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STATE OF ILLINOIS  
SENATE REDISTRICTING SUBCOMMITTEE  
SOUTHERN REGION

Thursday, April 1, 2021  
5:00 p.m.

via Zoom videoconference

1       PRESENT via Zoom videoconference:  
2       ILLINOIS REDISTRICTING SUBCOMMITTEE:  
3       SENATOR RACHELLE CROWE, Sub-Chair  
4       SENATOR CHRISTOPHER BELT, Sub-Vice Chair  
5       SENATOR SCOTT M. BENNETT, Member  
6       SENATOR JASON PLUMMER, Minority Spokesperson  
7       SENATOR TERRI BRYANT, Member  
8       SENATOR DALE FOWLER, Member  
9  
10       WITNESSES:  
11       MAYOR WILLIAM STEPHENS  
12       Mayor of the City of Murphysboro  
13       PROFESSOR SUZANNE J. SCHMITZ  
14       League of Women Voters of Jackson County  
15  
16       SENATE STAFF:  
17       MR. GIOVANNI RANDAZZO  
18       MR. BRIAN BURIAN  
19       MR. MATTHEW ZIMMERMAN  
20       MR. JOSHUA HORELED  
21  
22       MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC  
23  
24

1 CHAIRMAN CROWE: This meeting of the  
2 Senate Redistricting Committee is now called  
3 to order. Will the clerk please call the  
4 roll.

5 MR. RANDAZZO: Senator Fowler.

6 SENATOR FOWLER: Here.

7 MR. RANDAZZO: Senator Bryant.

8 SENATOR BRYANT: Here.

9 MR. RANDAZZO: Senator Plummer.

10 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Here.

11 MR. RANDAZZO: Senator Bennett.

12 SENATOR BENNETT: Here.

13 MR. RANDAZZO: Senator Belt.

14 SENATOR BELT: Here.

15 MR. RANDAZZO: Chair Crowe.

16 CHAIRMAN CROWE: I'm here. Thank you.  
17 There being a quorum present, the following  
18 entities are seeking leave to photograph and  
19 video the proceedings: Blue Room Stream. Is  
20 there leave? Leave being granted.

21 Senator Belt, do you have a  
22 motion?

23 SENATOR BELT: Yes, I do. Thank you  
24 Madam Chair. I move that this hearing be

1 transcribed by the court reporter so that the  
2 committee can have a full transcript of this  
3 hearing, which the Redistricting Committee  
4 can approve at a future hearing once members  
5 and staff have had an opportunity to review  
6 the transcript and make any needed  
7 corrections.

8 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Vice Chair Belt moves  
9 to allow a court reporter to transcribe the  
10 hearing. Is there leave? Leave being  
11 granted, the court reporter will be allowed  
12 to transcribe the hearing.

13 The subcommittee is in receipt  
14 of written only testimony from Ryan Tolley of  
15 CHANGE Illinois. Those documents, along with  
16 any other testimony received by the  
17 committee, will be made part of the  
18 committee's record and posted on the  
19 Redistricting Committee's ILGA website.

20 This subcommittee covers  
21 southern Illinois, which includes Senate  
22 districts that are currently represented by  
23 Senator Bryant, Senator Fowler, Senator  
24 Plummer, and I believe one county that

1 Senator Bailey represents, as well. Senator  
2 Bryant, Fowler and Plummer, thank you for  
3 joining us this evening.

4 I would like to start with an  
5 opening statement. I know Vice Chair Belt  
6 has some comments prepared, as well. And  
7 Senator Plummer, if you have any opening  
8 remarks, we will go to you after Senator  
9 Belt, and then we will turn to our testimony  
10 for the (electronic interference).

11 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Okay. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN CROWE: To everyone who is  
13 participating today, the Illinois  
14 Redistricting Committee, this is the latest  
15 committee hearing in a series of regional  
16 hearings the Senate Redistricting Committee  
17 is holding as we gather input from  
18 communities of interest across Illinois to  
19 create a fair map that reflects the diversity  
20 of our state. Redistricting is about making  
21 sure our communities receive fair and equal  
22 representation. We know that the needs of  
23 the people in southern Illinois are much  
24 different than the needs of those up north,

1 so we are here today to listen and learn  
2 about what the people of southern Illinois  
3 need to ensure they have a strong voice in  
4 the General Assembly.

5 I appreciate those who took the  
6 time to be with us this evening. And if you  
7 are unable to join us for this hearing, we  
8 encourage you to visit our website at  
9 [www.ILSenateredistricting.com](http://www.ILSenateredistricting.com). From there,  
10 anyone can submit their opinions and concerns  
11 and find more detailed information about the  
12 redistricting process. We are focused on  
13 encouraging as much public participation as  
14 possible. So on that site you could even  
15 draft and submit your own proposed  
16 legislative boundary maps, which will be  
17 reviewed as a part of the public record.

18 I'd like to take a minute to  
19 explain why it is that it's so important that  
20 we undergo this process. Very simply, it's  
21 our duty as members of the General Assembly  
22 under the Illinois Constitution to draft a  
23 map by June 30th of this year. Just as it is  
24 our duty to uphold our constitutional rights

1 to freedom of speech and the Second  
2 Amendment, it's our duty to meet this  
3 June 30th deadline in the Illinois  
4 Constitution. If we fail to meet this date,  
5 this process would be turned over to a  
6 committee of political insiders to draw us a  
7 map. I don't think that's a good idea, and I  
8 have a feeling that the people of southern  
9 Illinois don't think that's a good idea  
10 either.

11 I look forward to hearing from  
12 our panelists this evening. I thank you.  
13 And now I'd like to turn it over Vice Chair  
14 Belt for remarks.

15 SENATOR BELT: Thank you, Chair Crowe.  
16 I agree with you; we cannot abandon our  
17 constitutional duty, especially if doing so  
18 would mean fewer people having a say in this  
19 process. That's why we have put so much  
20 emphasis on holding these hearings and  
21 encouraging public participation in this  
22 process. Now you will still hear our friends  
23 on the other side of the aisle complain about  
24 the process. It's what they do best. But

1 let's not be confused about what they are  
2 advocating for. They are advocating for us  
3 to put off this process, to abandon our  
4 constitutional duty, while we wait on data  
5 from the U.S. Census Bureau that's been  
6 delayed because of the pandemic. That data  
7 won't come until late August or September,  
8 way past our constitutional deadline. By  
9 that time, if the Republicans get their way,  
10 mapmaking will have already been turned over  
11 to a group of political insiders, which would  
12 be an ultimate disservice to our communities.  
13 That's not transparency. That's failure.  
14 The people of Illinois deserve better. They  
15 deserve a voice, and that's why we are here  
16 today. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN CROWE: I thank you, Senator  
18 Belt. Senator Plummer, do you have any  
19 remarks?

20 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: I do. Thank you,  
21 Madam Chairwoman. As the members of the  
22 committee know, this is our ninth  
23 redistricting hearing in the last two weeks.  
24 And while participation has been severely

1 limited, severely limited by design I might  
2 add, there have been important themes that  
3 have been repeated by witnesses from across  
4 the state, and notably across the political  
5 spectrum, left, right, middle. All parties  
6 seem to agree on a few things, so let's talk  
7 about those few things.

8           First, it's transparency.  
9 Witness after witness continues to be  
10 critical of the lack of transparency in this  
11 process thus far. That includes requests for  
12 more robust public engagement, more notice of  
13 hearings and for answers on what specific  
14 data you will be using to draw the final  
15 maps. To date, none of these concerns have  
16 been addressed. We have heard repeatedly  
17 from witnesses that if you want true public  
18 engagement, then just slow the process down.  
19 There is no need to rush and pass maps by  
20 June 30th. Our real constitutional deadline  
21 is not until October, and the members of the  
22 committee know this.

23           As I say all the time, when  
24 someone's trying to hurry up and get you to

1 do something and rush you, it's often best to  
2 slow down and think through everything.  
3 Something this important and this  
4 consequential to southern Illinois absolutely  
5 needs to be slowed down and done accurately  
6 and fairly to all involved parties.

7           Our friends on the other side of  
8 the aisle continue to falsely claim that  
9 Republicans want the hearings stopped. That  
10 has absolutely no basis in truth. Anyone  
11 making statements such as that is knowingly  
12 making a false statement to the people of  
13 Illinois. In fact, the Republicans, along  
14 with independent groups across the state,  
15 have asked for even more hearings than are  
16 currently planned, but we need these hearings  
17 done correctly. We need true public  
18 engagement. We need to stop cramming them  
19 all into a couple weeks and, instead, provide  
20 at least two weeks' notice before each  
21 committee so the public has ample time to  
22 arrange their schedules and participate in a  
23 meaningful manner.

24           There are more counties

1 represented by this group than there are  
2 witnesses here to speak today. I think  
3 that's a sign of a lack of public engagement  
4 and public involvement; and again, that's by  
5 design.

6           The second theme we've heard  
7 from witnesses over the last several weeks is  
8 a clear warning not to use flawed and  
9 inaccurate ACS data to draw maps, as the  
10 Democrats have said they intend to do.  
11 Instead, we should wait for the official  
12 census data, which Illinois taxpayers spent  
13 almost \$50 million on last year. The use of  
14 data other than the official census data  
15 risks adversely affecting underrepresented  
16 areas in our state, particularly rural areas.  
17 There is no part of Illinois that would  
18 probably be more disenfranchised by using  
19 flawed data than the group that we represent  
20 on this subcommittee, rural southern  
21 Illinois. Again, that's not the Republican  
22 Party saying that. That has been the  
23 testimony of multiple witnesses from across  
24 the state and from across the political

1 spectrum.

2                   Finally, one last theme that has  
3 been echoed is the need to remove  
4 partisanship from this process. Voters want  
5 this process to leave them more choices at  
6 the ballot box. That would be healthy for  
7 everybody. They want more competition in our  
8 elections, instead of politicians using this  
9 process to protect their own political power.  
10 We strongly agree, which is why we introduced  
11 the People's Independent Map Act. This  
12 legislation would take politicians, like you  
13 and me and the rest of the legislature, out  
14 of the map drawing process. An independent  
15 redistricting commission has long been  
16 supported by Governor Pritzker and more than  
17 75 members of the legislature on your side of  
18 the aisle, including, I might add, members of  
19 this committee.

20                   So we look forward to your help  
21 in taking the politicians and insiders out of  
22 the process completely. People should be  
23 able to choose their elected officials,  
24 instead of politicians picking their

1 constituents. The process here today keeps  
2 politicians in complete control, and that  
3 needs to end.

4 Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

5 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Thank you, Senator  
6 Plummer, for those remarks. And I think you  
7 will be pleased to know that we did meet your  
8 request with this committee hearing as it was  
9 posted on March 19th, both on the ILGA  
10 website and on our redistricting website. So  
11 I'm glad that we were able to get more than  
12 two weeks' notice out there for that.

13 For the record, I do want to  
14 note that I know that the Democratic Party  
15 sent out invites to League of Women Voters,  
16 to the local elected officials, the chambers,  
17 the NAACP, the school districts, the county  
18 board members and the mayors, just to name a  
19 few. I would hope that our Republican  
20 counterparts did their share of sending out  
21 invitations, as well.

22 And now I would like to turn to  
23 our witnesses. For our witnesses, I'd ask  
24 you to please start your testimony by stating

1 your name and your organization. And I  
2 believe that our first witness will be the  
3 mayor of the City of Murphysboro, Mr. William  
4 Stephens. Mayor, thank you so much for  
5 joining us.

6           MAYOR STEPHENS: Madam Chair, thank you  
7 so much. And my name is William Stephens, I  
8 am the mayor of Murphysboro. I have been in  
9 that position since 2013. And I come here  
10 today because I have had an interest in this  
11 issue for a long time in terms of I'm just  
12 going to be turning 40 here in July, and I've  
13 just been interested in Illinois issues  
14 probably since I was in my teens and this  
15 particular one, I think, as we can see some  
16 of the gerrymandering that's went on in  
17 southern Illinois.

18           The first example of it that I  
19 think stands out to me is, if you are not  
20 familiar with, real familiar with Carbondale,  
21 the northeast side of Carbondale is a  
22 predominantly minority community. And it is  
23 carved out of Carbondale and into the  
24 118th District and the 59th Senate District,

1 which is primarily Shawnee National Forest  
2 area. And the reason I bring this up is  
3 because Carbondale, Duquoin, Murphysboro is  
4 all within one district. But many of our  
5 communities here are carved up into multiple  
6 districts. And it creates some confusion, I  
7 believe, for residents of Carbondale, of  
8 Duquoin, of other smaller communities, as to  
9 just who is exactly representing me.

10           And so one request that I would  
11 have as a mayor would be that the committee,  
12 as they look at redistricting, put an  
13 emphasis or heavy consideration on keeping  
14 our rural communities whole within these  
15 districts because I think that it helps our  
16 local elected officials, like myself, better  
17 communicate and connect our residents with  
18 the Illinois General Assembly members that  
19 are elected to represent them.

20           I think Senator Plummer touched  
21 on the bipartisan nature. Myself and Sheila  
22 Simon, former lieutenant governor, coauthored  
23 a letter to the editor a few years ago. And  
24 we were both, of course, advocating for fair

1 maps.

2                   And I understand that fair, of  
3 course, is to some extent in the eye of the  
4 beholder. But I do believe, again, that  
5 respecting those municipal boundaries and  
6 those county boundaries here in southern  
7 Illinois would be a good thing not only for  
8 the residents, but also for the state reps  
9 and state senators whose districts, because  
10 they are sparsely populated, have to travel  
11 much further than some of our urban  
12 counterparts to represent their constituents.  
13 And so I think that cohesion in the districts  
14 would be helpful for residents and for  
15 elected officials to both be able to connect  
16 with their government and for government to  
17 be able to connect with their residents.

18                   And lastly, I guess I would just  
19 say, because I want to respect the  
20 committee's time and I appreciate the work at  
21 the committee level, having been on the  
22 County Board, I know that this is where the  
23 hard work goes on. But it feels like this is  
24 a new day or should be a new day in Illinois,

1 with a new House speaker, Speaker Welch, a  
2 somewhat new Senate president in President  
3 Harmon. And I think that it would send a  
4 clear signal to the people of Illinois and to  
5 the residents of Murphysboro if things like  
6 the Better Government Association's maps are  
7 what the maps that come out of the work of  
8 the Illinois government ultimately look like  
9 because I really think this is a foundational  
10 issue. When people see maps that make sense  
11 and don't look like somebody spilled a cup of  
12 coffee and then outlined wherever the coffee  
13 ran to, that they feel more confident in  
14 their government. And people, for a lot of  
15 different reasons, don't have confidence in  
16 their government because of the thing that  
17 had went on at the federal level and at the  
18 state level.

19 And just getting this right or  
20 closer to right would send a clear signal to  
21 the people of Illinois that there is a new  
22 day dawning in this state. And I thank you  
23 very much for your time.

24 SENATOR BELT: Madam Chair.

1 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Thank you for your  
2 testimony, and I thank you for your time. Is  
3 there discussion?

4 SENATOR BELT: Just wanted a quick  
5 followup question to the mayor, if that's  
6 okay.

7 MAYOR STEPHENS: Certainly.

8 SENATOR BELT: There is a significant  
9 minority population in Cairo. Should that be  
10 combined with Carbondale to create a  
11 district?

12 MAYOR STEPHENS: I guess, unfortunately,  
13 I hate answering I don't know, but if I am  
14 going to be honest, I am not sure. I think  
15 that you might be able to create a district  
16 that included Alexander County, Union County  
17 and up through Jackson County to combine that  
18 population with the minority population in  
19 Carbondale. I think that could probably be  
20 done and respect certain lines. Because of  
21 just the nature, I don't know if you are ever  
22 going to be able to draw majority/minority  
23 districts in southern Illinois. But you  
24 could certainly get a more robust

1 representation for African-American Americans  
2 in southern Illinois if that was done.

3 SENATOR BELT: Thank you, Mayor.

4 MAYOR STEPHENS: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Are there any other  
6 members with questions or comments?

7 MR. RANDAZZO: Madam Chair, I don't  
8 think we could hear you.

9 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Can you hear me now?

10 MAYOR STEPHENS: And Senator Belt, I  
11 might just comment, I couldn't help but say  
12 this. You can't tell, but the photo on the  
13 wall behind me is a pencil drawing of Cairo,  
14 Illinois, from back in the early 1920s that  
15 was given to me by a friend. My wife is a  
16 reporter. This is sort of not germane to the  
17 conversation. But she did extensive  
18 reporting on the housing issues there in  
19 Cairo over the last year, and so I'm very  
20 familiar with that community.

21 SENATOR BELT: Awesome. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Are you all able to  
23 hear me now?

24 SENATOR BRYANT: Yes.

1 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Thank you, Mayor, for  
2 filling in the void. Senator Bryant.

3 SENATOR BRYANT: Chairman Crowe, I just  
4 wondered. It looks like Suzanne Schmitz was  
5 not able to get on, so, and CHANGE Illinois  
6 is not on either. Will Mr. Stephens be the  
7 only testimony this evening? Are we moving  
8 directly to questions?

9 CHAIRMAN CROWE: We are moving directly  
10 to questions. You know, if Suzanne Schmitz  
11 is able to join us at any time, certainly, we  
12 will be happy to hear from her. If she is  
13 not, we will make her written testimony a  
14 part of the record, certainly, for today.  
15 But Senator Bryant, please, if you have any  
16 questions.

17 SENATOR BRYANT: I do. In fact, I  
18 wanted to ask Ms. Schmitz some questions, but  
19 maybe I will ask some or make some comments  
20 by the testimony that I saw that she had  
21 submitted.

22 But before that, there is a lot  
23 of conversation about how this is supposed to  
24 be bipartisan and how we are all going to

1 work together. But honestly, Senator Belt,  
2 in your opening statement, I wrote down, I  
3 think what you said was that complaining is  
4 what we do best; and I think you were  
5 referring to the Republicans.

6 And so, I never have found you  
7 to be someone who purposely tries to insult,  
8 so I'm hoping that you did not mean for that  
9 to come out that way, because it's very  
10 difficult to start these kind of  
11 conversations if there are punches being  
12 thrown at the beginning of our conversations.  
13 So I can tell you that, for one, it is not my  
14 goal to simply complain on this hearing, but  
15 it is to get out some very important issues,  
16 one of them being a statement that Mayor  
17 Stephens made, as well as what is in the  
18 testimony from Suzanne Schmitz, and that is  
19 how the City of Carbondale has been divided,  
20 and also Union County.

21 The last -- since the last  
22 redraw not only split Union County in half,  
23 but if you look at the map, it shows two  
24 little bubbles that put the Anna Veterans'

1 Home and Choate Mental Health into  
2 one district. Everything else goes pretty  
3 much down 51.

4           So those kind of carve-outs have  
5 been very detrimental to southern Illinois.  
6 It's difficult for state facilities when they  
7 are carved out just as one tiny little bubble  
8 -- in this case, two -- for them to know who  
9 is representing them and also for legislators  
10 to get on the same page for who is doing  
11 what. So I think in order to represent those  
12 communities, the veterans community, as well  
13 as the developmentally disabled, it would be  
14 very important to make sure that we are able  
15 to keep them, that county, together.

16           And again, I had a question, and  
17 I will stop and let someone else ask. But  
18 because I know that Mayor Stephens has been  
19 on the County Board, also, I had a question  
20 in regard -- and I guess, Chairman, this  
21 would go to you if you can answer this one.  
22 How are the county's deadline of July 1 going  
23 to be met if -- you know, are there plans to  
24 change the law since the counties are going

1 to have difficulty meeting their requirements  
2 for their maps? Are counties going to  
3 need -- you know, there is this kind of  
4 complex how they have to do it. In fact, in  
5 Jackson, the county even illegally split a  
6 precinct the last redraw. So what's the plan  
7 for what the counties are supposed to do  
8 about their July 1st deadline?

9 (Electronic interference.)

10 SENATOR BRYANT: We can't hear you.

11 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Madam Chair, I  
12 think you are on mute.

13 SENATOR BRYANT: You are still muted,  
14 Madam Chair.

15 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Senator Bryant,  
16 maybe you could ask that question of Vice  
17 Chair Belt while Senator Crowe figures out  
18 the audio.

19 SENATOR BRYANT: Senator Belt, did you  
20 hear? I'm sorry. I can restate it if you  
21 want, or maybe you heard it.

22 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Can you all hear me  
23 now?

24 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Yes, now we can.

1 Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN CROWE: I apologize. I've got  
3 a MiFi going, along with the WiFi, so please  
4 bear with me. So, so sorry.

5 I think I understood your  
6 question, Senator Bryant. I was trying to  
7 answer. It's my understanding at this point  
8 that some counties have asked for a date  
9 change, but the committee is still waiting to  
10 hear more from them to understand what action  
11 we are going to need to take. I do  
12 appreciate the question.

13 SENATOR BRYANT: What's the plan then to  
14 hear from them? Are you going to have a  
15 hearing that's just for counties? Is there a  
16 plan for them?

17 CHAIRMAN CROWE: At this time, as you  
18 know, we have got these meetings scheduled  
19 throughout that we are doing now. My hope is  
20 that we will hear from them as we go along.  
21 If not, we will have to cross that bridge  
22 when we get there. Thank you.

23 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Madam Chairwoman,  
24 I have a question. I noticed after my

1 opening statement, you were quick to pounce  
2 on the fact that you guys posted the notice  
3 of this hearing two weeks, as you stated, two  
4 weeks prior to the actual hearing, which is  
5 something that I requested in my statement.  
6 And I know there is a lot of things that  
7 Republicans and Democrats struggle to agree  
8 on. I would hope, you know, the calendar is  
9 something that we could at least agree on  
10 because March 19th is not two weeks prior to  
11 this hearing, so it did not get posted two  
12 weeks prior to the hearing. I just want that  
13 corrected. But since, in your eagerness to  
14 correct me on that item, you clearly showed a  
15 belief in there being a need for transparency  
16 and a need for time before these committees,  
17 several advocacy groups have asked for a  
18 two-week period of time after the maps are  
19 introduced before a vote is taken so that the  
20 public can comment on the proposed maps.  
21 Since you clearly believe in a two-week  
22 threshold, even though you guys failed on  
23 this committee to meet it, in the interest of  
24 transparency, in honor of the desires of all

1 these advocacy groups across Illinois, will  
2 you commit to a two-week period before a vote  
3 is taken?

4 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Senator Plummer, I  
5 thank you for the comments and questions.  
6 Please don't take my responses as pouncing,  
7 or however you characterized them. I am  
8 certainly just trying to show the importance  
9 of coming together as a group, the importance  
10 of reacting as a group, and especially in  
11 fulfilling our constitutional duties right  
12 now. So I am glad that we had the notice go  
13 out for this hearing. I'm glad that we are  
14 all here today. I'm glad that we were able  
15 to get out all the invitations that we were.  
16 Were you able to get out any invitations?

17 And, you know, in response to  
18 your question, it is my hope that by  
19 beginning these hearings now and by not  
20 continuing any sort of stalling that we are  
21 hearing from all the communities and that we  
22 will have plenty of time to hear from  
23 everyone who wants to weigh in on the map.

24 As you know, we've got the

1 portal up and going now, so people and groups  
2 like those that you have mentioned can get on  
3 and actually draw those maps and submit them.  
4 So I think, I'm hopeful, that we will have  
5 the comments from everyone long before our  
6 deadline comes.

7 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Thank you, Madam  
8 Chairwoman. And yes, I believe, even though  
9 this is your system of meetings and this is  
10 your process, and as you well know, we  
11 disagree with the lack of transparency in the  
12 process, we are doing what we can, as well,  
13 to engage the public. We would desire much  
14 more public engagement in this process.

15 But going back to my question,  
16 in honor of the desires of the advocacy  
17 groups from across the state, in the interest  
18 of transparency, will you commit to a  
19 two-week period before a vote is taken on  
20 these maps?

21 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Senator Plummer, I'm  
22 sorry. I thought I answered your question.  
23 I don't believe it's for me as an individual  
24 senator to commit to anything. What I

1 believe is that we need to do our best at  
2 being transparent. I think the portal is  
3 going to be a great step for that so that  
4 each group can have a voice now, let alone  
5 two weeks before a vote.

6 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: I thank you,  
7 Madam Chairwoman. I think it's fair for you  
8 not to commit to something until you fully  
9 know what's going on. But out of just  
10 curiosity, what would you consider a  
11 reasonable and fair amount of time after a  
12 map is introduced before a vote for the  
13 public to be able to review it and comment on  
14 it? What would be a reasonable amount of  
15 time in your opinion?

16 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Again, I'm not sure  
17 that it's my opinion that's important at this  
18 stage. I think what's important is that we  
19 are doing what we are doing now. We are  
20 opening up hearings to anyone who wants to be  
21 heard now.

22 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Well, I will take  
23 the nonanswer as the answer, but I think that  
24 there is 200-some-odd thousand people in

1 Madison County that, you know, elected you to  
2 represent them in Springfield on matters of  
3 this importance, so your opinion is very much  
4 important and is desired.

5 I just want it to be noted for  
6 the public that advocacy groups from across  
7 Illinois geographically across the political  
8 spectrum have all stated that in the interest  
9 of transparency and the best interests of the  
10 people of Illinois, after a map is  
11 introduced, that there should be at least a  
12 two-week period for the public to review it  
13 and the public to comment. And it's  
14 concerning when the elected officials who are  
15 driving the process will not commit to the  
16 honors and desires and wishes of the public  
17 on a very reasonable period of time.

18 I believe last time this  
19 happened, a map was drawn, voted on and  
20 jammed through in less than 24 hours. And I  
21 would hate for something like that to happen  
22 again because that doesn't benefit the  
23 Democrats. It doesn't benefit the  
24 Republicans. It doesn't benefit the

1 Independents, and most importantly, it  
2 doesn't benefit the people of Illinois. And  
3 so I hope that our friends in the House and  
4 the Senate, Republican or Democrat, will  
5 commit to a period of time for the public to  
6 review maps after they are introduced before  
7 a vote is taken.

8 SENATOR BRYANT: Madam Chair, I see that  
9 Suzanne Schmitz was able to get on. I did  
10 want to respond. I'm sorry, Senator Plummer.  
11 I didn't mean to step on you.

12 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Go ahead.

13 SENATOR BRYANT: To your question,  
14 Madam Chair, you asked if we had reached out  
15 to people in our district in regard to the  
16 meetings, and it was because I reached out to  
17 my mayor, Mayor Stephens, today, I found out  
18 that he did not receive the link. And I am a  
19 member of the Jackson County League of Women  
20 Voters, so I'm glad that Susie was able to  
21 get on now. But as we are seeing with the  
22 way these hearings are being conducted via  
23 Zoom, because it is difficult at times to  
24 hear you, it was difficult just a moment ago

1 to hear Senator Belt, and obviously, there's  
2 been difficulties with the witnesses getting  
3 on. This is not the most transparent way.  
4 We heard earlier about people waiting in the  
5 waiting room, and, you know, everyone has to  
6 be approved to get on, where that would not  
7 be the case if we were having in-person  
8 meetings.

9           So I continue to be displeased,  
10 obviously, with the manner which we are  
11 having to do these, and that is by not doing  
12 them in person. I don't think that the  
13 general public does have the ability to weigh  
14 in their ideas on the redistricting.

15           CHAIRMAN CROWE: Thank you, Senator  
16 Bryant, for those comments. And, you know,  
17 certainly, we all wish we weren't living  
18 through a pandemic and challenging times  
19 where we have had to adapt and, you know, do  
20 things differently. I would like to note for  
21 the record though, we did have an in-person  
22 hearing in Chicago just a few days ago where  
23 everyone chose to appear via Zoom.

24           SENATOR BRYANT: No one was given that

1 option in southern Illinois. No one in  
2 southern Illinois was given the option of  
3 doing an in-person. I appreciate that there  
4 was that option for Chicago. There was not  
5 given that option in southern Illinois. And  
6 so, you know, we do see a difference in how s  
7 southern Illinois is treated, as opposed to  
8 the northern part of this state.

9 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Thank you, Senator  
10 Bryant, for your comments. Mrs. Schmitz, I  
11 apologize for the delay. I thank you for  
12 joining us this evening.

13 PROFESSOR SCHMITZ: I'm sorry. I have  
14 been having trouble hearing. I just received  
15 word of the Zoom meeting about 60, 70 seconds  
16 ago, so I apologize for not being with you  
17 earlier.

18 CHAIRMAN CROWE: No apology needed,  
19 Professor. I appreciate that you were able  
20 to join us this evening. Could you please  
21 state your name for the record, and we are  
22 happy to hear your testimony.

23 PROFESSOR SCHMITZ: Certainly. My name  
24 is Suzanne Schmitz, S-c-h-m-i-t-z. I am past

1 president of the League of Women Voters of  
2 Jackson County, Illinois. If you are ready,  
3 I have a few comments.

4 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Yes, please proceed.

5 PROFESSOR SCHMITZ: Thank you. Well,  
6 as I'm sure Senator Bryant has alerted you,  
7 Jackson County, Illinois is about three hours  
8 south of the Springfield area. We are part  
9 of a state league. We have been a strong  
10 supporter for a number of years for an  
11 independent redistricting commission. We  
12 have been a strong supporter of the Fair Acts  
13 Amendment, the Fair Maps Amendment. But  
14 regardless of who it is that's redistricting  
15 or how that process takes place, I think  
16 there are four guidelines which I've laid out  
17 which we support as a league, and that is  
18 that the districts be compact and contiguous,  
19 comply with the U.S. Voting Rights Act,  
20 follow existing political boundaries and,  
21 when possible, other natural boundaries or  
22 other features, and census tracks.

23 And if I could start with  
24 Illinois Senate District 1 -- or sorry --

1 Illinois Senate District 58, our primary  
2 concern there is two-fold. First of all,  
3 it's almost V-shaped, stretching from Mt.  
4 Vernon down to Jonesboro and Union County and  
5 up to the southern edge of St. Clair County  
6 on the northwest. It splits four counties:  
7 St. Clair, Washington, Union and Jackson. We  
8 don't like the idea of splitting counties.

9 My second point, and I think I  
10 may have heard Senator Bryant referring to  
11 this, particularly troublesome is splitting  
12 Carbondale. There are people in Carbondale  
13 who, when they talk to their neighbors, are  
14 unsure who represents them because if you  
15 live on one side of 51, you have one  
16 representative. If you live on the other  
17 side of U.S. 51, you have a different one.

18 So the southeastern edge of  
19 Jackson County has been split, and the  
20 eastern edge of Union County has been  
21 split -- those are our primary concerns there  
22 -- and do not reflect the guidance that we  
23 offer of being -- they may be contiguous, but  
24 they are not compact, and they don't follow

1 existing political boundaries.

2           And the reason we've raised this  
3 question is for the value of the citizens  
4 knowing who their legislators are, feeling  
5 some relationship with their legislators and  
6 the ease of knowing who the candidates are in  
7 any given election.

8           And before I forget it, let me  
9 bring up one other point, and that is, I urge  
10 the legislature to place the legislative maps  
11 once they are done on their website. When I  
12 began the process of preparing this  
13 testimony, I used the Google search engine  
14 and Googled districts, and I got a wealth of  
15 maps, some of which were out of date, and it  
16 was very hard to know which were out of date.  
17 Luckily, I know who my representatives are,  
18 and I went to their websites and found that  
19 they have very good maps. But a citizen who  
20 perhaps is not quite as up to date would have  
21 a hard time finding their district.

22           I also went to the Illinois  
23 Board of Elections looking for legislative  
24 maps and could not find them. So I would

1 think that one thing that might come of this  
2 would be that the General Assembly put the  
3 maps, once they are done, on the websites and  
4 then, of course, would have to update them.

5 My second concern is with  
6 Illinois House District 115, which parallels  
7 our Senate district; and again, it's very  
8 split up, not as badly as the Senate  
9 district, but it is split up. It splits  
10 Washington County, Perry County, and again,  
11 Jackson and Union, as I mentioned before, so  
12 I won't repeat that.

13 My third comment is with regard  
14 to congressional districts. Part of southern  
15 Illinois -- when I say southern Illinois, I  
16 sort of draw a line across southern Illinois,  
17 across Illinois, I should say, with U.S. 50.  
18 U.S. 50 will take you from St. Louis,  
19 Missouri to Vincennes, Indiana. That is  
20 split into two districts, and possibly three,  
21 depending upon exactly where you draw that  
22 line.

23 So we have the congressional  
24 districts of 12 and 15, and I believe one of

1 those counties, Washington, is split between  
2 12 and 15. Metro East itself, and I used to  
3 live in the Metro East area -- and by Metro  
4 East, I mean the area immediately east of St.  
5 Louis, primarily St. Clair County and Madison  
6 Counties -- the two larger areas, they are  
7 split into three congressional districts; and  
8 I would suggest that that is not compact.

9 That concludes my comments. You  
10 do have my written testimony, I believe. I'm  
11 not sure if you are hearing me, but I have  
12 completed what I wanted to say. I'd be happy  
13 if you have a question or two for me.

14 SENATOR BELT: Madam Chair, can I pose  
15 a question?

16 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Thank you, professor.  
17 I appreciate those comments. And I do just  
18 want to clarify one thing. I'm sorry that  
19 you were having difficulty with the maps. We  
20 do have a website up that is  
21 ILSenateredistricting.com. If you would go  
22 to resources there under current districts, I  
23 believe you will find an easy way to find the  
24 maps that you were looking for.

1                   And I apologize, Senator Belt,  
2 for the interruption. Please, go ahead.

3           SENATOR BELT: Professor, would you  
4 advocate then for connecting the minority  
5 communities in Carbondale and Alexander  
6 County?

7           PROFESSOR SCHMITZ: As a league, we have  
8 not looked at that particular question, so I  
9 really can't comment on that. I would  
10 certainly appreciate anything, though, that  
11 follows the four guidelines I pointed out.

12          SENATOR BELT: Thank you, ma'am.

13          CHAIRMAN CROWE: Thank you, Senator  
14 Belt. Are there other questions for  
15 Professor Schmitz?

16          SENATOR BENNETT: I have one, Madam  
17 Chair.

18          CHAIRMAN CROWE: Please, go ahead.

19          SENATOR BENNETT: Thank you. Professor  
20 Schmitz, thank you for your testimony and  
21 your both written and verbal testimony today.  
22 What did you -- do you currently teach at the  
23 law school?

24          PROFESSOR SCHMITZ: I'm retired.

1           SENATOR BENNETT:   And what subject areas  
2 did you teach?

3           PROFESSOR SCHMITZ:   Alternative dispute  
4 resolution, mediation, arbitration.

5           SENATOR BENNETT:   Can we retain you for  
6 this committee as we continue?   Never mind.

7           PROFESSOR SCHMITZ:   I'm retired, sir.

8           SENATOR BENNETT:   We may draft you back  
9 into service.   I'm just curious.   In your law  
10 studies -- I'm going to take my hand down.  
11 That's annoying.   In your law studies or in,  
12 perhaps, the practice or in the teaching of  
13 law, I didn't know if you had come across any  
14 either precedent or any kind of standards  
15 regarding constitutional amendments.   And  
16 here's my question.   We have talked a lot  
17 about that the process for redistricting  
18 every ten years is in our Constitution.   It  
19 has been since 1970.   There has -- before you  
20 got on, we talked a little bit about a bill  
21 that was just proposed by a senator, Senate  
22 Bill 1325, earlier this week, that would  
23 change that process.   And the question is,  
24 you know, do we address -- do we throw out

1 what we have and start anew with a new  
2 statute? I'm not aware of any precedent that  
3 would allow us to overturn a constitutional  
4 provision with simple state statute. Are you  
5 aware of anything like that, Professor?

6 PROFESSOR SCHMITZ: Let me just say  
7 first that I am here on behalf of the League  
8 of Women Voters and not the law school or  
9 anything connected with the university.

10 But as to your question, I can  
11 easily answer that I have not studied that  
12 issue, so I have no opinion.

13 SENATOR BENNETT: Okay. Well, I  
14 appreciate that, Professor. All right.  
15 Well, I will say this. While I would echo  
16 Chairman Crowe's suggestion of a resource, we  
17 do have a good new website that has or as  
18 part of this redistricting process that has  
19 all the maps on it. I think your suggestion  
20 was a good one for the Board of Elections  
21 going forward. I would like to see more  
22 state-run websites have that information  
23 available. I think that's a good suggestion,  
24 and it's one I could support. So thank you

1 very much or for joining us tonight.

2 PROFESSOR SCHMITZ: Thank you.

3 SENATOR BELT: Madam Chair.

4 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Are there further  
5 questions for the witness? Thank you,  
6 Senator Bennett.

7 SENATOR BELT: Madam Chair, I have one  
8 more for the witness.

9 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Please, go ahead,  
10 Senator Belt.

11 SENATOR BELT: Professor, do you think  
12 that representation is lacking in southern  
13 Illinois? Do the lines of the districts do a  
14 good job in representing southern Illinois?

15 PROFESSOR SCHMITZ: I think that most  
16 people in southern Illinois do not feel that  
17 they are well represented. Now when I say  
18 that, I have not done a poll, but if you look  
19 at frequent polling, I think you will get a  
20 sense that people do not feel that. Now, is  
21 it the lines, or is it something more? I  
22 can't say, sir.

23 SENATOR BELT: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Thank you. Are there

1 any further questions for this witness?

2 SENATOR BRYANT: Yes. Let me take my  
3 hand down. This is to the question of  
4 congressional maps, since, Dr. Schmitz, you  
5 mentioned those. This question's not for you  
6 but it's because you made the comment.  
7 Chairman Crowe, do you have any idea what the  
8 timeline is going to be for the congressional  
9 -- for approving the congressional maps?  
10 Because I know that part of the testimony  
11 from the League has been their concern about  
12 the congressional maps. I think the question  
13 was to Chairman Crowe, only because I don't  
14 have that, and I wondered if you did.

15 CHAIRMAN CROWE: No, Senator Bryant. I  
16 appreciate the question, but we don't have an  
17 Illinois constitutional deadline for those,  
18 as you know.

19 SENATOR BRYANT: But if I understand  
20 right, the data that will be used for  
21 congressional maps is the census data; and I  
22 think that the federal government spent -- I  
23 don't know what it was -- \$15 billion getting  
24 those census numbers so that they could do

1 the congressional maps accurately. We will  
2 have to meet, right, as a legislature to  
3 approve those because they won't be doing  
4 those congressional maps until after they  
5 receive the census data? Does anybody have  
6 any -- is that right?

7 CHAIRMAN CROWE: Well, Senator Bryant,  
8 thank you. We will end up going to court, as  
9 it has happened in past years in 1991 and in  
10 1981.

11 SENATOR BRYANT: So you anticipate us  
12 going to court over the congressional maps?  
13 So you don't think we are going to have to  
14 have, like, a special session to approve  
15 congressional maps later?

16 CHAIRMAN CROWE: No, ma'am, I don't  
17 anticipate that. They do.

18 SENATOR BRYANT: Who is they? Couldn't  
19 hear you.

20 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Chairwoman Crowe,  
21 we are having trouble hearing you again.

22 SENATOR BELT: Okay. I'll step in. I  
23 don't know if she can speak or not. So was  
24 she answering your question, or did she

1 finish answering your question?

2 SENATOR BRYANT: I don't think she did.  
3 And the reason I'm asking is because,  
4 obviously, we are going to have to have a  
5 special session to approve the congressional  
6 maps. Fifteen billion dollars was spent on  
7 making sure that we had accurate census  
8 numbers. And I believe that the State of  
9 Illinois spent 50 million, is that right? I  
10 may have the numbers reversed. But a  
11 significant amount of money was spent on  
12 making sure that we had the data from the  
13 census.

14 Clearly, we are going to have to  
15 have a special session to approve the  
16 congressional maps. So I'm just wondering  
17 why, when that is the case, we have to rush  
18 into approving maps when clearly our  
19 constitutional deadline is not June 30th.  
20 It's in October, unless, unless we want to  
21 use the June 30th deadline so that these will  
22 be totally partisan maps, because that's  
23 clearly what will happen if it's done by  
24 June 30th. It will be totally partisan.

1           SENATOR BELT: Okay. To your question,  
2 Senator Bryant, as far as I know, the  
3 Illinois Constitution set forth a deadline  
4 for the legislative maps but not the  
5 congressional. And so your question is  
6 really dealing with congressional maps. It's  
7 really not even laid out in our Illinois  
8 State Constitution.

9           And to Senator Madam Chair's  
10 point earlier when she spoke, if there is no  
11 remedy or no resolution, there have been  
12 times where we have had to go to court, to  
13 the Supreme Court, on it.

14           SENATOR BRYANT: But I believe that we  
15 are required to approve the congressional  
16 maps. And we won't get the congressional  
17 maps until after the census data because they  
18 will not be drawn until then. And at that  
19 point, I don't see any other recourse besides  
20 having a special session to approve those  
21 congressional maps. So unless we are using  
22 basically the false statement that we have to  
23 have a map approved by June 30th, there is no  
24 reason why we could not approve our --

1 approve the maps later with the commission  
2 doing the maps. There is no reason for it.  
3 I mean, obviously, the best data, the best  
4 data is the data that comes from the census;  
5 otherwise, we wouldn't have spent so much  
6 money making sure that we had good numbers.

7 SENATOR BENNETT: Madam Chair, could I  
8 address this a little bit? I did look this  
9 up a little bit earlier. And you are right.  
10 It's not congressional deadlines, but it's  
11 the state assembly deadlines. My reading of  
12 the constitution does have a June 30th date.  
13 "By June 30, 2021, the General Assembly shall  
14 redistrict the state." And then it has very  
15 specific, you know, if this doesn't happen,  
16 this is what happens. If we fail in our  
17 constitutional duty, this is what happens  
18 next. So --

19 SENATOR BRYANT: Our constitutional duty  
20 is to have a fair map to represent everyone.  
21 That's our constitutional duty. If you read  
22 on further, it says what happens if we don't  
23 have one by June 30th. So to have it by  
24 June 30th means that it's drawn by

1 politicians. It will be drawn in a partisan  
2 manner, unless we move to the next phase,  
3 which actually gives us until October, or  
4 unless we use the bill that was filed  
5 yesterday or the day before.

6 SENATOR BENNETT: Which, again, doesn't  
7 overturn the constitution. The deadline for  
8 a constitutional amendment is --

9 SENATOR BRYANT: It does not change the  
10 constitution.

11 SENATOR BENNETT: Respectfully, I  
12 disagree with you there, Senator. As you  
13 pointed out, there are very specific steps  
14 that we take in the map drawing process. And  
15 just to be clear, if you think that the map  
16 being drawn with public hearings by the  
17 elected representatives of the State of  
18 Illinois is a partisan process, then read on  
19 and see what happens after that because the  
20 process itself, when the four caucus leaders,  
21 two Democrats, two Republicans, speaker of  
22 the house, the president, of course the two  
23 minority leaders, they get to choose two  
24 people. So you are going to have eight

1 people. You come from a county -- I know we  
2 have at one point where we had an even number  
3 of people on a deliberative body. They may  
4 disagree, and they have historically. Three  
5 out of the four times they have met, they  
6 have come to an impasse. When that  
7 happens -- let see here, just to skip ahead.  
8 When that happens, by September 1st, if that  
9 eight-person panel can't reach a majority,  
10 which I'm not surprised when the foremost  
11 political people in the State of Illinois  
12 choose two people, they are going to choose  
13 insiders themselves. When they come to an  
14 impasse, then the Supreme Court picks a  
15 Republican and a Democrat, which are put  
16 forward historically by the parties  
17 themselves. That person becomes the  
18 tiebreaker, which they are drawn out of the  
19 hat by the secretary of state.

20 So now you have people that do  
21 not necessarily represent the state in a fair  
22 manner across the state. You basically have  
23 one person deciding drawn out of a hat, a  
24 partisan put forward by the political

1 parties, who will decide the new map. That's  
2 happened in 1970, 1980 and in 2000 -- excuse  
3 me -- in '81, '91 and 2001. And so to me,  
4 that is obviously the least ideal way to do  
5 this. You are taking an idea that's supposed  
6 to be the state picked and drawn by the  
7 assembly that's been voted on by the whole  
8 state, and now you are putting it on one  
9 person drawn out of a hat. That's the kind  
10 of thing that we get laughed at about by  
11 other states. Can you believe this is how  
12 they draw the next ten years of maps, a  
13 political insider drawn out of a hat?

14           So I disagree with the  
15 characterization that it's more political if  
16 we do it as encouraged by the constitution,  
17 giving us a June 30th deadline. I would  
18 point out this is what's done -- and this is  
19 not ideal, right? You have states across the  
20 country that are also struggling with their  
21 census data. One thing I'd point out though,  
22 even Republican states, so it's not just  
23 Democrat states, Republican states, too.  
24 Oklahoma, if you Google that, has been very

1 open about some of their struggles in trying  
2 to figure it out. Obviously they are not a  
3 Democratic state. But they are also trying  
4 to figure out how do we get our maps drawn in  
5 a timely manner with a lot of input from the  
6 public? And what they have said is, we are  
7 going to use American Community Survey, ACS,  
8 which is the best information we have  
9 available. And if, once we go through the  
10 process and we draw our maps with that data,  
11 if then when the census comes back later on  
12 in the fall, we find out that there is a --  
13 that it varies and that it wasn't as reliable  
14 as we believed the ACS was, then we can go  
15 back and change those districts individually.

16 But in the meantime, if we do  
17 nothing until we are waiting for this delayed  
18 deadline of the census, we waste all this  
19 time if we don't hold hearings like we are  
20 doing today. So I think that's the process.

21 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Senator Bennett,  
22 I guess to follow up on that, I will be the  
23 first to acknowledge, unlike some of the  
24 people on the call, I don't have a law degree

1 and I'm not a constitutional expert. But did  
2 you sign on last session to Senator  
3 Morrison's bipartisan bill -- I'm sorry --  
4 Senate Joint Constitutional Amendment SJRCA  
5 004? Because from what I'm hearing on your  
6 comments, you seem concerned about the  
7 constitutional ramifications of SB 1325. SB  
8 1325 doesn't impact the constitution. It  
9 doesn't overturn any provisions. It doesn't  
10 change any duties. I think that that's a  
11 false argument, but it's a false argument  
12 coming from folks who supported a  
13 constitutional amendment just recently that  
14 would have changed this process.

15           And I guess I'm just curious.  
16 Now it's kind of like that point in time when  
17 the rubber meets the road and a real map has  
18 to be drawn, and it sounds like that there's  
19 a lot of folks that have kind of shifted  
20 gears and are going 180 degrees differently.  
21 So help me understand that, please.

22           SENATOR BENNETT: Well, I would say the  
23 difference between Senator Morrison's bill  
24 was that was a constitutional amendment that

1 she was proposing. The deadline for that was  
2 last May where the legislature would vote on  
3 it. I did encourage that. I thought that  
4 was an important process. And then the  
5 reason the deadline was in May was because it  
6 was supposed to then go on the ballot in  
7 November for all the voters in Illinois to  
8 decide is this what we want or not?.

9           Ultimately, partly because we  
10 weren't in session for much of that period,  
11 that did not pass the General Assembly. It  
12 did not go the voters. And so the  
13 constitution was not amended. But I disagree  
14 with your characterization that 1325 doesn't  
15 change the constitution. It is a different  
16 process than we currently have in the  
17 constitution. That's my point, which is, we  
18 could have arguments that say this is the  
19 process we should do going forward, but if we  
20 were to do a constitutional amendment this  
21 year, it couldn't take effect till 2022,  
22 which is after the process we need to do for  
23 every ten-year census.

24           So that's the difference,

1 Senator. It may well be that if it was  
2 deliberated and voted on by the people that  
3 that is the process that the people of  
4 Illinois choose to pick, but we didn't go  
5 through that process. And to do it now, to  
6 put it in now, is a very different thing.

7 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Well, I guess,  
8 you know, it's interesting that, you know,  
9 the people in power that have drawn the last  
10 map and theoretically would get to jam this  
11 map through the system support reforms when  
12 the reforms are somewhat meaningless. And  
13 now when there is true opportunity to enact  
14 reforms that would empower people across the  
15 state, we kind of revert back to a partisan  
16 position.

17 The fact of the matter is what  
18 SB 1325 does, almost identical to the bill  
19 that 37 senators signed on to last time, was  
20 sponsored by a Democrat, had Senator Crowe,  
21 Senator Bennett and many more Democrat  
22 legislators sign on to. Now is the  
23 opportunity. Everyone put out press releases  
24 and talked about how this was a great thing

1 for Illinois and a great thing for the people  
2 of Illinois. And now the opportunity is  
3 there right when a mapping process is  
4 beginning to actually enact those changes,  
5 and now suddenly the process is problematic.  
6 And I find that concerning.

7 And then at the beginning of  
8 your comments, I just want to make sure I  
9 heard it clearly. Did you acknowledge that  
10 there might be a two-step process to the map?

11 SENATOR BENNETT: Can you explain what  
12 two-step process that would be?

13 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: That  
14 theoretically the majority party is thinking  
15 about passing a map and then coming back and  
16 amending that map?

17 SENATOR BENNETT: I'm saying that's what  
18 Oklahoma's doing. I'm pointing out this is  
19 not an Illinois-centric issue.

20 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: But you said  
21 Oklahoma, in your words, I think, or I'm  
22 paraphrasing, but Oklahoma was a Republican  
23 state, and this is how they were doing it,  
24 and it was a great thing. It sounded to me

1 like --

2 SENATOR BENNETT: I don't know if I said  
3 it's a great thing, but my point was the  
4 comments were made. Illinois's doing it as  
5 an outlier in that we are the only ones  
6 trying to get a map or trying to get the  
7 process done and some of the hearings done  
8 early on before we have all of the data  
9 available. And my point is, it's not that.  
10 States all across the country have gone  
11 through the same pandemic. They've had the  
12 same issues getting our census data in on  
13 time. And so we are also trying to find what  
14 is the right course for Illinois to take.  
15 That is the point I was making, Senator.

16 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Well, I just know  
17 that this conversation about data and how  
18 other states are doing it, I can cherry pick  
19 Republican states. I can cherry pick  
20 Democrat states. My point is that this is  
21 Illinois, and every state is unique. Every  
22 state is unique demographically. Every state  
23 is unique in many ways. And we need to be  
24 doing what's best for the people of Illinois.

1                   And what I know about what's  
2 best for the people of Illinois is that we  
3 put \$50 million of Illinois taxpayer money  
4 into historic outreach on the census,  
5 historic outreach. In fact, I think we had  
6 the highest response rate that we've ever had  
7 for a census in Illinois history. And yet,  
8 there is accusations that the census was  
9 flawed or the data might be flawed. Once we  
10 spent all of that taxpayer money and once we  
11 saw the results were so phenomenal, Governor  
12 Pritzker and numerous other folks on your  
13 side of the aisle came out and discussed how  
14 great it was, how wonderful it was, how  
15 Illinois exceeded during a difficult year to  
16 have phenomenal numbers. And I'm just  
17 confused why the numbers were so great, the  
18 census response was so great; and suddenly  
19 now I'm hearing the census was flawed, and we  
20 need to use ACS data, which we all know is at  
21 best a flawed snapshot in time. And what  
22 we're deciding here is the next ten years of  
23 public policy in the State of Illinois, and  
24 we are openly admitting we are going to use

1 inferior data to base our decisions on.

2 SENATOR BENNETT: Well, Senator, I don't  
3 know which, you know, in terms of attacking  
4 the census itself in terms of accuracy I  
5 don't think was my point at all. I don't  
6 know what sources have addressed that. The  
7 issue is the time limits of those results.  
8 We aren't going to have that data for a long  
9 period of time, till, we're told, August.  
10 And who knows if that's the case? So that's  
11 the issue I think most of us have with the  
12 census.

13 I agree there is nothing that  
14 should be partisan about a census. In fact,  
15 Senator Chapin Rose and myself were doing  
16 events in our districts encouraging people to  
17 fill their forms out, encouraging people to  
18 get their data in. And I think for the most  
19 part, you know, they were, through some  
20 Herculean efforts, they were able to get some  
21 of those results in, even though it was very  
22 hard to reach people individually in the  
23 pandemic. My point is not that it's  
24 unreliable, that it's not accessible until at

1 least August.

2 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: And thank you for  
3 the clarification. To my point about the  
4 census being attacked, or whatever, the  
5 census data was somewhat attacked in the  
6 opening statements for the subcommittee.

7 But moving on beyond that, I  
8 guess where I would kind of leave it then is  
9 we have admittedly better data coming. I  
10 think I just heard you say that maybe, or  
11 decent data coming. Undoubtedly, the census  
12 data is better than the ACS data. Again, I  
13 didn't go to law school, but is there not a  
14 process in the constitution, if we don't meet  
15 the date that you keep referring to as a  
16 deadline, is there not a process in the  
17 constitution to still have a map drawn?

18 SENATOR BENNETT: There is a fallback  
19 process, but it basically equates to a  
20 failure of us to do our constitutional duty;  
21 and the end result is the most partisan, back  
22 room result that can exist. And so that's  
23 where it gets frustrating. I understand if  
24 you're, you know, if you feel like you don't

1 have the votes, it's better to punt and to  
2 flip a coin and to draw a name out of the hat  
3 because at least there is a 50/50 chance that  
4 maybe somebody in your party gets drawn; and  
5 then ultimately, you know, you can, you know,  
6 again have an insider partisan person drawing  
7 those maps.

8 I don't think that's what the  
9 people of Illinois want. I think what they  
10 want is people that they elected in a  
11 November election to do their jobs, to go to  
12 Springfield, to go all over the state and do  
13 the hearings. That's what we are doing. And  
14 again, no one's rushing anything. We are  
15 holding these hearings now. We are beginning  
16 this process. We are gathering information  
17 the best we can trying to get a better sense  
18 all over the state of where are the  
19 communities of interest.

20 And there was a point earlier  
21 today, and I wanted to say thank you to  
22 Senator Bryant because a point that was made  
23 -- and I can't believe we are fighting about  
24 what's two weeks. Actually, from March 19th

1 -- I just had to look at my calendar -- two  
2 weeks is tomorrow, so we are a day off; but  
3 you are basically talking about two weeks.  
4 And the point is a good one. I may not agree  
5 with some of the comments made earlier about,  
6 you know, who -- say it differently -- but  
7 you know, there is something to be said if  
8 you say, boy, two weeks minus one day, it  
9 wasn't enough time to get anybody out here.  
10 But I would point out only one person on this  
11 committee so far has spoke up and said she  
12 invited at least two people, both of whom  
13 showed up and testified and helped us with  
14 our deliberative process. And I appreciate  
15 that.

16           If you don't do that, if you are  
17 not going to invite people in the 13 days  
18 that you had -- I would point out, under  
19 Senate rules, it's a six-day posting process.  
20 We've all agreed to rules that would allow a  
21 bill to be proposed and then go through its  
22 normal process but within six days going for  
23 the committee. In this case, you are talking  
24 about twice that. So that's plenty of time

1 to call your local, in this case, your local  
2 mayors, your local chamber of commerce, your  
3 local League of Women Voters. And I  
4 appreciate Senator Bryant's doing so because  
5 I think we have benefitted from the testimony  
6 we heard on today, and I hope we continue to  
7 do that.

8 But if you are going to say we  
9 didn't have enough time, I at least want to  
10 hear I invited these 20 people, and they  
11 didn't have enough time in two weeks to come.  
12 Two weeks is enough time in most cases for  
13 people to quit a job and for that employer to  
14 find a replacement, so I think that's enough  
15 time to find a few people to testify and to  
16 talk about what makes their community special  
17 and why we should consider that when we are  
18 talking about the maps.

19 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Thank you,  
20 Senator Bennett. Just to follow up, I want  
21 to make sure I heard that right. So  
22 following the process, as outlined in the  
23 constitution, I think you deemed that a  
24 failure; but instead, we are advocating for

1 using what I think everyone on this committee  
2 would acknowledge is inferior data, and  
3 that's not a failure?

4 SENATOR BENNETT: I don't agree with  
5 that statement. I think ACS is what we know  
6 to be accurate historically. There is no  
7 question that you could always have a better  
8 process, right? Even if the census came in,  
9 you could say, well, I still don't think it's  
10 exact enough. I'd like every single person  
11 to show up in Springfield and tell us, direct  
12 representation, direct democracy, I'd like  
13 them to tell us what they want. There is  
14 always something a little bit better.

15 The fact is we have a timeline  
16 which is in our constitution. We are trying  
17 to comply with what's in the constitution.  
18 We have what has historically been very  
19 accurate data, which is being used in other  
20 states, regardless of their party's  
21 affiliation, around the country.

22 So we are saying that is not an  
23 aberration. That is not such outlier  
24 behavior, as you are trying to make it seem,

1 to hope to get to that process where  
2 ultimately a name is picked out of the hat;  
3 somebody in your party might have a 50/50  
4 shot to get drawn. And I would point out, if  
5 that's the case, I doubt we'd have a lot of  
6 people on your side of the aisle saying, hey,  
7 let's get back to the independent commission,  
8 right?

9           There is something inherently  
10 political in maps, in a map drawing.  
11 Someone's always going to perceive someone  
12 else to have a partisan advantage. And if  
13 you are on the other side of that, you are  
14 crying foul; and I understand that. So, I  
15 mean, that's not an unreasonable position for  
16 you to come at.

17           But I think there is something  
18 pretty transparent about those, about that  
19 criticism. And to me, it's that if there is,  
20 since 1970, a deadline, a timeline deadline  
21 in our constitution, we should adhere to it.

22           SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Thank you,  
23 Senator Bennett. Appreciate the  
24 conversation. I guess I'm kind of stuck on

1 this data thing. I think I have a question  
2 maybe for Senator Belt. Because experts in  
3 this field, regardless of what state they  
4 live in or what political angle they come  
5 from, experts in this field all acknowledge  
6 that ACS data is a snapshot, it's not  
7 accurate, and that there is huge deviations  
8 in the ACS data. Since 1970, we've used no  
9 data other than the census data precisely for  
10 that reason; it's the best.

11 And this is the most important  
12 decision that we might make as legislators in  
13 ten years, and yet we are using data that  
14 experts acknowledge is not good and in some  
15 cases could be severely flawed. I know  
16 Senator Belt asked numerous questions about  
17 Alexander County and certain communities  
18 protecting the rights of different groups. I  
19 have read articles that the ACS data is  
20 extremely flawed when it comes to identifying  
21 hard-to-count communities that are  
22 historically missed. Hard-to-count  
23 communities, like rural areas, minority  
24 communities, are those that are most impacted

1 by faulty ACS data. Senator Belt seemed very  
2 focused on making sure those groups are well  
3 represented, as I think we all are, in the  
4 mapmaking process.

5           So I guess, Senator Belt, noting  
6 your obvious concerns about those  
7 communities, I mean, what are your thoughts  
8 about using data that the experts all say  
9 impacts those communities the worst, instead  
10 of just waiting, following the constitution  
11 and using the accurate census data that  
12 Governor Pritzker and everybody else was just  
13 bragging about a handful of months ago?

14           SENATOR BELT: Thank you, Senator  
15 Plummer, for caring about minority  
16 communities, as I do, and rural communities.  
17 The committee is looking at that data, but  
18 you don't have an answer form at this time.  
19 I don't have an answer for you at this time.  
20 But let me say this. I would argue, to your  
21 point, that even the census has undercounted  
22 minority underserved communities, right?  
23 Wouldn't you agree with that?

24           SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: I don't think

1 that the census --

2 SENATOR BELT: Yes or no? Wouldn't you  
3 agree that the ten-year census, when it comes  
4 along, doesn't get the count of underserved  
5 communities or even rural communities for  
6 that matter?

7 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Well, what I do  
8 know is that the census --

9 SENATOR BELT: You are not answering the  
10 question.

11 SENATOR PLUMMER: Sure I am. What I do  
12 know is the census that we just went through  
13 had the highest outreach and the highest  
14 percent of response in the history of any of  
15 our censuses. So I guess my question would  
16 be -- I'm not going to say any census is  
17 100 percent accurate for any community. But  
18 what we do know -- Senator Belt, let me  
19 finish my answer.

20 SENATOR BELT: We are talking about  
21 communities that were disproportionately  
22 impacted by a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic.  
23 So you made the point earlier about in  
24 talking about the seventies -- well, you made

1 up through since the seventies -- let me be  
2 correct in paraphrasing what you said. You  
3 said since the seventies. But there hasn't  
4 been a pandemic in our lifetime, Senator  
5 Plummer. And so if we already have  
6 communities in underserved communities,  
7 you're right, I am concerned about those  
8 communities because if you Google the top ten  
9 poorest communities in Illinois, three are in  
10 my Senate district. You would be hard  
11 pressed to find another Senate district with  
12 three of the top ten poorest cities in one  
13 Senate district. That's East St. Louis,  
14 that's Centerville, and that's Brooklyn.

15           So you cannot tell me these  
16 people that live in those communities who  
17 have a fear of government people coming to  
18 their door, they have been counted fairly for  
19 the last -- since 1970. Now add on to that a  
20 pandemic that disproportionately impacts  
21 people of color, and you tell me about  
22 whether those numbers are -- you keep saying  
23 they are the best ever. Where are you  
24 getting those numbers from? And let me ask

1 you, are those numbers inclusive of all  
2 communities in Illinois?

3 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: To answer that  
4 question, I'm getting that from a lot of  
5 sources, including Governor Pritzker. And I  
6 want to add that, you know, the pandemic had  
7 a lot of impacts on a lot of people. But  
8 when it comes to the response to the census,  
9 the minority and hard-to-count communities,  
10 rural areas, all of them had historic  
11 turnout. In fact you, yourself, Senator Belt  
12 -- our Senate districts are adjacent to each  
13 other -- we both did census outreach. We  
14 both did census events. We had historic  
15 census response. Regardless of the pandemic,  
16 we have the best numbers. Everyone touted it  
17 because the State of Illinois spent  
18 \$50 million on it. We had the best census  
19 turnout in history. We have the best census  
20 data in history.

21 And here we are, you know, being  
22 told by you and other members of your party  
23 that we should use ACS data that counts less  
24 than 1 percent of the households, less than 1

1 percent of the households, when we know we  
2 just had historic census turnout. So please  
3 help me connect those two dots.

4 SENATOR BELT: Senator Plummer, you keep  
5 extolling the virtues of some numbers, where  
6 you're getting them from, and you keep saying  
7 these numbers are great and great and great.  
8 When I tell you that I was in these  
9 communities, I was in Venice -- no one -- I  
10 probably went to Venice 15 times. We  
11 couldn't get over 20 people to come out each  
12 time. I was in East St. Louis -- oh, my God  
13 -- I was in East St. Louis probably 35, 40  
14 times myself doing outreach. I couldn't get  
15 any more than 14, 15 people to come. And so  
16 you keep touting these great numbers, but  
17 they are not in these communities. And so  
18 when you say that, that's a little  
19 disingenuous. That's not in the community.

20 Understand what I'm saying to  
21 you. These communities are historically bad.  
22 Add on top of that a pandemic that  
23 disproportionately impacts them, and you tell  
24 me what the numbers look like. So we can't

1 just say -- and then you've received what I  
2 received. We would get printouts of where we  
3 were in our efforts in the communities. And  
4 my Millstadt would be at 85 percent. My  
5 Mascoutah would be at 88 percent. My East  
6 St. Louis would be worse than it was ten  
7 years ago, and that wasn't good at all.

8 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: What I'm speaking  
9 of is official census data. Senator Belt,  
10 can I answer, please? What I am referring to  
11 is official census data from DHS. The State  
12 of Illinois had the number one response rate  
13 of heavily populated states, number one. We  
14 were number seven out of 50 states overall.  
15 And so have certain communities been  
16 underrepresented in the past? Sure. Of  
17 course. No one would disagree with that.

18 What I'm saying now is what we  
19 do know is that this census data is the best  
20 we have ever had. We spent \$50 million.  
21 Governor Pritzker and a lot of your allies  
22 came out and said this is the best census  
23 response we have ever had. Everything is  
24 great.

1                   Now here we are a handful of  
2 months later, because of political  
3 convenience, saying ah, ah, ah, ah, ah.  
4 Let's not use the census data. Let's use ACS  
5 data, which everybody acknowledges is  
6 inferior data.

7                   And so my question is these  
8 concerns about rural areas, these concerns  
9 about underrepresented areas, these concerns  
10 across the state in all these different  
11 places, right, those concerns can be best met  
12 by using the best data; and everyone says the  
13 best data is the census data. And here we  
14 are being, out of political convenience,  
15 having a process rammed down the throats of  
16 the people of Illinois that's using inferior  
17 data.

18                   ACS is less than 1 percent of  
19 the households every year. The census data  
20 had the highest response in the history of  
21 the State of Illinois. So again, I guess we  
22 can move on because we are just not going to  
23 agree to this.

24                   SENATOR BELT: We are not.

1           SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Anyone that says  
2 that using the ACS data is going to help  
3 these traditionally underrepresented  
4 communities is being disingenuous because the  
5 best way to help them is by using the best  
6 data available, and we know that the census  
7 data is the best data available. That's not  
8 from me. That's not from the Republicans.  
9 That's from Democrat leadership. That's from  
10 Republican leadership. That's from  
11 government agencies.

12           SENATOR BELT: Let's agree to disagree,  
13 and let's just say that we'll continue, the  
14 committee will continue to review. Is that  
15 fair enough?

16           SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Yeah, that's  
17 fair. I guess my last question would be if  
18 you feel that the pandemic severely --

19           SENATOR BELT: I don't feel that. It's  
20 a fact.

21           SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Well, if it is a  
22 fact that the pandemic severely impaired the  
23 turnout of these traditionally  
24 underrepresented areas, and if the

1 congressional maps have to use the census  
2 data, are you telling me that no matter what  
3 congressional map is passed that it's going  
4 to be inaccurate and it is guaranteed to  
5 misrepresent his historically  
6 underrepresented areas?

7 SENATOR BELT: I didn't say that. What  
8 I said was the census has historically  
9 underrepresented underserved communities.  
10 That's a fact. You can look that up in any  
11 publication. They will tell you that  
12 underserved communities are not counted  
13 because there is a fear of opening your door  
14 to people you don't know, telling them how  
15 many people you actually have in your house.  
16 There is a fear that if you have two people  
17 on the lease but six people live in the  
18 house, if you open the door and if you speak  
19 to someone, you are going to only say two  
20 people live in the house. That's a fact,  
21 Senator Plummer. That's a fact.

22 SPOKESPERSON PLUMMER: Again, so you are  
23 talking about these areas are historically  
24 underrepresented. My only point is, okay.

1 I'm not going to argue that point. Fine.  
2 What I'm saying is we know that this census  
3 data is the best we've ever had.  
4 Now if you are telling me that,  
5 in addition to these areas being  
6 traditionally underrepresented, that the  
7 pandemic had even a more severe impact on it,  
8 then what I'm hearing from you -- and I'm  
9 just looking for confirmation, yes or no, on  
10 this -- but what I'm hearing from you then is  
11 that the congressional maps using that census  
12 data that we are going to be working on are  
13 on are inherently flawed?  
14 SENATOR BELT: Senator Plummer, let's  
15 agree to disagree on this. And if that's  
16 where we are stuck at, we can move on, okay?  
17 SENATOR BENNETT: I would agree. We are  
18 repeating the same points over and over.  
19 Madam Chair, is there additional evidence or  
20 additional witnesses we can hear from or any  
21 new points whatsoever? Is the Chair still on  
22 the call?  
23 SENATOR BELT: I think she is, but I  
24 don't think her internet connection is, so

1 I'll assume the position.

2 We are at the beginning of our  
3 discussion on redistricting. I ask the  
4 entities that testified today and those  
5 listening to please continue engaging with  
6 the committee as we work to make sure our  
7 community voices are heard. If you have any  
8 further documents, information or questions,  
9 please feel free to send them to  
10 RedistrictingCommittee@SenateDem.ILGA.gov. I  
11 would recommend if you are interested in  
12 drawing a legislative map, please go to our  
13 website, <https://ILSenateredistricting.com/>  
14 where you can draw Senate and House maps and  
15 submit them to the committee.

16 If there is no further business  
17 to come before the committee, the meeting of  
18 the Senate Redistricting Committee on  
19 southern Illinois stands adjourned. Thank  
20 you all.

21 (Meeting was adjourned at  
22 6:28 p.m.)

23  
24

1 STATE OF ILLINOIS )  
2 COUNTY OF COOK ) SS:

3

4

5

6 I, Cathleen M. Baker, CSR,  
7 Certified Shorthand Reporter, and a notary  
8 public in and for the County of Cook and  
9 State of Illinois, do hereby certify that the  
10 testimony given in the proceedings before THE  
11 ILLINOIS Senate REDISTRICTING SUBCOMMITTEE,  
12 SOUTHERN ILLINOIS, on April 1, 2021, was  
13 recorded stenographically by me and  
14 transcribed by me.

15 I FURTHER CERTIFY that the  
16 foregoing transcript of said proceedings is a  
17 true, correct, and complete transcript of the  
18 proceedings held at the time and place  
19 specified.

20 I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not  
21 a relative or employee or attorney or  
22 employee of such attorney or counsel, or  
23 financially interested directly or indirectly  
24 in this action.

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have set  
my hand.



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Cathleen M. Baker  
Certified Shorthand Reporter  
Certificate No. 84-002130

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