

Dear Chairman Aquino and members of the Senate Redistricting Committee,

My name is Mike Buehler and I serve as a County Board Chairman for McHenry County. I appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the Senate redistricting that will affect all residents of our county.

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented all of us with unprecedented challenges in protecting the health and livelihood of our citizens. However, these challenges are not limited to those areas. In the case of the decennial census, and the delayed results thereof, it is unclear how the counties are to meet the deadlines and requirements pertaining to redistricting. Since the United States Census Bureau is not making data available until September 30, there is no way for counties to accurately reapportion with a deadline of July 1.

Currently, county board chairmen are required by statute to present their reapportionment plans to county boards for approval by the third Wednesday of May after the results of the decennial census is received. Unless the U.S. Census Bureau delivers information prior to September 30, county leaders will not be able to meet their statutory requirement to ensure equal representation among all districts.

Clearly, the General Assembly needs to enact legislation to alter current statutory deadlines for approval of reapportionment maps to align with the delivery of U.S. Census data.

Another major problem with the delay in decennial data is that it makes it nearly impossible for potential candidates who wish to be on the ballot for the 2022 Primary Elections to know which district they would need to file in.

Currently, candidates can begin circulating petitions to be placed on the ballot in mid-September, which is before data will even be available for reapportionment. I would encourage the Committee to consider whether or not we can move forward with a March 2022 Primary Election based on the absence of Census data.

In addition, I would respectfully request consideration to allow for Independent maps versus Fair maps. This would facilitate the desire of many to take the politics out of creating the new maps by removing those from the process who have a vested interest in the outcome of reapportionment.

Also, in McHenry County, some of our municipalities have multiple senators, representatives, and congressmen all within in the same municipality. I feel this creates confusion on the part of the voter and does not support continuity within the community. Boundaries of districts should have clear and transparent delineation to avoid these types of situations.

Finally, I believe the Independent creation of more accurate and transparent maps would allow for a more equitable process which would in turn lead to better representation for all constituents in McHenry County.

We appreciate that the Senate is having a dialogue on this issue and would encourage all parties to work together to develop a realistic sensible timeline for the reapportionment of all districts and the 2022 election timelines.

Sincerely,

Michael Buehler

Chairman-McHenry County Board