

5.20.21

Chairperson Elizabeth Hernandez
Redistricting Committee
102nd General Assembly
redistrictingcommittee@hds.ilga.gov

Dear Chairperson Hernandez:

I am writing to urge the General Assembly's Redistricting Committee to reunite the City of Galesburg within a single House district.

Since the last round of redistricting in 2011, Galesburg has been divided among two state house districts and two state senate districts. These divisions disadvantage the city and its residents. Galesburg and its citizens have interests distinct from the rural areas and smaller communities with which it shares political representation, and the current division into separate districts severely diminishes their ability to make those interests and concerns heard. Galesburg is a commercial, small-manufacturing and educational center with a strong representation of organized labor. Nearly 25% of the city's residents are people of color. The collective interests of the city and the urban issues of concern to its citizens are very different from those of the overwhelmingly rural and agricultural population that makes up the majority of these districts.

Galesburg's diminished voice is evident in the fact that none of our elected representatives maintains a district office here. The closest, Rep. Dan Swanson (74th), is 16 miles away, in Woodhull, while the district offices of Rep. Hammond and Senators Stoller and Tracy are all more than an hour away, in Peoria and Macomb. The fact that the largest and economically most significant city in these districts (outside of Quincy and Peoria, most of which is in its own separate house and senate districts) is not home to any district office is a stark indication of how much the division of the city weakens its voice and those of its citizens. Dividing the city in this way virtually ensures that these interests and values are effectively halved in impact both at the ballot box and after.

The city and its residents deserve to be represented through a process where all their votes can have as full an impact as possible. Redistricting should be governed by the principle that municipalities are divided only when necessary. I urge the Redistricting Committee to reunite the City of Galesburg and bring it back into a single state House district.

Sincerely,
Gerald R (Jerry) Ryberg