

CHANGE ILLINOIS!

Co-Chairs
Peter Bensinger
Deborah Harrington
George Ranney

Steering Committee
Cameron S. Avery
John M. Buchanan
Terrence J. Dee
Todd Dietterle
Paul H. Dykstra
Bob Gallo
Paula Lawson
Hoy McConnell
Newton Minow
Hon. Dawn Clark Netsch
Sylvia Puente
Brenda Russell
Hon. Kathy Ryg
Alexander E. Sharp
Adlai E. Stevenson
Anton Valukas
Rev. Patricia Van Pelt Watkins
David B. Weinberg
Paula Wolff
Hon. Corinne G. Wood

Member Organizations
100 Black Men
AARP
Action Now
Adlai Stevenson Center on Democracy
Better Government Association
Business and Professional
People for the Public Interest
Center for Economic Process
Center for Neighborhood Technology
Center for Tax and Budget Accountability
Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice
Chicago Council of Lawyers
Chicago Crime Commission
Chicago Metropolis 2020
Chicago Sinai Congregation
Chicago Urban League
Citizen Advocacy Center
The Civic Federation
Common Cause Illinois
Community Advocate for Political Change
Community Renewal Society
Congress for the New Urbanism
Devers Group Inc.
Donors Forum
ENLACE
Frontenac Company
Grassroots Collaborative
Hedlund & Handley, LLC
Illinois Ballot Integrity Project
Illinois Campaign for Political Reform
Illinois Public Interest Research Group
Inner City Muslim Action Network
Jewish Council on Urban Affairs
The Joyce Foundation
Latino Policy Forum
League of Women Voters of Illinois
Main Street Campaigns
Mercy Hospital and Medical Center
Metropolitan Area Group of Igniting
Civilization, Inc.
Metropolitan Planning Council
Mexican American Coalition of
Will County, IL
Mexican American Legal Defense &
Education Fund
The Mikva Challenge
Openlands
Organization of the NorthEast
Prairie State Medical Society
Protestants for the Common Good
Sara Lee Corporation
The Sargent Shriver National Center on
Poverty Law
SEIU Illinois Council
Southsiders Organized for Unity & Liberation
Southwest Organizing Project
TARGET Area Development Corporation
United Congress of Community &
Religious Orgs
Voices for Illinois Children
Woods Fund of Chicago

Coalition for Honest and New Government Ethics

CHANGE Illinois! Testimony to the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee Presented by Peter Bensinger, Co-Chair of CHANGE Illinois! April 19, 2011

On behalf of CHANGE Illinois! -- an independent and non-partisan coalition of diverse interests including organizations that represent more than 2 million Illinoisans working for political reform -- I thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today about the redistricting process.

CHANGE Illinois! advocates a redistricting system to advance the common good, ensure that voter voices are amplified, promote diversity, expand opportunities for representation, and create a transparent and fair system for mapmaking. While we believe that a constitutional amendment is necessary to accomplish all of these goals, it is possible for you to improve on past redistricting efforts.

Across America, the redrawing of legislative district boundaries is of utmost importance to state legislators and members of Congress. While the determination of where lines are drawn understandably is of concern to sitting legislators, it also is important to those of us not running for office.

We commend the Senate and the House for scheduling hearings throughout the state. It is important that you listen to voters about what they like and don't like about district boundaries from past elections. Because you are holding hearings in so many cities up and down Illinois, you must recognize it is important to voters, too.

In these early hearings, you'll hear a great deal about maps that reflect Illinois, that respect communities of interest, that are fair to minorities, that don't divide local governments unnecessarily and much more. But the public doesn't want to talk only about what makes a good map. The public wants to SEE what maps are proposed and have time to tell you what they think of those maps before you vote on them. The public wants to be able to tell you whether draft maps meet their expectations and to suggest how they can be improved.

Our message today is short and simple. Today's hearing establishes communications, but it is neither sufficient nor responsive enough to the public interest. We urge you to travel throughout the state and hear from the public after new maps are proposed and before a final vote in each chamber.

Instead of preparing Illinoisans for the possibility that there won't be much time to hold hearings after maps are drafted, we think the leaders should unveil their draft maps well in advance and explain the rationale for the district boundaries before a final vote. There should be hearings in several locations, and the public should have advance notice of the hearings. If you believe the public should have a role in redistricting, make certain it happens when it counts most, after the maps are drawn.

c/o Illinois Campaign for Political Reform
325 W. Huron Street, Suite 706, Chicago, IL 60654
312-335-1767 phone 312-335-1067 fax
www.Changell.org