



Testimony to the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee
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The Illinois Campaign for Political Reform is a non-partisan, non-profit, public interest group that researches and advocates for transparency and accountability in government and politics. For the last 18 months, we have been working to educate the public about redistricting and how it affects government. Much of our work has been to highlight the lack of sunshine and opportunities for public involvement in the remap process, and to advocate that the General Assembly conduct the 2011 redistricting in a more transparent manner.

While we are pleased that the committee has taken numerous steps to increase awareness about the remap through public hearings and a website, the fact remains that this committee has yet to commit to the most meaningful measure of all: The public vetting and editing of draft legislative and Congressional districts.

This committee and its counterpart in the House have already committed to going beyond the four public meetings required by the statute signed into law this March. That is commendable. But as we explained during the debate on that proposal mandating four public hearings per chamber, it's not only the quantity of the committee hearings, but also the quality of those hearings, that matters.

Already, members of the public have offered detailed definitions of their communities, outlined problems with existing borders, and even used their organizations' limited resources to create maps. But what is this committee going to do with that information? Is the information submitted from the public going to be taken into consideration by map-drawers and their comments incorporated into the new map? Or will the hours of testimony already taken by this committee and the public comments solicited by this committee's website be disregarded when a final map is produced?

Unfortunately, if this body does not make draft maps available to the public for evaluation well in advance of a vote, and if it does not provide an opportunity for the public to propose changes and have those modifications considered in a

public forum, the transparency initiatives you've undertaken will be viewed as hollow gestures. Map-drawing has already begun, and residents in Illinois are eager to see your work product.

After this Committee and the House Redistricting Committee have gathered information from the public through hearings and online submissions, and after the map has been completed, this Committee should publish those draft districts online, in a format that all can access. Along with those draft districts, the committee should make available tables explaining the demographics of the proposed districts and a narrative that explains the map-drawers' rationale. This description will help residents – who historically have been kept in the dark about the establishment of these new borders – understand the proposed map that will guide their elections for the next 10 years, and possibly forestall some questions and opposition.

Additionally, this narrative will help you, as lawmakers, respond to critiques of the map by offering justifications and shedding light on map-drawers' intent.

It should come as no surprise to you that, thanks to advances in technology, media coverage and community engagement, the 2011 redistricting cycle will be subject to unprecedented scrutiny. It is in both in the public interest, and your interest, as lawmakers, to proceed with this remap in a meaningfully transparent and accountable way.

We recognize that the process of drawing districts is a very difficult task. In this committee's Chicago hearing last week, some individuals testifying before this committee offered conflicting advice about how the maps should be drawn. There likely will be areas of disagreement today and in future hearings.

While it may seem impossible to pass a map that pleases all individuals and interest groups, it is quite possible for you to pass a map that the public has had ample opportunity to study and influence.

We look forward to working with Chairman Raoul, this committee and all members of the General Assembly to ensuring that the public is given a meaningful role in this important process.

Thank you.