

Testimony to the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee
March 17, 2021

I am writing today as founder of Act. Connect. Engage. (ACE) in Naperville, Illinois, and as a 41-year resident of Naperville. The organization ACE is a progressive group of men and women who are primarily over age 40 years, and who follow and support legislative issues that center on the environment and climate change; affordable and accessible health care for all; affordable housing in our community; holding fair, accessible, and transparent elections facilitated by robust voter participation; and protecting the rights of women, the LGBTQ community, the Asian-American community, and the Black Lives Matter movement.

For the first 25 years we lived here, Naperville was firmly Republican and more often than not, Republican candidates ran unopposed for public offices. However, in the past 15 years, the population has gradually changed to be younger and more progressive, so different voices are heard today when presenting or arguing issues. I believe that in the long run, this will strengthen our democracy at the local, state, and national levels.

Today I present arguments for redrawing congressional, legislative, and representative districts that follow the principles to stop the gerrymandering that has nurtured partisan politics for a long time. Just four years ago, my congressional representative refused to hold town halls because he “didn’t find them productive.” He did however hold big ticket luncheons for his corporate and PAC supporters when at home in his district, a practice that shut down the voices of constituents who wanted to present an opposing argument and pretty much guaranteed the incumbent’s re-election. Gerrymandering mutes the voices of voters who support the other side, and I firmly believe elected officials need to hear the voices, pro- and con-, of everyone they represent. The geographic jigsaw that is the IL-6th, and for that matter, the IL-14th and IL-11th too, are begging to be redrawn. The arguments provided below also apply to redrawing state legislative and senate lines.

I believe new district lines should follow – as much as is practicable – existing and/or natural boundaries - like rivers, county lines, state or federal highways - to encompass the required number of constituents. Ideally a district would include, as much as possible, a healthy mix of large and small businesses; urban, suburban, and rural areas; and constituents from different economic, ethnic, and educational backgrounds.

I believe the outcomes of balanced and logical mapping will be positive in the long-term for the government and the governed, and they will include the following.

1. Elected officials will have to listen to all constituents in making legislative decisions when re-election is no longer a “given.” Town halls will be the general rule in order to hear from constituents. Re-election would require

- earning voter support with a voting record of representing everyone residing in district.
2. Elected officials may work better across the aisle to reach compromise when crafting legislation, and compromise will move legislation forward, not stop it in its tracks.
 3. If populations migrate and districts need future changes, it will be easier to change a boundary to a river, road, or highway farther north, south, east or west, much like school districts shift borders as developments - and the populations they bring - rise or fall within cities and towns.
 4. I hope a redistricting law will be written by a committee that is bipartisan, and whose members hold transparent and public meetings. I also hope that any legislation to stop gerrymandering will be easy to understand, and firmly grounded in the law to prevail against potential legal challenges in the future.
 5. Finally, in a healthy democracy, the pendulum of party majority will swing back and forth over the long-term, as each generation takes on the responsibility of leadership. However, if give-and-take is a renewed and relearned practice and political skill, compromise will prevail and facilitate sound and fair government for the Common Good.

Respectfully submitted to the Illinois State Senate Redistricting Sub-Committee Hearing for DuPage County

March 18, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

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