

April 19, 2021

To the Illinois Legislative Redistricting Committees,

We have a reputation - and it isn't a great one. With regularity Illinois is the punchline with regard to state corruption and financial condition, and in many cases fairly so. We need to work to improve the underlying issues that contribute to both the substance and appearance of those core issues we face.

Fair, consistent, and transparent redistricting is a key part of this.

People and groups in power tend to work to stay in power. This isn't necessarily nefarious - if an elected official genuinely believes they are the best person for their post it is good to strive to continue that work. Over time though power can be corrosive - and the vital check is our electoral process.

When we have biased maps drawn to maintain or consolidate power we short-circuit that check on our leaders. If we the people believe we have biased maps - that too is corrosive to our state. Discouraged folks choose not to vote, stay less and less engaged both in government and their community.

We need a process that is good, fair, and trusted. That includes...

- A transparent process and clear process which includes a well defined process & calendar. At the moment, for example, I haven't seen a timeline with what happens after these hearings. That type of information is vital.
- Very strong outreach - including an easy to use web portal to keep those interested engaged throughout the process. Short notice of sessions, in most circumstances, isn't acceptable. People assume it is either because of poor planning or more likely a desire to keep constituents out of the process.
- Multiple weeks between introduction of a map proposal and a vote - and an active attempt to gain feedback. Constituents need to feel like input matters and it isn't a case of technocrats checking the legally required boxes, or political powers manipulating for their desired outcome.
- A culture of franchisement. Groups that have common interest should not be "watered down" by spreading a small number in multiple districts. Most obviously would be racial and ethnic minorities - so that people of color have their voice heard and can be directly part of shaping their community. The people need to be empowered and engaged and we need to strengthen protections from federal and state voting rights acts.
- A concrete and actionable plan that moves to an independent and non-partisan boundary setting in future cycles. In the long term this will help our state to trust the process and it eliminates the complaint against the legislature that it is only "corrupt politicians" who make a district to their liking. It then allows the legislature to use its time on other work the people of Illinois need addressed.

I live in Peoria, and I love my community. As so many cities in Illinois we have our challenges - and many of those have at least a piece driven by the state. At the core is genuine representation that works simply and powerfully for the people. Redistricting is where that begins.

Thank you for your time, and your leadership in ensuring we have the most representative and transparent map drawing cycle in our state's history - that sets us up to do even better after the next census.

Samer Aldroubi
Peoria, IL