



Testimony of Anthony V. Esposito, President of the Registrars of Voters of Connecticut
Connecticut Reapportionment Commission
Public Hearing at Fair Haven Middle School, New Haven, July 19, 2011

My name is Anthony V. Esposito. I am a Registrar of Voters in the Town of Hamden. I have been involved with the Registrars' Office for more than 40 years, these past 13 as Registrar. This redistricting will be the third in which I will have participated. I presently serve as President of the Registrars of Voters Association of Connecticut, a professional organization representing some 340 Registrars of Voters across the State. I wish to thank the commission for providing this opportunity for the public to voice their opinions on this very important subject. I am here to represent the Registrars who have to implement whatever plan the Legislature approves, and the ones who have to answer the voters' complaints when they don't like the way the new plan affects them. I know that your task is difficult one and I wish you well in your work.

There are three (3) concerns I would like to lay before this Commission. The first is what I call neglecting 'geographic neighborhoods' – the neighborhood groups in geographic proximity to others bounded by naturally defined borders of existing conditions like lakes and rivers, not by roads. Without considering the population that is between the roadway and the natural boundary separates that population from its neighbors and forces them to be grouped with the population on the other side, and that usually means that that group must travel some distance to a poll rather than the poll that serves the rest of the neighborhood. Choosing a roadway on the other side many times makes more sense. Such a condition, to which Representative Villano will attest, occurs in my hometown. Placing the dividing line down the middle of one road separates over 200 voters, who reside between the road and the lake from a poll three blocks away and places them in another district with a poll some distance away. Choosing a roadways that encircle the lake would affect only four households.

The second concern has to do with boundary lines of Senatorial and Assembly Districts. When Senatorial lines cross over Assembly lines it creates an 'isolate' polling district of a specific size (population). The size of the isolate district determines the relative size of all the other districts in the municipality as they may not vary in size from the smallest to the largest by more than 10%. In my town that means there must be two more polling districts for State Elections than there are for Local Elections. Municipalities with more than one poll have other boundary concerns. Two-thirds of the towns in the State have more than one polling district. Towns that share Senatorial and Assembly Districts with their neighbors, do not in many cases share the same local issues that impact their respective communities. When contiguous communities have disproportionate populations the degree to which each is fairly represented is questionable. The Town of Hamden with a population of approximately 60,000 is divided into two

Senatorial Districts that cross over into neighboring towns , and four Assembly Districts, two of which are completely within the Town; the other two are partially in Hamden and partly in neighboring towns.

The third concern has to deal with the technology used to determine boundary lines. The original census tract maps used in the 1990 redistricting were not geographically accurate. New maps made with aerial surveillance techniques and GPS Tracking applications that actually identify housing facilities are extremely accurate. It is in the public interest and to the commissions benefit to ensure that only the most accurate data is used in formulating district boundaries. What looks like cul de sac may really be a circular road with houses on both sides. It makes more sense to send all the voters to the same poll rather than split the area down the middle of the road and send those on the inside of the circle to one poll and those one outside to another.

Although I have mentioned examples of how redistricting impacts my community, the concerns are not limited to just my town. It has been my experience in working with Registrars across the State that these are not unique to my town but occur in many communities from Groton to Granby. The greatest concern is how difficulties in getting to polls directly affects how many people will not vote. It is important to eliminate as many impediments to exercising the voters franchise as possible. Having conflicts and confusion about where to go to vote is such an impediment. In my town some 3,000 of the 33,000 voters change polls each year. Changing polling locations each year dissuades voters from voting.

I would be pleased to any questions your commission may have.