

# **Public Testimony to the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee**

**Presented by Valerie F. Leonard, Founder, Nonprofit Utopia, LLC**  
**May 1, 2021**

Good morning. My name is Valerie Leonard. First of all, I thank Senate President Harmon, Senator Aquino and Senator Sims and the Senate Redistricting Committee for ensuring that we could have a hearing on Chicago's West Side. We appreciate your taking the time from your extremely busy schedules to listen to our concerns. We also want to let you know that we appreciate your staff's outreach efforts to ensure that as many people who wanted the opportunity to voice their concerns could do so.

I am the Founder of Nonprofit Utopia, the ideal community for emerging nonprofit leaders who want to build their own leadership skills while building the capacity of their organizations to make a positive impact on their clients and communities. Our membership includes nonprofit leaders from around Chicago, including the West, South and North sides; other states and abroad. Our mission is to develop the next generation of ethical nonprofit leaders, with a vision to train 50,000 people by 2033. This is achieved through consulting, coaching, an online community, livestreamed videos and podcasting.

We are convening Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting to engage Black leaders around the State of Illinois to provide education on redistricting and to engage them in the process. We have provided workshops on the redistricting process and how to navigate [ilga.gov](http://ilga.gov) and the Senate and House redistricting websites.

Nonprofit Utopia and Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting have hosted a number of meetings for our members to provide education on a number of topics, including the state and federal voting rights acts and proposed changes; the redistricting process; developing public testimony, etc. We are also hosting the Census Bureau to facilitate a workshop on navigating [Census.gov](http://Census.gov); creating data sets and understanding reapportionment.

I am a CoFounder of the Lawndale Alliance, a neighborhood association of local residents who come together on an ad hoc basis to address issues of concern to the community through grassroots community organizing, advocacy and community outreach. We were part of a statewide, multi-cultural coalition of grassroots organizations, facilitated by UCCRO, who came together to develop proposals to optimize opportunities for minorities around the State of Illinois to select candidates of their choice. Our map proposal provided more majority-minority districts than any other proposal in the state of Illinois. We are collaborating again this year to work on a Unity Map.

We respectfully request, that, as you develop the new map that you take into consideration the following:

### **North Lawndale is a Community of Interest**

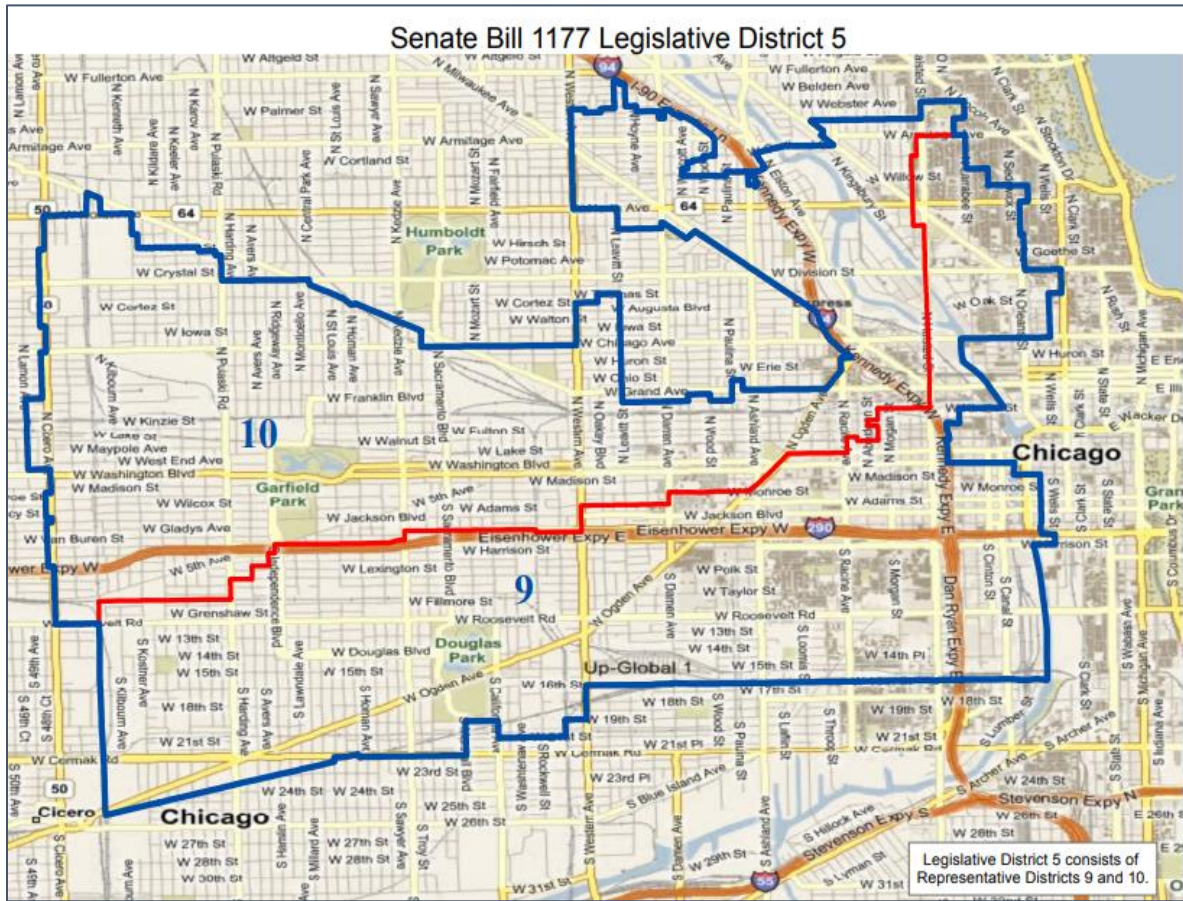
The North Lawndale community is located approximately 3 miles west of the Chicago Downtown. As of 2018, the racial composition was 87% African American, 5.27% Hispanic, 8.83% White, .17% Asian, and .61% of some other race (CMAP). The community continues to struggle with issues of high rates of poverty and unemployment, blighted commercial districts, high crime, poor performing schools, high mortgage foreclosure rates, lack of access to decent and affordable housing, and limited access to health care. We have a significant number of people in the community who have been classified as Hard to Count under the 2020 Census program. Our community is also among one of the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, including high instances of COVID-19; increased poverty and homelessness due to COVID-related job loss and business closures and widened educational achievement gaps due to our children being out of school for prolonged periods of time.

While we have a number of challenges, we also have a number of assets, including Douglas Park designed by the legendary landscape architect Jens Jensen and the Historic K-Town District, one of the largest concentrations of historic Greystone houses in the City of Chicago. The community is held together by its history and culture, which includes block clubs, community gardening, basketball games and gospel festivals. North Lawndale nurtured the talents of such people as Dina Washington, Ramsey Lewis, Otis Clay, Koko Taylor, Cicero Blake, Mark Aguire, Darryl Stingley, Mickey Johnson and Michael Scott, to name a few. The community has completed a combined comprehensive plan and Quality of Life Plan, with technical assistance from CMAP and LISC. The plan is in its implementation stages, and is attracting billions of dollars in investment. Indeed, I am very proud to have played an integral role in the development of the infrastructure for the planning process, including writing the proposals to CMAP and LISC.

North Lawndale covers approximately 33% of the land mass in Representative District 9, and a little less than 20% of Senate District 5. Approximately 80% of North Lawndale's land mass is in the 24<sup>th</sup> Ward, and the 24<sup>th</sup> Ward accounts for over a third of Representative District 9's weighted vote, and about a fourth of the weighted vote for Senate District 5. North Lawndale is in the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. The voters of Representative District 9 tend to vote Democratic.

The Lawndale Alliance is a neighborhood association of local residents who come together on an ad hoc basis to address issues of concern to the community through grassroots community organizing, advocacy and community outreach. We hold annual TIF town hall meetings series on a number of topics, including status reports on the financial and programmatic performance of every TIF that impacts North Lawndale; the performance of North Lawndale schools; the pros and cons of hosting Olympic venue in North Lawndale; and a status report on the impact of the mortgage foreclosure crisis and the level of Neighborhood Stabilization Program funding the community received to put abandoned foreclosed properties back on the property tax rolls as affordable housing units.

### Illinois Senate District 5



Illinois State Senate District 5 includes Illinois Legislative District 9 and Illinois Legislative District 10. While the district is not shaped in a square, it goes as far south as Ogden and Cicero; as far west as Lamon, north of Kinzie; as far north as I-90 and Fullerton, and as far east as Wells and Division. (These are approximations based on the map above.) The blue line depicts the border of the entire 5<sup>th</sup> Senate District, while the red line separates Legislative District 9 from Legislative District 10. Major community assets include Douglas Park, Garfield Park, Ogden Avenue (Historic Route 66, which connects Chicago and California), I-290, I-94, University of Illinois, the West Loop, parts of Downtown, including the Financial District and Illinois Medical District.

As may be seen on the table below, the total population in the Illinois Senate District 5 increased from 206,793 in 2010 to 221,544 in 2019. This represents an increase of 14, 751 people or 7.13%. The White population increased from 29.9% of the Senate District population in 2010 to 31.23% during the same period. This represents a 1.33 percentage **point** change, or a 4.45% increase between the last Census count and 2019. The Black population decreased from 53% of the Senate District 5 population in 2010 to 46.9% of the District’s population in 2019. This represents a 6.10 percentage **point** decrease, but an 11.51% decrease in the Black population between 2010 and 2019. The Latino population comprised 10.4% of the Senate District 5 population in 2010, and 13.20% in 2019. This represents a 2.80 **percentage point** increase, or a 26.92% change in Latino population in the Senate District 5 population.

The number of housing units went from 99,884 in 2010 to 103,449, suggesting a net increase in housing stock 3,565, or 3.57%. The average ratio of people to housing units increased from 2.07 persons per housing unit to 2.14 persons per housing unit.

### Illinois Senate District 5 Demographics

<b>Senate District 5 Change in Population By Race 2010-2019</b>				
	<b>2010</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>%</b>
Black	109,679	103,794	-5,885	-5.37%
Hispanic/Latino	21,545	29,269	7,724	35.85%
White	61,784	69,052	7,268	11.76%
Native American/Alaskan	265	223	-42	-15.85%
Asian	10,608	14,279	3,671	34.61%
Other	2912	4927	2,015	69.20%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>206,793</b>	<b>221,544</b>	<b>14,751</b>	<b>7.13%</b>

Note: 2010 data are from the 2010 Census. 2019 data are from ACS.

The total population of Senate District 5 increased 7.13% between 2010 and 2019, going from 206, 793 in 2010 to 221, 544 in 2019. At the same time, the Hispanic/Latino population went from 21,545 in 2010 to 29,269 in 2019, for an increase of 35.85%. The Asian population increased from 10, 608 to 14,279, or 34.61%. The White population grew 11.76%, going from 61,784 to 69,052. Other groups combined increased from 2,912 to 4,927, or 69.20%. The Hispanic/Latino and Asian populations are each growing at a rate of about 5 times the growth rate of the District.

The only racial groups to experience a decrease in population are the Native American/Alaskan and Blacks. The Native American/Alaskan population decreased 15.85%, going from 265 in 2010 to 223 in 2019. The Black population decreased from 109,679 in 2010 to 103,794 in 2019 for a total reduction of 5.37%.

<b>Senate District 5 Change in Racial Composition 2010-2019</b>				
	2010	2019	Change	%
Black	53.04%	46.85%	(6.19)	-11.67%
Hispanic/Latino	10.42%	13.21%	2.79	26.81%
White	29.88%	31.17%	1.29	4.32%
Native American/Alaskan	0.13%	0.10%	(0.03)	-21.45%
Asian	5.13%	6.45%	1.32	25.64%
Other	1.41%	2.22%	0.82	57.93%
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>		

Senate District 5 also experienced significant changes in its racial composition between 2010 and 2019. The percentage of Blacks decreased from 53.04% in 2010 to 46.85% in 2019. This represents a 6.19 percentage point change and 11.67% reduction in the concentration of Blacks in the District. The percentage of Hispanic/Latinos increased from 10.42% in 2010 to 13.21%, representing a 26.81% change. The percentage of Whites increased from 29.88% to 31.17%. This represents a 1.29 percentage point change, but a 4.32% increase in concentration. The Native American/Alaskan population decreased from .13% to .10%, or 3 percentage points. While they are small in number the change translates into a 21.45% reduction in concentration. The percentage of Asians went from 5.13% to 6.45%, or 1.32 percentage points. This represents a 25.64% increase in concentration. Other groups, including biracial persons, increased from 1.41% to 2.22%, representing 57.93% growth. It should be noted that the District was drawn to be majority-minority, with Blacks being in the majority when the District was drawn. Blacks are now a plurality.

### **Treatment of Prisoners in Census Count**

The Legislature has recently passed legislation to count prisoners from their last known addresses before coming to prison. However, the law won't take effect until 2025, effectively kicking the can down the road 10 years. We would therefore, need to live with the current system until the next Census count. Senate District 5 is more adversely impacted by this policy than any other Senate District in the State.

Carol Marin, of CBS Local, conducted a study of 2013 IDOC data and found that IDOC released over 30,000 prisoners. Over 12,000 came to Chicago. Five thousand, five hundred thirty-five (5,535), or 46% of Chicago's returning prisoners, returned to zip codes with all or some land mass in Senate District 5.

## Zip Codes With The Highest Number of Returning Prisoners

Zip Code	Returning Prisoners
60608	1,570
60607	923
60624	779
60644	679
60651	616
60623	540
60621	428
	5,535

6 of the 10 Illinois Zip Codes with the most returning prisoners are on Chicago's West Side, with all or some land mass in Senate District 5.

Source: CBS Local 2013

Under current law, incarcerated persons are not counted in the Census numbers of the community from which they originate, but in the populations of the towns in which they are incarcerated. As a result, the Census numbers in Chicago for African Americans is significantly undercounted, while the voting numbers in some Downstate communities are inflated by over 95%. (Prisoners of the Census) On top of that, representatives from the districts in which the prisoners are incarcerated have a history of voting against legislation that will enhance education, job training and rehabilitation of prisoners. In effect, prisoners have no representation, and this is a clear violation of the “one man, one vote”, guaranteed by our Constitution.

On the other hand, legislators from the prisoners’ originating communities tend to be the ones advocating for improved education and rehabilitation services for prisoners who are not counted in their districts’ population. Towns with prisons are receiving entitlement funds for Community Development Block Grants and Social Service Development Block Grants that benefit their communities, but not the prisoners. A cursory analysis of publicly available data suggests that over the next 10 years, over \$1.3 billion of Census-driven funding could go prison towns around the state of Illinois, instead of going to prisoners’ hometowns. More than \$240 million of this will have been diverted from the West Side and Senate District 5.

When the prisoners return home their originating communities are the ones who must help them transition by providing housing, job training and other social services. Unfortunately, the originating communities don’t get their full share of funding because the prisoners were counted in the Downstate town’s Census statistics. I respectfully request that the Legislature amend the law to effect the change immediately.

## **Illinois Will Lose A Congressional Seat**

Because the State of Illinois lost population, we will be losing a Congressional seat. Chicago's three Congressional Districts headed by African Americans have each lost population and must expand boundaries. We respectfully request that any new boundaries be drawn to protect the voting rights of African Americans by ensuring that we continue to be represented by each of the African American members of the Illinois Delegation. It should be noted that African Americans, as a percentage of Chicago's population was reduced by less than 1 percent during the last Census. It should also be reiterated that our numbers are significantly undercounted due to the numbers of African Americans incarcerated in Downstate prisons.

## **The North Lawndale Community Should Be Kept Intact**

Currently, the entire North Lawndale Community, as defined by Chicago Community Area 29, is located in the 9<sup>th</sup> Legislative District and the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. We respectfully request that you keep the community intact to ensure that the special needs of our community are addressed by a single legislator. We have heard testimony from social service providers from other communities indicating the level of confusion caused by delivering services to a client base with multiple legislators and other local government officials.

## **Configure Senate District 5 and Legislative Districts 9 and 10 Such That Those Districts Are Majority Black, If Possible**

With significant Black population loss, protecting existing Black voting rights districts are of utmost concern for us. We respectfully request, that to the extent possible, these Districts be drawn with majority Black populations, pursuant to the Voting Rights Act. As I indicated earlier, we are working with the United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations (UCCRO) to prepare a multi-cultural, statewide redistricting proposal to optimize opportunities for minority communities to elect candidates of their choice. Outlined below are examples of what we believe is possible, based on 2019 ACS Data and the parameters of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Illinois Voting Rights Act of 2011.

<b>Potential for Drawing Majority-Black Districts</b>	
District	Black Population
Senate District 3	55.44% Black
Senate District 4	54.69% Black
Senate District 5	52.70% Black
Senate District 13	55.17% Black
Senate District 14	56.41% Black
Senate District 15	59.62% Black
Senate District 16	55.25% Black
Senate District 17	59.55% Black

Source: UCCRO

## **Maintain the Redistricting Timeline**

There has been much back and forth as to which data set to use- ACS data, which are available now, or wait until the final 2020 Census count is released in September. Generally speaking, the ACS data are not perceived to be as accurate, and don't go down to the block level. The Census data won't be available until after our Constitutional deadline for the Illinois Legislature to approve a new map. This has caused some groups to request that you go to court to have the Constitutionally-mandated timeline pushed back so you can incorporate the more detailed 2020 Census Data.

We prefer that the General Assembly keep the original timeline outlined in our state's constitution. We recommend that you work with experienced demographers to draw the maps using the 2019 ACS as a baseline, and incorporating assumptions made from their projections and other sources. Professionals have the capability to use these data to make inferences regarding growth patterns down to the Census block level.

It should be noted that the margin of error for the 2010 Census was 1.65% (Census.gov). The 2019 ACS estimate for Illinois was 12,671,821. The actual figure reported for the 2020 Apportionment Data released this week was 12,812,508, with a difference of 140, 687 people. This translates into a 1.1% difference and is within the margin of error of the 2010 Census. While we don't know specific breakouts, we believe that the final numbers for individual districts will not be that far off from the Census data that we will receive in September.

## **Make the Fairest Maps Possible Using the Best Data Available**

The Illinois Constitution does not dictate what data set should be used for drawing the maps. We recommend that you use the most recent data available and make your best estimates to make the fairest maps possible before the June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. If, by any chance that the final data show that the redistricting was done in a manner that inadvertently violated the Voting Rights Act then you would be required by law to remedy the situation causing minimal change to the approved map.

In closing, we thank you for your time and consideration, and hosting this public forum. If you have any questions, I may be reached at 773-521-3137 or [valeriefleonard@nonprofitutopia.com](mailto:valeriefleonard@nonprofitutopia.com)