

Greetings,

My name is Brandon Hovey. I am a county board member in Tazewell County. I was invited to file a witness slip for this committee. I laughed when I read the invitation you sent me— ‘interest groups’ is a rather odd or robotic way to speak of my constituents. To me tax payers are the only interest group that matters as they provide the money that we in government take custodianship over to provide essential government services. Tazewell County has a lot of great things going for it. My colleagues and I do our best to keep taxes low and government lean and functional. I’m not going to provide you the demographic information of my county. That’s discoverable on your own. After all, you are the state level government. Instead, I want to discuss with you the topic of voter suppression.

Voter suppression is a problem everywhere. It looks very different in different places. In Illinois it has been a problem for some time in the form of maps. The redistricting process is oftentimes parodied as gerrymandering is as American as apple pie unfortunately. Modern Americans who live in the 21st century deserve better. Yes, I am a Republican and I am concerned about voter suppression. Every vote matters and every vote counts. Gerrymandering has and will be always a form of voter suppression that is unfortunately acceptable—it should not be.

Fair maps do not suppress voters. Instead, these maps provide adequate opportunities for these constituencies to choose their elected officials with a more level opportunity for both parties, or a third party. Hopefully parties or individuals running are capable people instead of extremists. Political extremism is a problem in our United States and this in turn has created an environment of mistrust in government across the United States. Oligarchs in high offices: the presidency, Illinois’s past governor and current governor do not add to trust and faith in government either. Senator Aquino, when your committee meets you have the opportunity to start restoring trust by drawing fair maps. This is one piece of a puzzle that must be solved.

Many people are leaving this state. It is no surprise. I could tell you my theories of why, but in our postmodern world where truths are relative you would try to reassure me those are not the reasons why. Fair maps would at least be a good faith effort to allow citizens to know that they are electing their representatives in a fair fashion. It is my hope you will use the data given you by the census and other agencies to make the best possible decisions.

My stance on this witness slip is neutral. I do not know what you will end up choosing. I do not know what will transpire. I do know who you are though. I wonder if you all can change? You got rid of your political liability: Mike Madigan. But, many of you are still from his time. Many of you still likely consider him a friend. I hope you will write a better future despite your troubled histories.

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