

Testimony to the Joint Redistricting Committee, ILGA, August 26, 2021
Abigail C Nichols, 990 N Lake Shore Drive, Apt 26B, Chicago, Illinois, 60611
202/841-5718, Abigail_Nichols@hotmail.com

Good afternoon, Members of the Illinois General Assembly. Thank you for making it easy for me to testify by your coming to downtown Chicago.

I am Abigail Nichols. I live in the Streeterville neighborhood of Chicago. I live in Assembly District 26, State Senate District 13, and US Congressional District 7. These are all oddly shaped districts, and I find it hard to understand how my elected representatives would be able to know their constituents in such districts.

I call on you and the Illinois General Assembly to redraw all maps in a sensible way so that electoral districts are contiguous, compact, and respond to the needs of communities – communities who want to work together and not to be divided by artificial boundaries.

Turning the whole job over to an independent commission would relieve you of work you don't need to be doing and would give Illinoisians a less cynical view of what you are about. I hope that you are able to watch the good work of the Chicago Advisory Redistricting Commission. You can see close-up that an independent redistricting commission approach can work. It would be great if, in your next regular session, you immediately reintroduced and passed the bill authorizing citizens to vote on an independent commission – a bill that languished in 2019.

I moved to Chicago two years ago from Washington DC. I am grateful to the League of Women Voters of Illinois and the League of Women Voters of Chicago which help me learn about the political structure of my new home. I admit to some discouragement. I worked for the Fair Tax. I advocate for the Clean Energy Jobs Act. I talk to everyone I can about redistricting. Unfortunately, too many of the people I talk to don't trust government and seem to have withdrawn from political life.

You know, and I know, that distrust of government undermines our democracy. No man is an island. We are part of a big State where we must work together in community. We have to make government and elected legislatures part of our very DNA.

I know you are pulled many ways. Please keep your focus and do what needs to be done.

I want to be of help, and I appreciated the warm welcome your staffs gave me when I visited many of your offices in Springfield in July.

All politics is local – Joe Biden works hard to pull our divided country together. We play our part in that at every level of government. Let's work together for the good of Illinois and our country. Best wishes to you all.