

ILGA Joint House and Senate Hearing
Senate Redistricting Committee
August 26, 2021, 1:00 PM

I want redistricting to be led by a person with at least an M.A. in Geography. Map-making – Cartography – is *entirely* under the aegis of Geography. People with enough education in this discipline can take *all* the required factors into account, and create district maps which satisfy the legal requirements of contiguity, compactness, and certain provisions in the Voting Rights Act.

Neither “bipartisan,” “non-partisan,” nor “independent” commissions guarantee their leadership by someone with *at least* an M.A. in *Geography*. I have been saying this for years and it’s been *ignored* by both legislative bodies and mass media.

Until legislative bodies *require* redistricting to be led by people with at least an M.A. in Geography, testimony from communities of interest and pertinent boundaries is rarely anything but a request to gerrymander the map. It’s too early to get into these mappable data elements, though they *are* important to consider.

I am attaching my previous testimony, along with some online comments I’ve made about redistricting.

It is *way* past time for both these legislative bodies *and* mass media to openly discuss my call for redistricting leadership by someone with at least an M.A. in Geography.

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To the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee
April 16, 2021

All redistricting must be led by someone with *at least* an M.A. in Geography. Mapmaking is called Cartography in academia, and is *entirely* under the aegis of Geography. Geography knows how to take into fair account all the factors which are legally required to be recognized, and also *all* the factors which require the districts to deviate from the perfect array of equal-sized hexagons found in a beehive. The geometric manifestation of success – compactness and contiguity - is districts whose perimeter lengths are clustered in the narrowest possible range.

We must also respect existing jurisdictional boundaries including counties, cities & villages, and unincorporated places recognized by the Census.

In Chicago, redistricting at all levels should use Community Areas to the extent possible.

Legislation about redistricting *must explicitly require* leadership by someone with at least an M.A. in Geography. “Bipartisan” and “independent” won't do this.

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Attached and included for the record:
My testimony about ward remapping in Chicago, before City Council years ago (2/25/2014)

To the City of Chicago about Ward Boundary Remapping

I have a B.A. in Geography and 2 A's in Cartography. *I am qualified to comment about redistricting.*

If the data points are evenly distributed across a 2-dimensional space, and there were no restrictions on its outer boundary, the only fair ward map would have equal-sized hexagons. Beehive cells are hexagonal to minimize the use of wax. Political jurisdictions have to deviate from this, first, because most of the outer boundaries and natural interior boundaries (for example, streets) have right angles; second, because the people ("data points") are not evenly distributed. The logical starting point would be equal-sized squares rather than hexagons.

So Chicago can't have equal-sized wards of any shape. I really don't know how one starts to draw ward boundaries. The main goal should be to have the lengths of the ward perimeters clustered in the narrowest possible range. I don't know why The Voting Rights Act must try to keep certain minority groups clustered into wards together. I think that part of the law must have been passed to fight discrimination by gerrymandering. It would be a rare situation in which two map choices would differ *only* in whether a group of minority residents were put in one ward or the other. Mathematically, gerrymandering is characterized by the lengths of the ward or district perimeters having a much wider range than is possible if you're trying to minimize them.

People with more education in Geography and Cartography have written about redistricting. I refer you to their works:

Manninen, Diane Lynn, "The Role of Compactness in the Process of Redistricting." Master's Thesis, Department of Geography. Seattle: University of Washington, 1973.

Morrill, Richard L., *Political Redistricting and Geographic Theory*. Washington D.C.: Association of American Geographers, 1981.

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Discussion on [WTTW \(WWCI\) 7 comments](#)

[Democrats Unveil New Legislative Maps, and the GOP Isn't Happy](#)

JeanSC 3 months ago

I don't even like the reporting about this redistricting. One level focuses on the gerrymandering fight between Democrats and Republicans. Another level focuses on the efforts by various demographic communities to get districts drawn with high percentages of their members in single districts, so that there's more of a chance one of their members will be elected to represent them. There's no reporting on the mathematical marker of the gerrymandering, which is the dearth of what's called "compactness", that is, a low ratio of perimeter to area of a district. And the spread of these ratios should be as small as possible. I spoke about this years ago to the Chicago City Council at a ward-remapping hearing. I spoke at one of the redistricting hearings held by Democrats in Chicago for this round, during which I advocated that redistricting be led by someone with at least an M.A. in Geography. Nobody asked me any questions or made any comments. There was no reporting of it. I've said it on this website, too, but TV viewers would never know.

What good is input from the public when it's completely ignored - treated as if one said nothing?

<https://news.wttw.com/2021/05/24/democrats-unveil-new-legislative-maps-and-gop-isn-t-happy#comment-5396852360>

[Latino Policy Forum Seeks Twenty Majority-Latinx Districts ... Or Else](#)

JeanSC 4 months ago

Don't all voters have the opportunity to choose who will represent them? Of course, if a candidate is running unopposed, it gets tough. But if Latinos want their voting power to have a 1:1 relationship with their population, the only way I can see that to be guaranteed is if representatives were elected in the "at large" system, in which the jurisdiction isn't subdivided into districts, and the voters can pick a certain number of representatives total, and vote for any candidates they want regardless of where they live. But there's no guarantee that Latinos or any other group would vote as a bloc. I know there are some more local jurisdictions across the USA which use this "at large" system, but don't know if it's allowed at the state or national level.

Frankly I doubt if any of the guests in this segment have any academic qualifications in Geography, which is where the redistricting leadership should come from.

<https://news.wttw.com/2021/05/06/latino-policy-forum-seeks-twenty-majority-latinx-districts-or-else#comment-5373524067>

[Redistricting Offers Once-a-Decade Opportunity for Communities Seeking...](#)

JeanSC Bob from Logan Square 4 months ago

This is basically included in the testimony I gave at the hearing Saturday at Malcolm X College, to the Democratic redistricting committee. In the neighborhood part, I said that in Chicago, districts should follow the Community Areas (which were based on natural neighborhoods as best as could be done, given certain requirements which I'm sure could be looked up in the history of CAs) as much as possible; also that the redistricting process at every level should be led by someone with at least an M.A. in Geography, the academic discipline which can fairly take into account all the factors. That hearing was supposed to be held last month, but was cancelled and then rescheduled.

<https://news.wttw.com/2021/05/03/redistricting-offers-once-decade-opportunity-communities-seeking-representation#comment-5370437671>

Democrats Committed to Remap in May, but Uncommitted on Data to Draw From

JeanSC 4 months ago

Data for remapping? What's needed is education and skill.

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<https://news.wttw.com/2021/04/27/democrats-committed-remap-may-uncommitted-data-draw#comment-5362557910>

One-on-One With Gov. Pritzker: Redistricting, Reopening and More

JeanSC 3 months ago

When Pritzker talked about redistricting in this interview, he didn't mention the word "compactness" which is required to fight gerrymandering. You *don't* need any kind of degree in Geography to be aware of the *compactness* requirement - just read the dry, academic and legal writings about redistricting. "Compactness" means the district has a very low ratio of perimeter to area. The most compact shape is a circle, but that's not realistic. From there we go to hexagons, squares, etc. Pritzker's omission of the compactness requirement is one reason why I have long advocated that redistricting be led by someone with at least an M.A. in Geography. Using keywords like "bipartisan" and "independent" will not guarantee cartographic competence. Pritzker hasn't done his homework on redistricting.

<https://news.wttw.com/2021/06/03/one-one-gov-pritzker-redistricting-reopening-and-more#comment-5407616268>