](https://latfor.state.ny.us/)
- Community of Interest Mapping Resource: Representable: [https://representable.org/](https://representable.org/)
- NY Census Data: [https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NY](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NY)
- League Resources: [NYRedistricting.org](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NY)
What now?
HOW TO REGISTER:

- Visit NYIRC.gov
- Click on “Meetings”
- Click on “Submit Testimony” or “Sign Up to Attend”
- Create an account and register to submit testimony or testify “in person” (virtually)
- Register no later than 2:00pm the day prior to your community’s hearing!
- The email from the Commission will come later. But if you don’t receive it by the day prior follow up.
- PS! A Catch-All hearing will be announced soon for the end of August!!
FINAL THOUGHTS:

Please Share Training

Invite us to Present

Present it Yourself

Help us Get the Word Out

Links to slides, documents, and other resources will be shared in the chat!
THANK YOU!

JENNIFER WILSON
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