

Testimony by Abigail C. Nichols, 990 North Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois
State Senate of Illinois, Redistricting Committee Hearing, May 1, 2021, Malcolm X College
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I am Abigail Nichols. I live in Streeterville, Chicago. I am a two year resident of Illinois. Although an active member of the League of Women Voters and Fair Vote Illinois, I am speaking for myself today.

Redistricting is an important component of making our democracy work. The League of Women Voters held a national redistricting day April 19. Next Saturday, May 8, is National John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Action Day. Redistricting is a way to say that every citizen has an equal say through electing leaders who represent them. Republican votes, Green Party votes, Libertarian votes should all count as much as Democratic party votes. The votes of members of minority communities should count as much as the vote of a majority community.

What questions do you Illinois legislators have about how to realize fair government principles in redistricting? You haven't told us, so we are left guessing how to be part of this process. The implication from your only saying that you intend to meet Constitutional deadlines is that you do not care about creating fair maps. I must infer that you think that what is good for the Democratic party is good for Illinois. You might be able to get fair maps with pre-census data, but your intention to use this data really implies that you don't intend fair maps.

We are living in the aftermath of four years of divisive National bullying. Americans everywhere want our country to unite around common goals.

I am looking for assurance from the Illinois Democratic majority that they too want Illinois to unite. We Illinoisians want to hear public statements from the Illinois Senate and the Assembly that your mapping strategy aims for districts that bring communities together. So far, I am not reassured. It appears that once again party hegemony is more important than is shared Assembly purpose to use redistricting as a vehicle to ensure government can improve life for Illinois residents.

Please let us know that you hear the 75 percent of Illinoisans who want fair mapping. Promise us that you will draw maps comply with the Illinois constitution's requirements that legislative districts shall be "**compact, contiguous and substantially equal in population.**" Start with the Constitution and it may become easy to then meet the requirements of the Federal Civil Rights Act and the Illinois Voting Rights act.

Our democracy is in your hands. Thank you.