

Re: 2020 Census and Adjustments to the General Assembly Redistricting Act of 2021

To: 102nd General Assembly House and Senate Redistricting Committees

Hearing Date: August 26, 2021

Proponent: Christopher J. Donovan (PDF)

Committee Chairpersons, Vice Chairpersons, and Republican Spokespersons;

I am respectfully submitting this as my written testimony regarding the 2020 Census and Adjustments to the General Assembly Redistricting Act of 2021, in lieu of making my public comments in person during the hearing scheduled for Thursday, August 26, 2021 at 1:00 PM in Room N-600 of the Michael A Bilandic Building, Chicago, IL.

It is my opinion that the legislative maps approved by the respectively chambers of the 102nd General Assembly and by Statute on June 4, 2021 is flawed and not in the interest of the people of the State of Illinois. The flaws are made apparent in the complaints made by the Republican Party of Illinois and the lawsuit filed by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF). At issue in their complaints is the malapportionment of voters in the new districts result by the use of estimated population counts from the American Community Survey rather than the actual U.S. Census Bureau data released on August 12, 2021. I support those arguments and await a final decision by the federal courts on the map adjusted due use of that data.

As a resident of the State of Illinois and a voter it is my belief that the complaints and resulting federal judicial action would have been avoided had the Democratic Party leadership of the Illinois Senate permitted a vote on SJRCA4 2019 during the last legislative session, rather than let the Bill fail by “Session Sine Die” on January 13, 2021.

The bipartisan legislation was co-sponsored by 37 of 59 State Senators; including 18 Democrats. The Senate Bill would have established a nonpartisan independent commission for mapping of the new legislative districts. The Senate Bill was essentially the same as HJRCA58 passed on May 3, 2016 by a bipartisan supermajority 105-7 vote in the Illinois House. Any reconciliation of differences between the Illinois House and Senate versions of the legislation could have been resolved, received final passage by both Chambers, and signed into law by Governor J. B. Pritzker, with the independent redistricting committee members appointed, the new legislative maps drawn by the committee, presented and passed by both Chambers of the Illinois General Assembly, and signed into law by the Governor, all well before the June 30, 2021 deadline mandated by the State Constitution.

Instead, there is an impasse possibly resulting in formation of a committee divided equally by partisan members of the State legislature, with the party drawing the map quite possibly determined by the flip of a coin, with the final map ultimately determined by the State Courts, if not the federal Courts.

The people of Illinois deserve better.

I can only hope that upon adjustments made to the map due to careful scrutiny of the U. S. Census data the legislative redistricting will assure the people of fair and inclusive representation in the Illinois General Assembly.

And, when this impasse is resolved that the Senate and House members reconvene to consider and pass new versions of HJRCA58 and SJRCA4, establishing an independent mapping commission for redistricting before the 2030 U.S. Census, to avoid any future impasse on mapping of new legislative districts in 2031.

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