

**Testimony to the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee
Regarding the Boundaries of Illinois' Legislative Districts
Submitted by Sylvia Puente, Executive Director, Latino Policy Forum
Tuesday, April 19, 2011**

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Sylvia Puente

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this committee. My name is Sylvia Puente and I'm the executive director of the Latino Policy Forum. The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago-area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future.

A major component of the Forum's community engagement is its role as co-convenor of the Illinois Latino Agenda, a 49-member coalition of Latino nonprofit organizations. One of the Illinois Latino Agenda's primary concerns is representation at various levels in state government. As such, we've focused much time and energy working together in order to recommend new legislative district boundaries that protect the voting rights of Latino residents and strengthen their political representation.

I would like to share information with you regarding the dramatic growth of Illinois' Latino population, discuss how this impacts the redistricting process, and then review a series of maps with you outlining new Latino majority and influence districts throughout the suburbs of Chicago. The Latino Policy Forum will be submitting maps outlining new Latino majority and influence districts in Chicago at House Redistricting Committee hearings later this week.

As far as federal boundaries are concerned, 2010 Census data used during the Apportionment process shows that Latino population growth saved Illinois from losing a second Congressional seat. If the Latino population had changed at the same rate as the non-Latino population over the last decade, Illinois would have been over 470,000 residents short of the population required for an 18th Congressional seat.

Fortunately for Illinois, the Latino community expanded by 33% or nearly 500,000 people over the past decade. This growth represents the largest population increase among all racial/ethnic groups in Illinois. In fact, Latinos now represent 16% of the total population making this subgroup the second-largest racial/ethnic group in the state.

As for state-level implications, Illinois' dramatic Latino population growth must be accompanied by new legislative district boundaries that enable greater Latino representation in the Illinois General Assembly. It is important that communities with shared interests be able to select candidates that reflect their priorities and have an opportunity to hold them accountable for their actions. If the state legislature reflected the diversity of the Illinois' population, there would be 28 legislative district boundaries where voting blocs containing a Latino majority could select a candidate of their choice instead of the 12 we have today.

Under the U.S. Voting Rights Act of 1965, minority voting rights cannot be diluted where a majority-minority district can be created. Furthermore, under the new Illinois Voting Rights Act of 2011,

minority communities are also protected in the creation of influence, coalition and cross-over districts. As you know the Latino community is protected under both of these laws,

The Latino Policy Forum is collaborating with the *Illinois Latino Agenda* (a 49 member coalition) as well as the Draw the Line Illinois coalition, and the United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations (UCCRO), in order to recommend a map to the legislature that upholds and strengthens the voting rights of Latino and other minority residents throughout the state.

The maps that I've submitted to you today include 1 Latino majority district, located in Aurora, and a 6 Latino influence or coalition districts located outside of Chicago.

These maps have been adopted by members of the *Illinois Latino Agenda*, but have not been endorsed by either the Draw the Line Coalition or UCCRO at this point. However, we are all working together to come to agreement on a consensus map that serves the interests of all minority residents in the state.

In the Aurora map, Latinos would constitute 65.6% of the total population and 60.6% of the voting-age population. Although the Latino population within the current district boundaries has grown enough to become a Latino-majority district, the new district boundaries enable the district to capture a more substantial portion of Latino concentrations in that area, which is essential to strengthening the voting power of Latino residents.

In the Franklin Park region, we have recommended a set of legislative boundaries that create a new Latino-influence district. This new district enables residents in suburban communities that are Latino saturated and have experienced significant Latino population growth to come together within one district in order to accommodate their shared interests. Within the proposed district, Latinos would constitute 62.8% of the total population and 56.5% of the voting-age population.

We also recommend the creation of a new Latino influence district that includes Elgin and Carpentersville. Over the last ten years, the Latino population in those communities has increased by 45% and 52% respectively. The map that I've submitted contains a Latino population of 55.7% and a voting-age population of 49.2%. Given the concentration of Latinos in each of these municipalities, we believe that these legislative boundaries best position the Latino residents in these areas to support candidates that reflect their interests and values.

In other suburban regions we recommend the creation of Latino influence and coalition districts in and around Waukegan, Joliet, Evanston, and Rockford.

Lastly, I'd like to comment on transparency and the redistricting process. All Illinoisans deserve an opportunity to view and comment on maps being considered by the General Assembly before they are voted upon. Absent the opportunity to view and comment on proposed legislative district boundaries, the Latino Policy Forum is unconvinced that incumbent legislators will keep the best interests of the Latino community in mind. The Latino Policy Forum calls upon the members of this committee to schedule an additional set of public hearings after maps have been drafted by the legislature with two weeks to review prior to a final vote. Given that advocates will be sharing their preferred maps with you throughout the remainder of this process, I respectfully ask that you show us yours. Thank you.

Illinois Latino Agenda

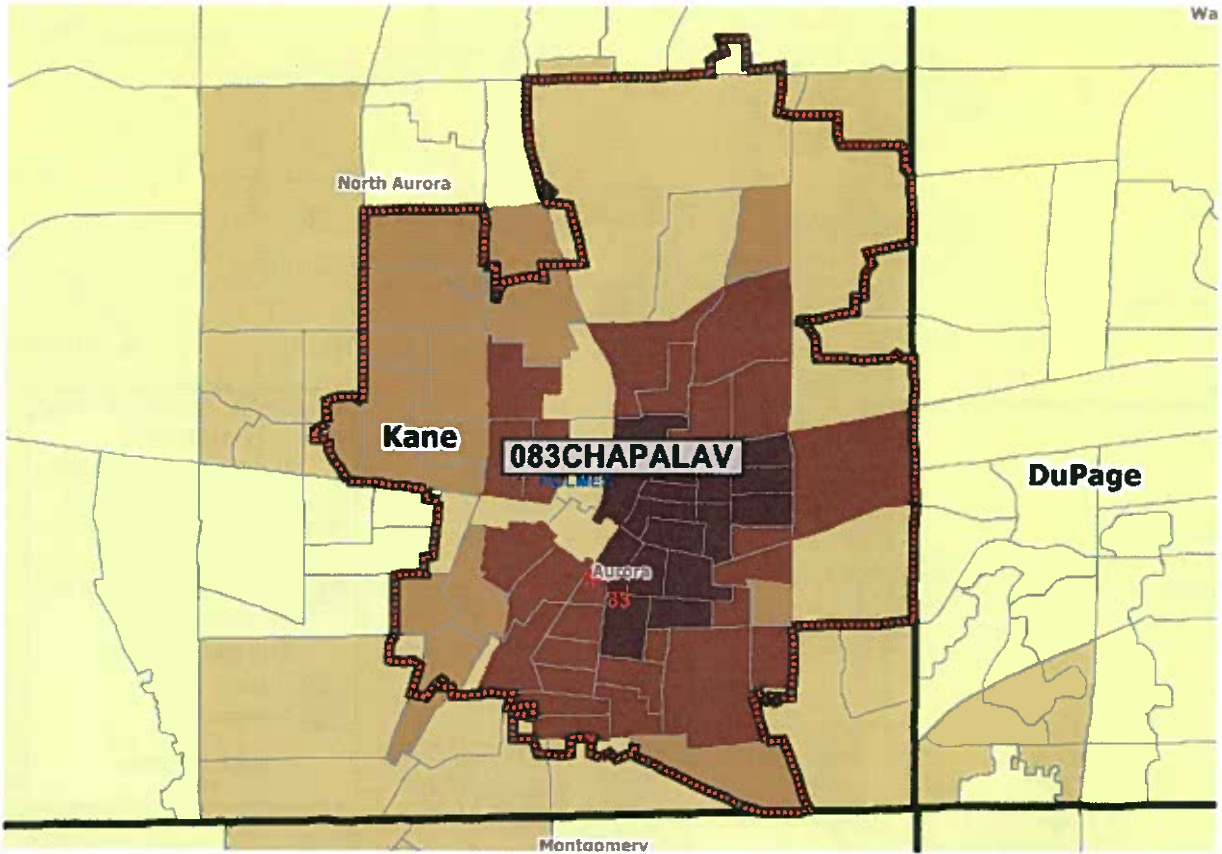
Convened by Latino Policy Forum and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

Membership

1. **Alivio Medical Center**
 2. **Arden Shore Child & Family Services**
 3. **Association House of Chicago**
 4. **Casa Central**
 5. **Centro de Información**
 6. **Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition -CHHC**
 7. **Cicero Area Project**
 8. **Corazon Community Services**
 9. **El Hogar del Niño**
 10. **El Valor**
 11. **Enlace Chicago**
 12. **Erie Neighborhood House**
 13. **Family Focus -Aurora**
 14. **Family Focus –Nuestra Familia**
 15. **FEDCMI/Casa Michoacán**
 16. **Gads Hill Center**
 17. **Healthcare Alternative Systems, Inc.**
 18. **Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement (HACE)**
 19. **Hispanic Housing Development Corporation**
 20. **Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees**
 21. **Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights**
 22. **Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce**
 23. **Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education (ILACHE)**
 24. **Illinois Latino Resource Center**
 25. **Instituto del Progreso Latino**
 26. **Interfaith Leadership Project**
 27. **La Casa Norte**
 28. **Latino Consortium**
 29. **Latino Education Alliance (LEA)**
 30. **Latino Organization of the Southwest**
 31. **Latino Policy Forum**
 32. **Latinos Progresando**
 33. **LULAC of Illinois**
 34. **MALDEF**
 35. **Most Blessed Trinity Parish**
 36. **Mujeres Latinas en Acción**
 37. **National Council of La Raza (NCLR)**
 38. **National Latino Education Institute**
 39. **Near Northwest Neighborhood Network**
 40. **Onward Neighborhood House**
 41. **Puerto Rican Agenda**
 42. **Puerto Rican Arts Alliance**
 43. **Rainbow House**
 44. **Salud Latina**
 45. **San Jose Obrero Mission**
 46. **SER, Jobs for Progress, Inc. of Lake County**
 47. **Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center**
 48. **The Resurrection Project**
 49. **Youth Service Project, Inc.**
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Draft of Potential Aurora District

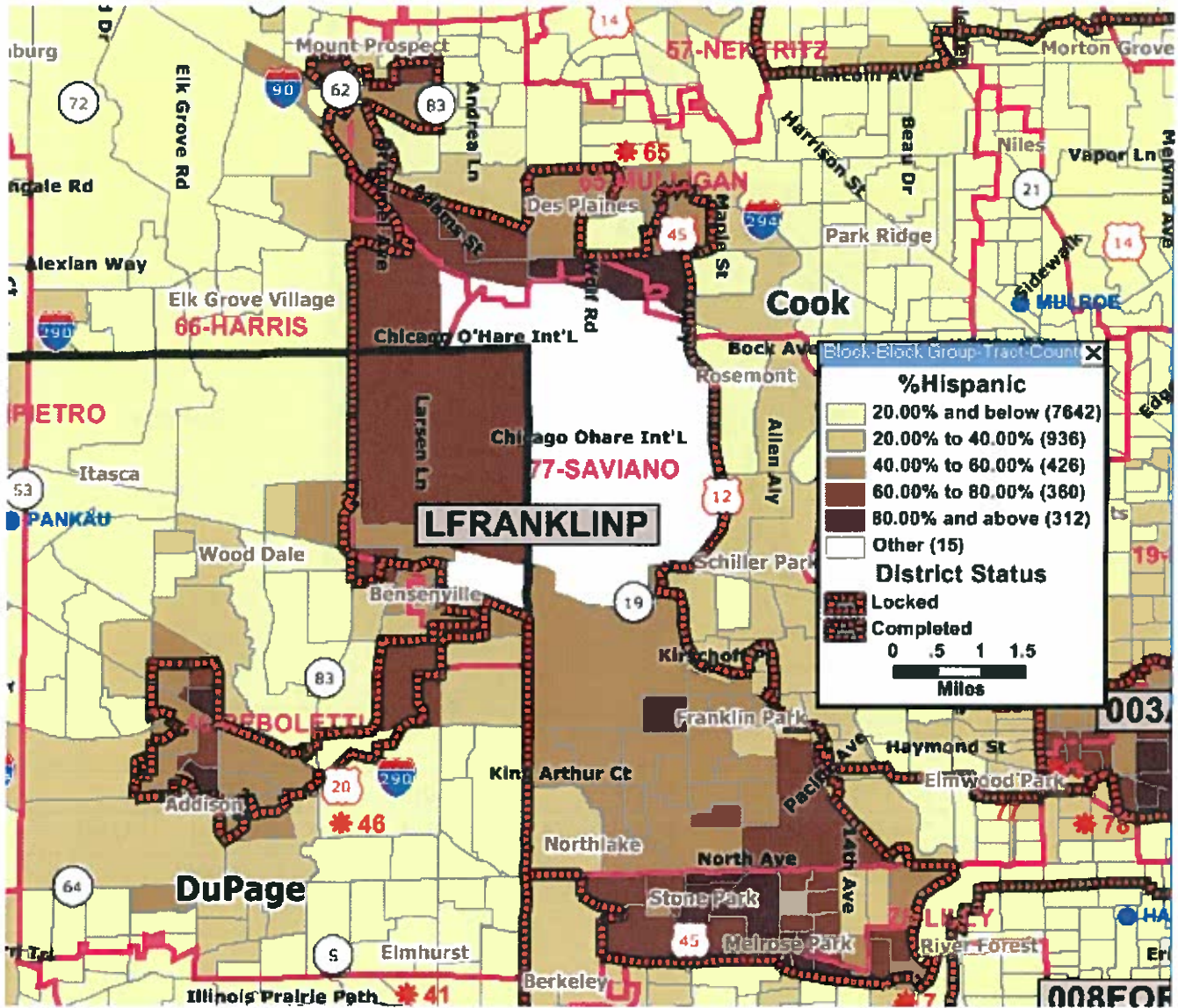
This will be a new majority-Latino district. While this was not a majority-Latino district in 2000, it does have a Latina legislator (Chapa LaVia).



District	Latino		Black		Asian		White	
	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP
Aurora	66.55%	60.57%	9.31%	9.8%	1.04%	1.23%	21.93%	27.58%

Draft of Potential Franklin Park District

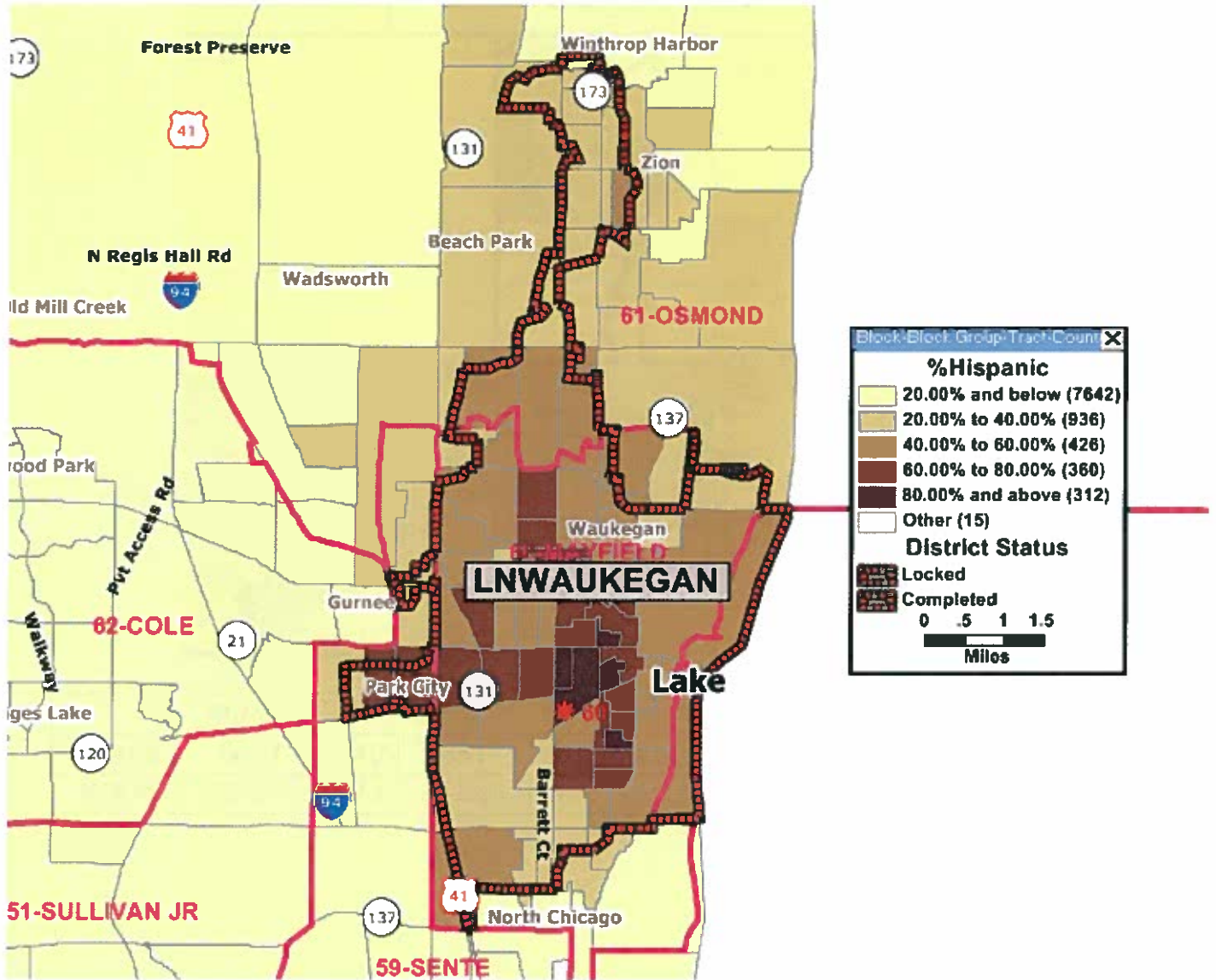
This will be a new Latino influence district. While this district does not look very compact, it keeps key communities together including Addison, Melrose Park and Franklin Park.



District	Latino		Black		Asian		White	
	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP
Franklin Park	62.79%	56.52%	3.73%	3.76%	3.74%	4.2%	28.68%	34.58%

Draft of Potential Waukegan District

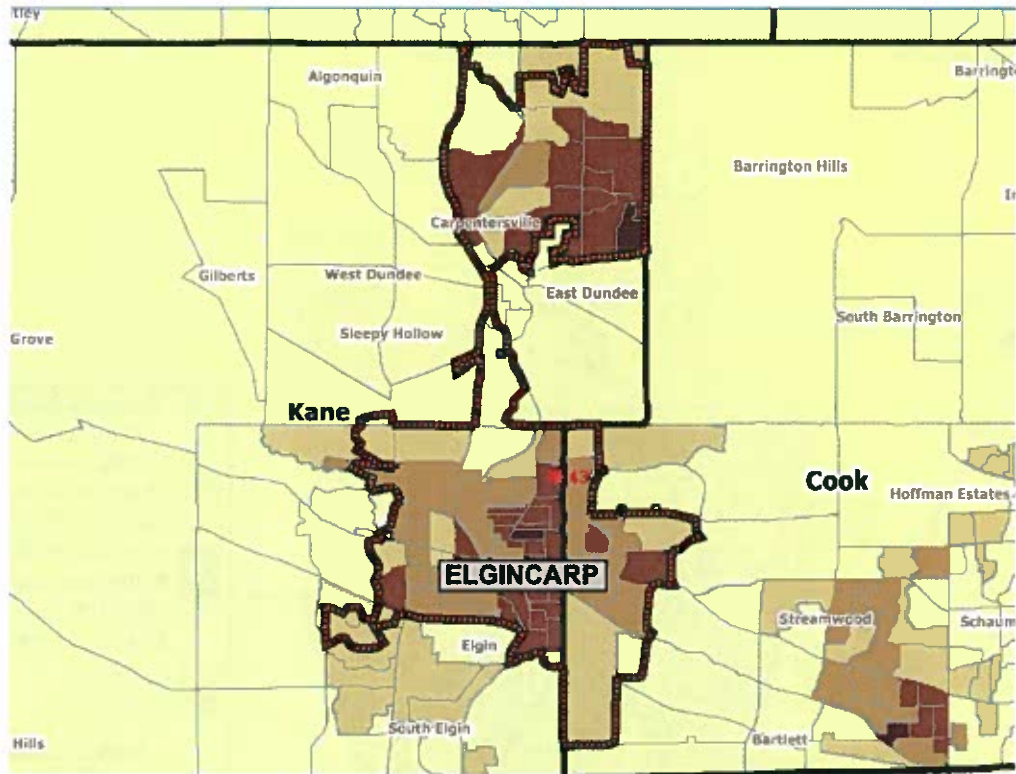
This will be a coalition district. African-Americans and Latinos together will make up a majority in this district. There is currently an African-American legislator representing this area.



District	Latino		Black		Asian		White	
	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP
Waukegan	55.83%	50.46%	22.56%	23.06%	2.26%	2.68%	17.01%	21.85%

Draft of Potential Elgin/Carpentersville District

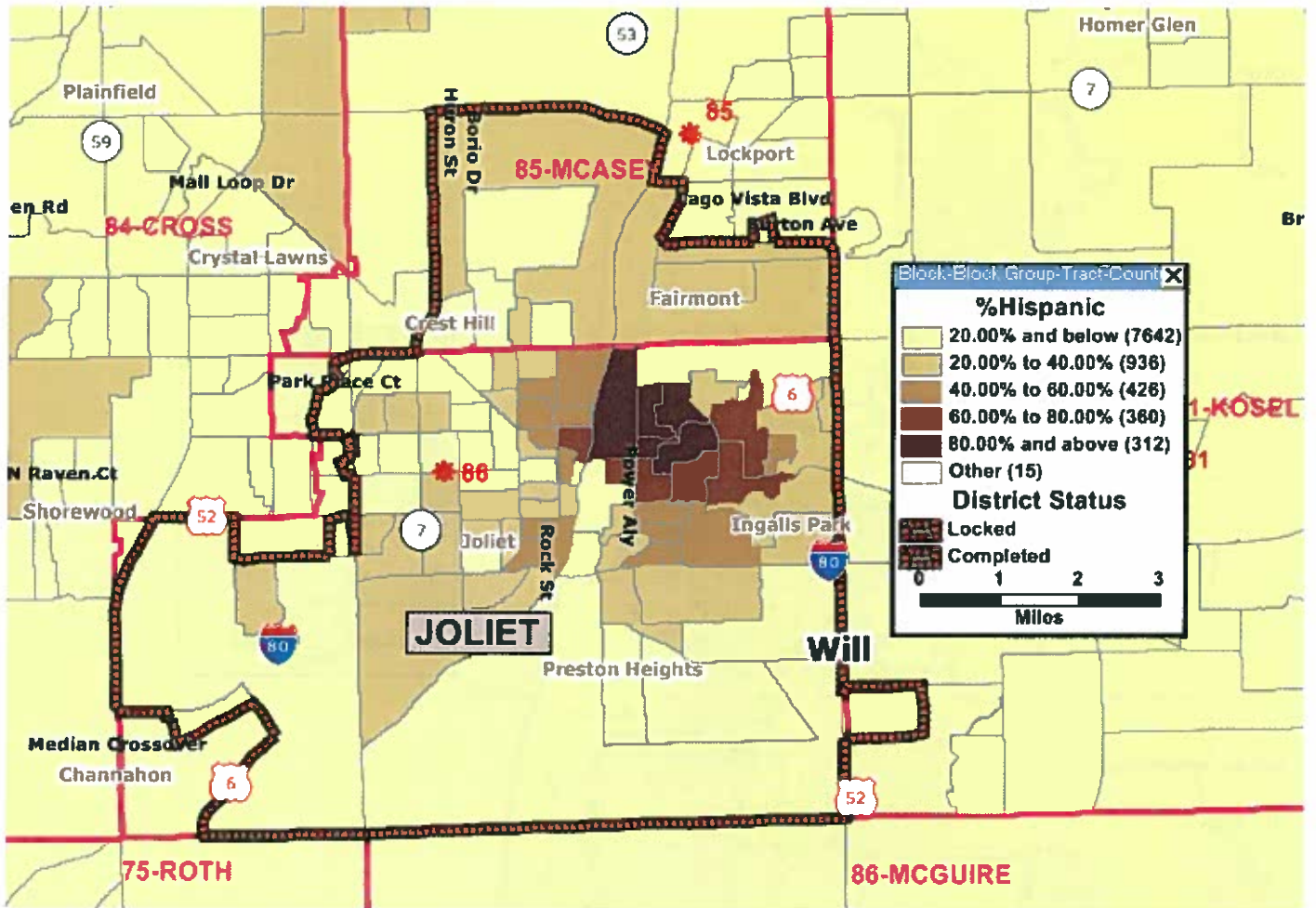
This will be a new Latino influence district. While this does not look very compact, Latino leaders want to see Elgin and Carpentersville together in one district.



District	Latino		Black		Asian		White	
	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP
Elgin	55.67%	49.22%	7.25%	6.43%	3.14%	3.5%	32.42%	39.81%

Draft of Potential Joliet District

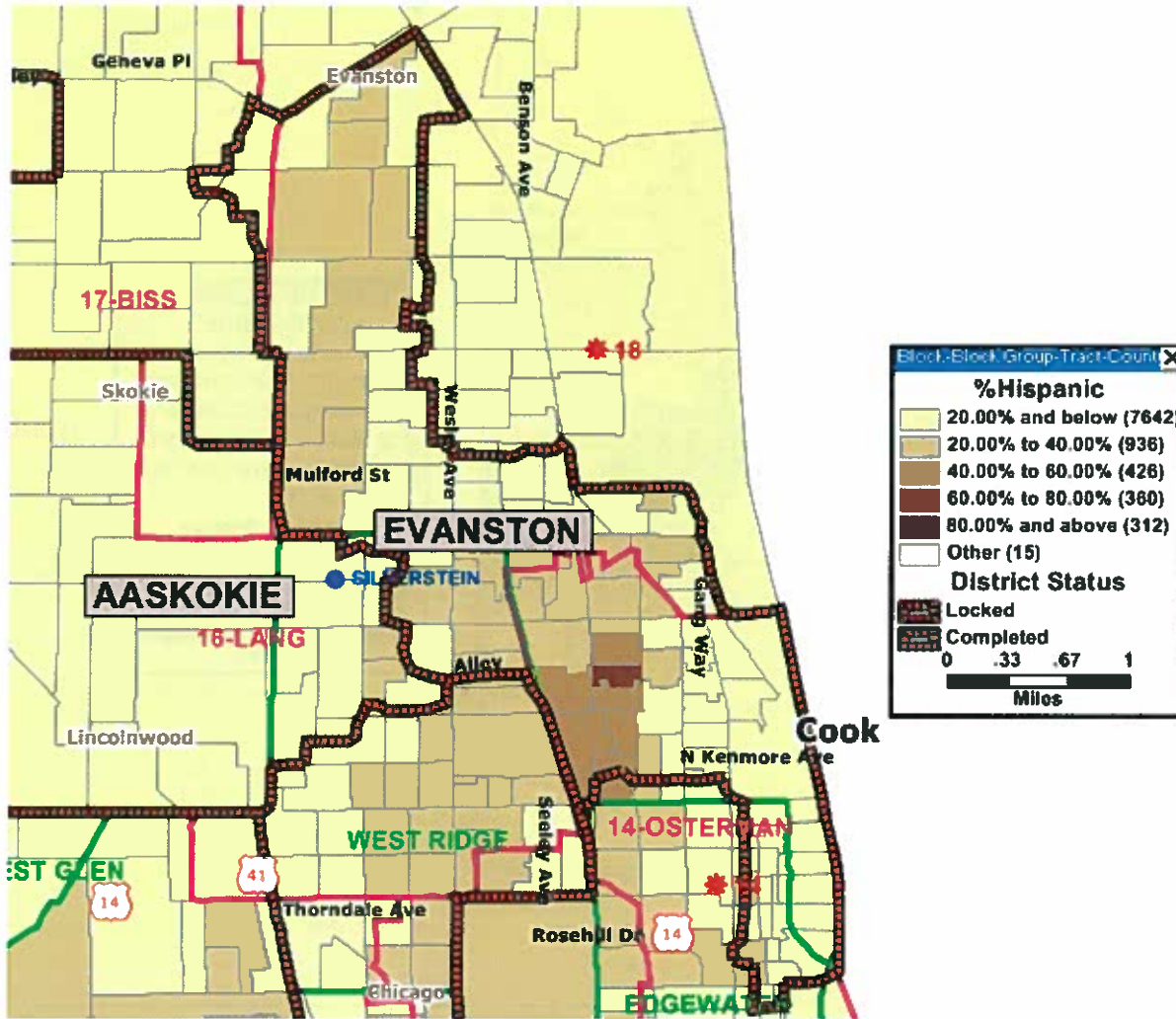
This is a possible influence or coalition district. African-Americans and Latinos together make up a majority in this area.



District	Latino		Black		Asian		White	
	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP
Joliet	32.33%	27.54%	24.53%	23.97%	1.03%	1.13%	40.42%	46.31%

Draft of Potential Evanston District

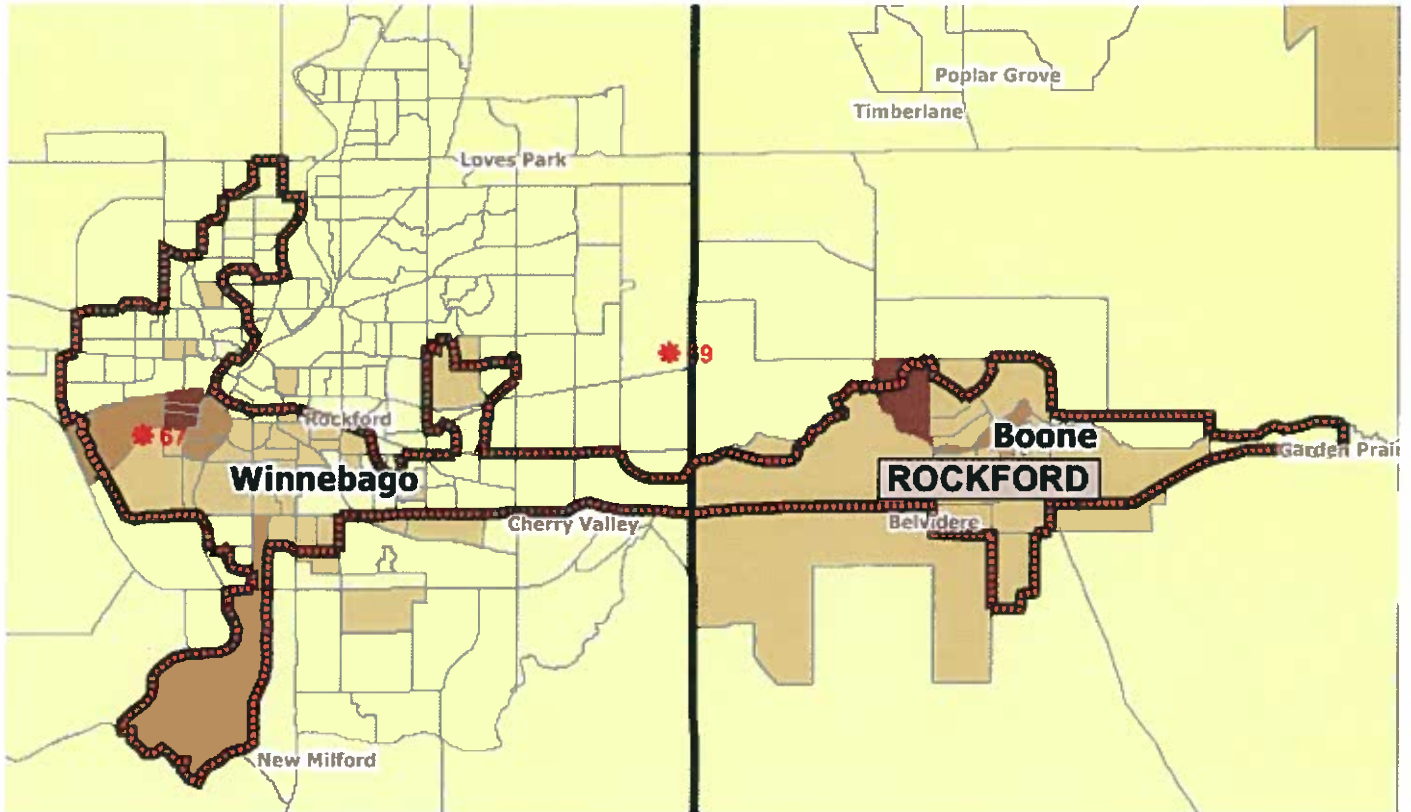
This is a possible influence or coalition district. African-Americans and Latinos together make up a majority in this area.



District	Latino		Black		Asian		White	
	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP
Evanston	20.27%	17.11%	28.71 %	27.39 %	8.06%	8.35%	39.35%	44.2%

Draft of Potential Rockford/Belvidere District

This is a possible influence or coalition district. While these populations are not high or very compact, they connect Latino immigrant populations that have faced challenges.



District	Latino		Black		Asian		White	
	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP	Total	VAP
Rockford	22.77%	18.64%	23.06%	21.24%	1.94%	1.95%	49.44%	56.55%

