

**Testimony re: State redistricting, 7/18/11
Submitted by Garland Walton, Fairfield CT**

My name is Garland Walton. I've been a Connecticut resident since 1995. Prior to that, I worked for the Illinois State Senate for five years. In the early 1990s, I was the lead staffer for the Senate Democratic Caucus for the Illinois Legislature's state and congressional redistricting. Our state's process was similar to 99% of our country's other states. I have seen (and—sadly—participated in) the behind-the-scenes work which occurs during the redistricting process. I am not thrilled to say it, but all the work done focuses on helping elected officials, not citizens. I *not once* had a conversation about drawing lines which would ensure better representation for the people of, say, the twenty-third district instead of the senator representing that district.

Instead, I helped exclude from a district a challenger who might be a threat to a sitting senator. I included or excluded public housing, parks, factories, or other things legislators wanted or didn't want in their districts. I excluded blocks or census tracts which had a higher-than-acceptable percentage of Republican voters. No attention was given to matters of compactness, competitiveness, representational fairness, and uniting communities of interest.

In most states, redistricting is a terrible, expensive, and undemocratic process. As we were going through the process in Illinois, we learned that Iowa's district lines were computer-drawn, saving that State (and thus taxpayers) considerable time and money.

Having legislators and legislative staffers focused on this means they're not focused on fixing the significant issues facing our state. I don't know exactly how Connecticut approaches the process, but it wouldn't surprise me to hear we have multiple, possibly dozens of staff members dedicated solely to this task, pulling them out of critical policy positions. It also means taxpayers are paying for a process that is largely political. It's my belief this is an unacceptable use of taxpayer funds—and I say this as someone who, I am embarrassed to say, spent my early twenties getting paid by Illinois taxpayers to do campaign work on the State payroll most days of the year.

Legislators don't want to hear this. I understand that. And even if I could find a small-government champion for this idea, it likely would go nowhere...because legislators have to vote on the map, regardless of who, or what, generates the lines. But we're all, each of us, taxpayers. We know there's a more fair way to draw lines and spend taxpayer dollars. I hope our legislators find the courage to consider this idea. Given the fiscal crisis we're in, I for one will be closely watching what my legislators do. Thank you for your time.