

8 Valley Road
Bethany, CT 06524-3410
14 September 2021

Reapportionment Committee
reapportionment@cga.ct.gov
Connecticut General Assembly
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 60106

To Senator Kelly, Representative Haddad, and other members of the committee:

Thank you for holding the public hearings, both in-person and virtually. I decided to use my time to write my testimony instead of trying to attend. I regret I will not be able to join tonight's Zoom hearing because I will be at work cablecasting a Freedom of Information workshop in the town where I work.

I write as a member of the League of Women Voters of Amity and a former Registrar of Voters. As a citizen, I watched the 2001 and 2011 reapportionment process through the news. I watched the first two hearings and am watching the 9/13 session in Shelton as I write. To repeat and emphasize what others have said:

1. The voters should be at the top of your criteria.
2. Keeping municipalities in as few districts as possible is a very good idea also.
3. Please continue to use CT-N and YouTube to keep your meetings open to the public, with proposed maps visible to those watching.
4. Please begin the process of amending our state Constitution to change this process before 2031 and create a nonpartisan, non-legislative reapportionment commission.

On point 1: I have tried to use Dave's Redistricting App, but have not made much progress or time to do better. In general, I like the shape of Mr. Erlingheuser's proposed maps very much, especially for the Congressional districts. I went back to Dave's to see how he did it; I hope the deviation among them is acceptable, if this is the only way to keep the cities from being split at this level. I look forward to seeing **(point 3)** any other maps that come before you and hearing the rationale behind whatever changes you make. Transparency will protect you from unfair accusations of closed-door dealing.

On point 2, I asked the town clerks near me about election costs when a town goes from one to two voting districts. In 2011, when Woodbridge was split into 2 state senate districts, they had to buy three more voting tabulators and add those maintenance contracts to their budget. When both major parties have state or federal primaries, they plan for 4 simultaneous primaries--4 sets of ballots, machine memory card formatting, voting lists, poll

workers. Woodbridge stays with a single polling place because there isn't another that could accommodate the 1,100 voters in the smaller voting district.

Bethany has never been split in my 30 years of residence. But when I heard on 9/09 that Lisbon (with a smaller population and comparably modest town budget) was so divided, I worried. Realistically, the cost increase for another district-worth of ballots is only in the hundreds, but towns are already struggling to keep other costs down. If we had to establish an additional polling place, especially with sanitation requirements during a pandemic, that expense is likely to be much larger.

On point 4: Connecticut's bipartisan committee/commission system works well except when it doesn't, and maps need to be sent to the state Supreme Court. Bipartisan is good; nonpartisan is better. Remember that the number of unaffiliated voters in Connecticut still outnumber the voters affiliated with either major party.

A friend who was a registrar of voters for many years sent me this story:

I recall going to a New Haven County Registrars meeting during either the 2001 or 2011 redistricting. A brave state senator came to answer registrar questions. He was very honest about how the process was done. He was asked if the state took into consideration the cost and staffing issues on the town level of slicing a small portion of a town and adding to another district. His answer was "no."

As a member of the redistricting committee, he was besieged with requests from fellow legislators looking to influence district boundaries. They would often ask for certain areas to be in their district, including not only their residence address, but also the neighborhood where they grew up, the church they attend, etc.

The difficulty of disappointing your colleagues and caucuses is understandable. If we had a nonpartisan body of citizens who are not legislators, you all would be relieved of this problem. I encourage members of this Committee to get in touch with the election officials in your own districts. Registrars of Voters are currently busy preparing for municipal elections, as well as trying to fulfill additional requests for voter information that have come in since the end of 2020. It is likely that they haven't had time to watch these proceedings and will be surprised by the results. The timing will always be difficult, even without the problems of a pandemic and late data from the Census Bureau.

Thank you for your work in this, and good luck.

Pua Ford

League of Women Voters of Amity

League of Women Voters of Connecticut, open government specialist