



134 N LaSalle Ste 1430
Chicago IL 60602-1173
312-263-6493
decaloguesociety@gmail.com

Testimony of Aviva Miriam Patt, Executive Director of The Decalogue Society of Lawyers

The Decalogue Society of Lawyers, founded in 1934, is the nation's oldest Jewish bar association. Decalogue's mission includes educating the public on legal and Jewish issues, maintaining vigilance against discriminatory public and private practices, particularly anti-Semitism, and working with other ethnic communities to combat hate and promote justice.

Thank you for this opportunity to once again make our case for the creation of a Jewish influence representative district. The Jewish community in Illinois is small – just over 2% of the population and widely dispersed in the Chicago metropolitan area and throughout the state. But there is one area where our people live in sufficient concentration to make an influence district possible. We have submitted a map encompassing those areas of West Rogers Park, Peterson Park, Lincolnwood, and Skokie that are the heart of the Jewish community in Illinois. Testimony was previously submitted by Agudath Israel, a Jewish religious group, detailing various challenges our community faces including the need for religious accommodation and protection against anti-Semitic hate crimes and violence. We seek a district in which our community can have a strong voice in the selection of those who represent us and the political power to influence and hold them accountable after election.

Yet the request to create a Jewish-influence district in the only area in the entire state where it is possible was ignored, and the heart of the Illinois Jewish community was eviscerated, sliced into pieces allotted to three separate districts. When I testified in May I said we want to know why. We are still waiting for the answer.

Decalogue asks that the legislature extend the time for public hearings for at least one and preferably two weeks, with a notice to everyone who has previously submitted testimony, and with public postings in traditional and social media. This week's hearings, with short notice to a select few, and just days after the release of the census data, are not sufficient for non-profit organizations that don't have redistricting staff to draw maps to submit for your consideration. There certainly is not time for us to confer with one another as was done in the spring, to assess the areas where our communities overlap, and come to consensus on how we can meet diverse needs.

Decalogue also asks for an open mapping process, allowing the public to know the criteria the legislature is using to determine district boundaries. The map should then be released with demographic information, something that inexplicably was not done for the map passed in May. Finally, we ask for two weeks of hearings for the public to respond to the revised map before it is voted upon.

The rushed nature of the map revision is mystifying. There have been public comments that time is short to prepare for the election, but such comments are disingenuous. In redistricting years, the map is generally passed on May 31, approximately 90 days before the first day petitions are to be circulated. The first date that petitions can be circulated for the rescheduled 2022 primary is January 13. The legislature could pass a map as late as October 14 and still provide the same amount of lead time for candidates that has existed in every other redistricting year.

Democracy demands not just the appearance of public participation but the substantive reality. The Decalogue Society of Lawyers asks you to take advantage of the next 6 weeks to create a genuinely meaningful public participation process where the voices of all communities can be heard.