

CHAIRMEN: Senator Williams

MEMBERS PRESENT:

SENATORS: Looney, McKinney

REPRESENTATIVES: Donovan, Nafis, O'Neill

SENATOR WILLIAMS: -- final public hearing for the Reapportionment Committee. I would like to thank you for coming to provide your input and testimony.

Just a few housekeeping things at the beginning. There are a couple of handouts that are available and if you haven't had a chance to pick them up from our information table outside please do either during the public hearing or on your way out.

One of handouts is frequently asked questions and as you might expect, it may answer most of the questions that are asked about the reapportionment process. And there's another handout with a lot of data about the population shifts in the 169 towns.

Just to give you some brief background as to why we go through this process, every ten years there is a U.S. Census, as we know. The population is measured in Connecticut in our 169 towns and then at the end of that census process each state takes a look at its congressional districts, its state representative and state senatorial districts and adjusts them in accordance with the shifts in population so that we assure that to the greatest extent possible you have one person, one vote and you don't have the disproportionate amount of voting power for a

district that, say, is much smaller in population but has the same number of state representatives or a state senator as a district that's much larger in population. We try and balance that out. We are legally required to do that. So that's why we go through the process every ten years.

In Connecticut that process is a little bit different than in some other states. Right now we're working towards a September 15th deadline to come up with plans that we would then submit to the General Assembly -- actually submit the plan to the General Assembly by September 15th. It would have to pass by a two thirds vote.

There is a backup process. In the last two cycles 10 years ago and 20 years ago it went through the process past September 15th where the Governor would appoint a commission, usually the same folks who are on this commission to then work toward November 30th.

And 10 years ago that was achieved, everything except the congressional districts, because we lost a congressional district ten years ago. That got kicked up to the State Supreme Court and then it got bounced back and then the commission ultimately did, at the last minute, make that decision and we shaped those districts. We are not losing a congressional seat, thank goodness, in this go around. So again, we are trying to conform the districts to the shifts in population.

Now I mentioned our process is a little bit different than in other states. You probably hear about redistricting or reapportionment sometimes in terms of one political party, the dominant political party exerting its will against the other party, redrawing the lines

to better advantage that political party in the next election.

I recall, I think it was Texas in the last cycle where I think legislators walked out. We read about legislators walking out in other states and going into another state to avoid a quorum.

In Connecticut we have an equal number of Democrats and Republicans regardless of which political party has a majority in the Legislature, regardless of which political party has a majority of statewide elected officials. So we try and use that as a check and balance against that kind of partisan approach to redistricting.

So tonight is your opportunity to give your input. We have not started drafting maps because this part of the process is all about getting input from you and listening to you. We have a website which is -- website information is on one of the handouts that you can pick up so you can follow along the process, get more information. All of the maps for all of the districts, congressional districts, state representative, state senator districts are on that website so you can scrutinize that, think about other changes even beyond our public hearing. There's nothing that prevents you from corresponding with us, sending information.

There is a computer terminal here available at the Legislative Office Building and if you'd like more information about that, ask our staff at the end of the public hearing. You can come in and use that and actually manipulate the data, come up with other proposed districts and that's something we would encourage you to do and again, submit to

this committee as we go about our business.

So with that as the backdrop for what is actually a very important task, setting our district lines, let me call our first person to testify this evening. It is Yolanda Castillo representing LPRAC.

Good evening.

Oh, you know what? Let me just -- I forgot to even introduce myself. So I am State Senator Don Williams, President of the State Senate. I represent the 29th District. I am the cochairman of this committee.

And let me also introduce our other distinguished members of this panel, starting with Minority Leader in the Senate John McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you, Senator Williams.

John McKinney, 28th District representing the towns of Fairfield, Easton, Weston and Newtown.

SENATOR LOONEY: Martin Looney, State Senator, 11th District and Senate Majority Leader representing New Haven and Hamden. And good to see you all this evening.

REP. DONOVAN: Good evening. Chris Donovan. I'm the Speaker of the House, State Representative representing Meriden.

REP. NAFIS: Hi. I'm Sandy Nafis. I'm Assistant Deputy Speaker of the House representing the 27th District, which is Newington.

REP. O'NEILL: I'm Arthur O'Neill, State Representative from the 69th District, which

is Southbury, Roxbury, Bridgewater and Washington. And I think my title is Deputy Minority Leader at large, or whatever.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Art.

So Ms. Castillo, you may proceed.

YOLANDA CASTILLO: Good evening, Cochairs Williams and the honorable members of our (inaudible) committee. My name is Yolanda Castillo and I'm the commissioner of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission. I am here today to give you our feedback and recommendations with respect to your task of redrawing both the congressional and our state district lines in the state of Connecticut as mandated by the federal and state laws.

For the record, the Latino Commission presented this testimony in Bridgeport, Norwalk, New Haven and it is our intention to provide you a summary of our recommendations today in Hartford. In our testimony we do have information, our background information that was given to you, but I really wanted to stress today our recommendations regarding the redistricting.

One is reducing the number of districts in the State of Connecticut would harm Latinos by diluting their ability to influence the outcomes of elections. Two, there are higher proportions of Latino citizens, potential voters residing in Central Connecticut where there are higher proportions of noncitizen nonvoting Latino American residents in the southern most towns and cities.

Third, the redistricting process would create two senate seats with a majority Latino population, 50 percent plus. The available

data suggests that the 1st, Hartford and the 23rd, Bridgeport Districts would be redistricted in order to create new senate districts with a proportion of more than 50 percent of Latino residents.

There are at least four assisting districts, namely the 75th in Waterbury, the 28th, Bridgeport, the 3rd District in Hartford and the 145th in Stamford could be redistricted to increase the proportions of Latino residents above the 50 percent of the populations of these districts.

Please note that we have corrected our testimony to indicate that we were referring to the 145th District, not the 147th as indicated in our earlier testimony.

And I wanted to thank you for giving us that opportunity to do that. The commission is very concerned and really interested in that this information is given to you and that Latinos in this state has grown so much that we hope that you give us the opportunity to create more leadership and more people that can come and have that opportunity to become leaders in our community and represent our communities as it is growing every day.

And so I thank you today. I know you've heard this testimony before, but I wanted to make sure that your heard our testimony again in Hartford. And I thank you very much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Ms. Castillo.

Are there questions or comments?

Representative O'Neill.

REP. O'NEILL: You're right. We have heard this

before, but each time I hear it I get a little different thought or angle that I notice.

In the testimony about creating the districts, you cite two senate districts that we could create which would have a 50 percent plus Latino population. And I'm just wondering, is it -- if you can say whether it's your opinion or if it's the opinion of the commission -- is 50 percent sort of a threshold, a minimum number that you would need to have a district that you could count on as voting for a Latino candidate? Was that sort of where you have to get to that number to be confident that you'll get a Latino successful candidate?

YOLANDA CASTILLO: I believe so based on the information that was given to us and the background information that we found. Yes.

REP. O'NEILL: Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Anything else?

Thanks for your testimony.

YOLANDA CASTILLO: Thank you very much. Have a good evening.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next is Maria Ayala. I know that she testified earlier this afternoon. Maybe her name was --

Moving right along.

A VOICE: (Inaudible.)

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Excuse me?

A VOICE: (Inaudible.)

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Oh, she did? So is she here or

no? No.

Francisco Kuin, and K-u-i-n. I hope I pronounced that correctly. I'm sorry. Yes. Is Francisco here? Yes? No? Maybe?

Moving right along. Thomas J. Serra of Middletown. Mr. Serra.

THOMAS J. SERRA: Thank you very much for the opportunity, honorable committee members.

I'm Thomas J. Serra from 251 Sisk Street in Middletown, Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to address you this evening. I'm a resident of Middletown. I'm the present majority leader of the City's common council. I'm a former mayor as well and involved in local government since the seventies in some capacity.

I wanted to take this opportunity to address the Redistricting Committee with regards to Middletown and it's placement in one of Connecticut's U.S. district, congressional districts as well as the State Senate as well as the state representative districts.

As most of you probably know during the last redistricting process Middletown was taken out of the 2nd District and split between the 1st and the 3rd Districts. While splitting the city may have worked for the numbers, it has been confusing for residents, city residents. And while our city enjoys great relationships with our current representatives, it presents some challenges in addressing needs and concerns of Middletown residents.

As you may also know Middletown is currently split between two state senate districts and four house districts, all of which can add to

the confusion of who actually represents them. We believe -- and this is my personal opinion, it's not the City of Middletown -- it should be one state senator and two state reps. This has been going on in Middletown for -- since the seventies.

I believe Middletown should have -- it shouldn't be, in a sense, a man without a country, a city without one solid representative or state senator. It's been happening for years and hopefully you'll consider that.

I would strongly encourage this committee to review Middletown's current situation and look for a resolution that would place us in one U.S. congressional district. That said, with the population trends that way they are, to maintain the level of continuity. I believe it would make the most sense for Middletown to be wholly placed in the 3rd Congressional District.

Middletown is unique in that it currently is included in or borders four of Connecticut's five congressional districts, however I believe that city's character, history, socioeconomic demographics more closely mirror those communities in the 3rd District.

Historically Connecticut's congressional districts have been drawn in such a way that the communities sharing a representative also share strong commonalities. Everything from regional planning and common community patterns to more simple things as reading the same local paper or watching the same news broadcast.

For the most part our current districts reflect these commonalities and with new

population numbers, will require a shifting of districts. There is something to be said for the level of continuity.

In my mind it would be detrimental to all of our communities to significantly redraw the lines. This is particularly true for Middletown because of the drastic changes that were made during the last redistricting process. To be fair the changes during the last process were necessary because we were losing our congressional seat, as the Senator said earlier. However as that is not the case presently I see no reason not to maintain their current lines as much as possible.

As the committee considers the changes that must be made to the state congressional districts I would urge you to maintain the character and integrity of each district as much as possible. Middletown has been well served as part of the 3rd Congressional District and I hope this committee will see its way to ensuring that the city in its entirety is placed in the 3rd District.

And on a personal note, the incumbent congresswoman, I have known her since she was Senator Dodd's chief of staff and I dealt with her when I was involved in the Middletown council and she knows Middletown. She knows the character of Middletown. She does the personality of Middletown. Hopefully she represents us entirely.

So if you would consider again one state senator for the city of Middletown, two state reps. It's been a long time that we've been split up and the confusion with our citizens in Middletown.

Thank you very much for your time and

listening to my comments.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thanks very much.

Are there questions or comments?

Thank you for your testimony.

Next Alan Simon of Windsor.

ALAN SIMON: Good evening. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the committee. I'm here representing myself as a citizen, but I'm also here representing the Town of Windsor as its deputy mayor.

First, a little history. I was here ten years ago talking about the same topic. The topic is Windsor's lack of a majority legislative district. I don't know how much history you know of the situation. I'm sure there have been some other speakers because more and more folks in Windsor are concerned enough to use the system to try to get what we consider to be a fair outcome.

But in the 1980s our majority district was split into three. Three districts, three house districts, none of which has a majority of Windsor residents in it. We are a town only about a thousand votes -- or excuse me, a thousand persons difference than Newington. Ms. Nafis, I think, could understand that she represents, I think, only the town of Newington and it's barely larger than our town.

So we're back here again at another redistricting opportunity looking for what we consider to be a fair outcome for our town, which is a majority district. Because as a matter of fact Windsor residents do not have

self determination over any other of the legislative officials who represent our town. We do not have a final say in who can represent us.

I'm sure for all of you that the driving, the initial driving force to you involved in politics was (inaudible). That's what gets us all involved. And then being exposed to government politics after a while tends to temper the idealism with some cynicism once you see how things actually work; the sausage factory.

I'm appealing to your idealism to make right a wrong that was done to our town 30 years ago. We are beginning to get impatient. While we've made arguments based on facts and fairness, we still haven't gotten the outcome we believe is fair for our town.

Folks are beginning to get impatient and what that means is they will -- people will use whatever political means are available to try to achieve an end. That's only normal. One of them is asking for redress through the Reapportionment Committee, others are beginning to use the primary process to try to gain a party nomination in the district. And lastly is the potential for legal action by the Town of Windsor or other interested parties.

This is a bipartisan issue for our town. My town council voted nine to zero to make this issue it's top legislative issue. And I'm hoping that the message will get through to the committee this time, that this is an important decision for the committee to make to give Windsor a majority district again after 30 years.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thanks very much.

Are there comments or questions?

Thanks for your testimony.

ALAN SIMON: Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Barbara Ruhe of Wethersfield.

BARBARA J. RUHE: Good evening. My name is Barbara Ruhe. I live at 79 Main Street in Wethersfield. I'm here as a citizen.

The thing that's important to know about Wethersfield is we are older than Windsor. And I just want to get that right out on the table before there's any question about that.

Wethersfield, like Windsor, we have two state senators and we have two state representatives. We also feel a little bit like stepchildren. The 1st State Senatorial District is a good chunk of Hartford and a tiny part of Wethersfield. The 9th is cut up between Wethersfield and Rocky Hill. So Wethersfield, like Windsor, doesn't have a huge voice and it is confusing.

The other things that should be thought about when you try and consolidate districts and towns is that we could have fewer voting places in Wethersfield if we had fewer districts. Because we have two senate districts and two house districts we have to have more polling places and it's more expensive to have an election. And those are some things that should be considered.

Also I think that having Wethersfield

partially in the 1st to some extent dilutes the power of the city of Hartford. I know that Hartford residents are very concerned that they might lose a state senator, but I think it's not fair to the people in Wethersfield. We, our interests, our concerns and some of our needs are very different.

The 1st is an exciting district. I'm very fond of it for a variety of reasons, but it's also a very challenging district. I would urge that when reapportionment is done you try and keep town line -- districts within towns. Or if you can't do that, have towns that are more logically paired. It would be more logical to pair Wethersfield, Rocky Hill, Newington. It might be more logical to pair Hartford with East Hartford. East Hartford is more of an urban environment. Those are some thoughts.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thanks very much.

Are there questions?

Thank you.

Lee Sekas of Wethersfield.

LEE SEKAS: Lee Sekas, 117 Wells Road, Wethersfield.

I've been working as a poll worker for over ten years and redistricting is important for fairness and also where people vote is my concern. The State wants to encourage voting, to have people register to vote, to have people get out and vote.

One problem we've had in Wethersfield for

decades is one place in town which is used as a voting location is also a residential building and the people who live at that building cannot vote there. They are in a different voting district.

Now districts, voting districts are one thing but the state and the city and the town, everybody is passing the ball back and forth. You are the State. You're the people. The State should have the word rather than pass it back and forth, you know, end it once and for all. If you live in a place that's a voting place you should be allowed to vote there. That should be in the bylaws somehow.

In the past ten years we did have one referenda at one location in town. So a vote can take place at one location where people aren't discouraged from going out to vote.

Another thing is the cost factor. Like Barbara before me said, we have two senators and two representatives. That's four different ballots on the town. In a time of economic -- to be more fiscally responsible, the fewer ballots to print, the fewer different ballots to print you can cut down on costs. And just the fact that cutting down costs is important, that's a fact in itself.

And one other thing, as a poll worker I take the oath every election day, every primary, every referendum. But the oath, it does not say referendum in the oath. It only says primary and election. That should be addressed and corrected as well. I thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Are there questions? Thanks for coming in this evening and thanks for your public

service.

Next we have Tod Jones of Kent.

TOD JONES: Good evening, honorable committee members. Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify before you today. My name, as you know, is Tod Jones. I Chair the Kent Democratic Town Committee. In speaking for the members of my committee I am speaking for them as citizens of Kent rather than simply as Democrats.

We have long contended that the town of Kent has been arbitrarily cordoned into a General Assembly District, the 108th, among towns which we enjoy a few commonalities of interest. For almost 40 of my 49 years I have lived fewer than nine miles from my present home in the village of Kent, ten years in Sherman, two years in the Gaylordsville district of New Milford and nearly 28 years in Kent. Consequently I have an intimate knowledge of the towns of the 108th District comprised of Kent, Western New Milford, Sherman and New Fairfield.

From my boyhood until now I have always realized that the towns of the Candlewood Lake Valley such as Sherman, New Fairfield and New Milford and the towns of the Upper Housatonic River Valley, where Kent is situated, form two very distinct communities with very different regional atmospheres. Every Kent resident feels this instinctively.

I graduated from the Sherman School and from New Milford High School and grew up to see my daughter graduate from Kent Center School and Housatonic Valley Regional High School.

I would scarcely need to emphasize to any

long-time resident of my area that the rural widespread Region 1 School District, to which Kent belongs, and the densely populated New Milford school district are two very different educational environments with distinct challenges and needs.

For more than 25 years I worked in New Milford at a stone fabrication shop. Now my wife and I are owner/operators of a small business in Kent. Every citizen of Kent is well aware how very different are the business climate and economy of Kent from those of an increasingly urbanized New Milford. Kent's economy depends upon firstly the three private schools which operate there and secondly upon a village retail and hospitality base which rely upon tourism. And the tourists are attracted by the unique charm of our village center and by the beauty of the rural environments.

New Milford, on the other hand, is a town which has a dwindling industrial base supplemented by an ever-growing tangle of box stores and strip malls. The plain fact of the matter is that in the pursuit and protection of those interests which are vital to the town of Kent: governance, education, economic development, tourism, preservation of regional character; Kent is already working in constant cooperation with its neighboring towns in the northwest corner, our natural regional allies and not with New Milford, New Fairfield and Sherman.

Among the towns of the 108th General Assembly District Kent is the sole member of the Region 1 School District, the Northwest Connecticut Council of Governments, the Northwest Regional Planning Collaborative, the Northwest Connecticut Chamber of Commerce and the Upper Housatonic Valley Heritage Area, to name just

a few of the associations which bind us to the small towns of the northwest corner.

No possible benefit can accrue to Kent from being isolated in a legislative district with towns that do not share its character or its concerns and with which we do not plan and work to achieve common goals. Towns which form communities of interest ought to be able together to command the attention and service of a mutual state representative who is dedicated to their common needs.

And that is why I respectfully appeal to the members of the General Assembly Reapportionment Committee to place Kent in a district with those towns of the northwest corner with which we habitually cooperate in the pursuit of our mutual interests, Salisbury, Sharon, Cornwall, Goshen and the like, towns currently in the 64th District.

Thank you very much for your time.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you. Are there questions? Speaker Donovan?

REP. DONOVAN: Hi. Nice to see you.

TOD JONES: Hi. Nice to see you.

REP. DONOVAN: So how many residents are in Kent?

TOD JONES: Just under 3,000.

REP. DONOVAN: All right. Thank you.

TOD JONES: Okay. Thank you very much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next Barbara Reed of Bloomfield.

Good evening.

BARBARA REED: Good evening, everyone.

My name is Barbara Reed and I live in Bloomfield. I have been active in the Town of Bloomfield as a member of the planning and zoning board and the Democratic Town Committee. I am also active in Saint Monica's Church in Hartford.

In my church we have members from all over the greater Hartford area including Bloomfield, Windsor and Hartford. When we join together to pray or to help the community nobody asks where you live. The only things that count in your committee -- intentions and responsibilities -- is your commitment to your intentions and your responsibilities.

As church members rise to leadership positions they receive support because of their involvement and dedication. I believe that political leaders earn the same respect through their caring and willingness to help make things better. I feel disappointed when I hear some political leaders say that a legislator who does not live in a certain town can't properly represent that community.

That commitment -- ignores the personal qualities and traits of the elected official. It overlooks the fact that ultimately the voters get to decide who is best to represent them. In my church we come together to improve lives and it doesn't matter where you live. In politics we too must work together and the fact that several towns share a legislator should not matter.

What truly counts is that the person elected is willing to work with the residents of his or her entire district. In Bloomfield, like

Windsor, we have several legislator representatives, specifically we have two Senators, David Coleman and Beth Bye, and two Representatives, David Baram and Matt Ritter.

I never hear complaints that we have four representatives. Just the opposite. People know that our legislators work together for the common good and that they get things done. As long as each official is willing to work for our benefit it doesn't matter where they live.

Residents appreciate that our four legislators work together to get results. Residents expect that by having several legislators we have more clout in addressing matters of importance. Issues such as budget, social services, public safety affect us all. Residents should judge elected officials by what they do and by their positions on issues.

In fulfilling your responsibilities on redistricting I hope that you will continue to see the benefits of allowing towns to share legislators. In Bloomfield we are proud to work with Windsor, West Hartford and Hartford. It would be unfortunate to change established relationships that have existed for such a long time. That is why I speak in favor of keeping our existing senate and house districts which allow the four great communities of Bloomfield, Windsor, West Hartford and Hartford to work together.

Thank you for your time and listening to my views.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Are there questions for Ms. Reed?

Thanks very much.

Robert Goldberg of Windsor.

ROBERT GOLDBERG: Good evening, Reapportionment Committee members. I am Bob Goldberg and I live in Windsor. I have not been very actively involved politically, but I am involved in several religious and charitable organizations in Windsor, Bloomfield and I also work with different state agencies.

As a Windsor resident and a voter I want to share some of my perspectives with you. I vote for and judge elected officials by their accessibility, position on issues and attention to citizen opinions. What really matters is the person we elect who is willing to work for the residents of his or her district.

Using this standard, I feel fortunate to have people like Representatives David Baram, Peggy Sayers and Elaine O'Brien representing us. Even though two of the three people represent other Windsor districts, I have always felt that I can approach any of them if needed for help. And trust me, I have.

I consider Windsor lucky to have three quality Representatives who care about our town. All three are consistently visible and support the community events that occur. They stay in touch with the local officials and staff and communicate regularly with the local press.

People know that our Legislators work together for Windsor's common good and they achieve these results. The Windsor residents I speak with are most content when their representative and felt that they have never been ignored or denied any representation.

In Windsor we understand that our representatives and senators work jointly together to get results. By having these legislators we are more likely to have a greater voice in the Legislature, especially when addressing matters of importance to our town. In reassuring -- it is reassuring to know that each of the legislators have different backgrounds and expertise, so on that given issue one of them is more likely to have knowledge in a particular area or provide more specific guidance.

It's not too different from charging -- from choosing a medical firm. You usually want a group of several doctors with varied experience. It gives you confidence to know that there's always somebody accessible and that can serve your needs.

Issues such as environment, budget, social services, transportation affect the entire state. Voters should evaluate elected officials by what they accomplish and whether their positions on issues are consistent with our own.

As a Windsor resident I am proud to say several people representing me in the State House of Representatives, they are predecessors -- their predecessors have always done an excellent job for the people of Windsor. It should be -- it would be very unfortunate to change relationships that have served Windsor so well over the years.

Consequently I urge you, the committee, to preserve our existing house districts which allow Windsor residents the best possible representation. Our state representatives do not live in the town to our associates -- I'm

sorry. Let me say that again. Our state representatives need not to live in the town to be our advocates on state issues and local issues requiring state action. I am much more concerned about the quality of the officials and their ability to get the needed results.

Lastly, it's important to me to note that most towns with overlapping districts have a lot in common. Bloomfield and Windsor are often referred to as sister communities. Our demographics are similar and many people who live in one town work in the other. And there are numerous organizations, churches, synagogues and groups that draw from members of both committees -- communities.

I'm very confident that our state representatives and state senators are working with our local officials and staff and are listening to the representatives and residents and provide effective, responsive representation. I want to vote for the best people and Windsor has indeed been fortunate to have chosen well.

I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to express my views. And if you have any questions I would love to entertain them.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Goldberg.

Are there questions?

Thanks very much.

ROBERT GOLDBERG: Thank you for your time.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Next is Eric Remington of Suffield.

ERIC REMINGTON: Hello.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Good evening.

ERIC REMINGTON: Eric Remington from Suffield.

I've been active locally politically most of my life. I served as a selectmen on numerous boards and commissions. I've chaired a political party, but I'm here tonight representing myself.

And I think you've heard a lot of requests for change tonight. I'm actually here to ask you not to change anything. We are lucky or fortunate, I guess, that the entire town is in one legislative district, one senate district, and one congressional district. And I think the general sense of the community is that we'd like to keep it that way with one polling place in the town.

In the 61st District we have the entire town of Suffield, part of East Granby and part of Windsor. And although there are parts of different towns, socioeconomically all parts of those towns that are in the district are very similar.

We have much in common with East Granby. We share a border with the airport which is different from the part of the airport that Windsor Locks shares. We don't have the retailing/tourism type activities they do in Windsor Locks. And both communities are fairly rural; still have a number of farms in the communities.

And we understand the pressure from Windsor to change so if that were to happen and we were to lose part of Windsor as the district I believe our preference would be to have more of East Granby in the district, if that was possible.

There hasn't been a lot of discussion tonight about the congressional districts. I understand the 2nd Congressional District needs to shrink and that's just the cold, hard facts. We do fit well in the 2nd District, that we have much more in common with towns in the eastern part of the state than we do with some of the other urban communities in some of the other districts. So our preference would be to stay in the 2nd Congressional District, if that's possible.

And I know, you know, previously we were in the 6th Congressional District which was the northwest corner of the state in the Farmington Valley, which was also a good fit for us. And I know there's been some discussion about possibly redrawing the 5th and that would be, I guess, our second choice if that were to come to fruition.

So that was it.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Are there questions for Mr. Remington?

Thanks very much.

Cynthia Jennings of Hartford.

Good evening.

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: Good evening. My name is Cynthia Jennings and I am a civil rights attorney. I'm also chairperson of the Connecticut Coalition for the Protection of Civil Rights.

In 2000 I was the only statewide census employee and I had the responsibility of establishing partnerships between government, faith-based organizations, educational

institutions, colleges, universities, business and industry.

Even with a full census count Connecticut lost an entire congressional seat. The basis for redistricting in the census is the -- I'm sorry. The basis for redistricting is the census count. Connecticut is losing its population. Our children are leaving the state in record numbers. The opportunities are not there for our children or our adults in terms of employment, educational opportunities and political empowerment.

Political and economic empowerment relates directly to how the political lines are drawn. When voting rights are diluted based on race you politically disempower the people within those districts. People within the politically disempowered districts face a higher educational disparity, they face higher health disparities, they face higher unemployment, they face higher poverty and they face a higher rate of incarceration, which is the end game of all of those disparities.

The question I would like to ask is, can Connecticut taxpayers afford the consequences of districts that politically disempower people based on race?

Black voters prior to Reconstruction had senators, representatives, educational opportunities and employment opportunities. Reconstruction changed all of this. The lines were redrawn to politically disempower the black community and the lines have continued to be redrawn to politically disempower the black community and now the Latino community and any other people of color that come into the state.

I urge you to take Connecticut taxpayers into consideration when you redraw the political lines. The current system of disempowering people politically based on race has not worked in Connecticut. This system of disempowering communities based on race is sinking the State economically and it is creating a huge disparity based on race in the employment world, in the educational arena and in the state in general.

Political disempowerment of electoral districts based on race has put Connecticut taxpayers on a disastrous track. Political disempowered districts have resulted in higher rates of high school dropouts, increased crime, high rates of incarceration and huge unprecedented nationally known disparities in education, health, employment and any other disparity that we have in Connecticut. We are number one. These disparities have placed huge burden on all Connecticut taxpayers. I urge you to take the state economy into consideration when you draw the political lines. Politically and economically disparaged citizens have a higher rate of incarceration.

And in Connecticut there was a woman who testified from the League of Women Voters -- she said there were 20,000 people plus incarcerated in Connecticut prisons. Each one of these individuals costs the State of Connecticut \$70,000 a year. That's clearly one state employee that -- for every single person that's incarcerated.

And Connecticut was cited by Amnesty International for having the highest percentage of black men incarcerated in the world. Black men are incarcerated with longer

sentences and now the people that are incarcerated, the Constitution states that there shall be no slavery, nor involuntary servitude except in the conviction of a crime. So this makes Connecticut the largest slave state in the country and in the world.

We really have to think about what we're doing when we draw the political lines. When we decide to disempower people politically we're underpinning and undermining the very basis of our society and that is one person, one vote.

So I'm urging you, even though you have no people of color on the committee that I visually see, I'm urging you to take Connecticut taxpayers into consideration. We cannot afford to continue to incarcerate people. We cannot afford to continue to undereducate our citizens. We cannot afford to continue to lose our political representation because ultimately we all lose.

I think gerrymandering in the redistricting process attacks the very foundation that our society is based on. I urge you as a committee to take this into consideration to make sure that when the lines are drawn that you're not politically disempowering people who have a right to feed their families, a right to work and a right to eat.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Ms. Jennings.

Just two a couple of -- just two quick clarifications. I think you mentioned that we're losing population rapidly. Actually we've gained population. It's not exactly a gold rush to Connecticut by any stretch of the imagination. But unlike ten years ago when we

were clearly losing population -- we've lost a congressional district, as you noted. Over the last ten years Connecticut has gained slightly a little bit over 4 percent population.

And in terms of the incarceration rate, 20,000 was an accurate figure a couple of years ago, however I think it's good news that the number, or the prison population has decreased. And I believe that number is somewhere between 17,000 and 18,000. We can still do better obviously, but the incarceration rate is going down and has been for the last 18 months or thereabouts.

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: And I think that when I talk about the incarceration rate, I'm talking about the percentages of black and Latino individuals that are in these prisons with the longest sentences in the world.

I know that there's been a lot done with the Legislature. This year in July there were laws put in place that will protect and try and prevent and reduce this and I really applaud that. But I'm saying that if we politically disempower communities by drawing the lines to intentionally dilute the vote, people cannot represent themselves because we are not able to elect people that would look out for our best interests.

So all I'm saying is that if you do the right thing when you draw the lines, then it's better for the entire state and better for the economy. And also we talked about the issue with prisoners being counted where they're housed. If they're in Enfield they're there involuntarily.

So if there are prisoners that are housed in

prisons, it's my understanding that the -- that there is a process in place to identify where prisoners came from. They are going back to those same communities, so prisoners that are located in Enfield and Somers and in towns, those towns should not count those prisoners as being residents of those towns. Those prisoners have families. They come from a community and they're going to return to that community after they're released from their prison sentence.

So I'm just saying that in terms of how the prisoners are counted I'm asking that they be counted in the towns, the sending towns, the towns where they originated from.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: That's a valid point. My point was -- and I don't disagree that in terms of the prison population people of color are disproportionately incarcerated in terms of numbers. You're absolutely right about that.

However at the same time the number of folks who are in Connecticut jails overall, that number has been going down. It's not at 20,000. To the extent that we reduce that incarceration, that overall incarceration rate, that also reduces the minority population in prisons.

We have taken some steps in recent years to do better in terms of corrections, to do better in terms of reentry programs, to try to reduce the recidivism rate and obviously to be proactive and help people avoid going to prison in the first place.

So I think, you know, we want to certainly continue to do better in that area, but you raise many good points. And I appreciate very much your testimony.

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: And I think that one thing you should think about in terms of the prison population is that if 12,000 of the 17,000 prisoners -- if 12,000 of the 17,000 prisoners, the nonviolents were reentered into the community and taken out of the prison, that would have been the \$1.5 billion budget hole that was in the budget and that would have meant no layoffs and no economic crisis in Connecticut.

So we can no longer afford to keep our people in prisons. It's just too expensive.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: No argument there. We have been moving in the direction of not incarcerating nonviolent criminals. I mean, obviously there are people in prison who committed crimes that were nonviolent, no question about that. But we have been, over a number of years now, trying to move in that direction and reserving the, not only to prison space, but the costs involved, exactly what you're saying for violent criminals as opposed to nonviolent criminals.

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: And I've seen the change in the legislation and I applaud that. I just want to say that we have to do more more quickly or our state is going to be in a crisis until we do solve that problem.

And thank you very much for your time and your consideration in this matter. And I believe that some of these things are within your purview to make changes to.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Any other questions for Ms. Jennings?

Representative O'Neill.

REP. O'NEILL: You indicated that you wanted us not to intentionally draw district lines that diluted the vote of people of color. In looking at the current system, the lines that exist, is there any district that comes to your mind that you believe was drawn that way?

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: I won't say that I'm an expert on which districts were drawn that way, but I would say most districts are drawn that way and that that is why we have the situation that we have.

So I'm just saying that when the districts are drawn you can maximize the number of Latinos. You can maximize the number of African-Americans. You can maximize the number of Asians. You can maximize the voting empowerment and power as opposed to diluting it -- so that you divide them up so that nobody has enough power to put representation in that would adequately represent their community.

So when -- it's up to you when you draw the lines to really take this into consideration and don't have it be a challenge at the end because reapportionment and redistricting is always, always a challenge in the end if it's not done properly.

So I'm just saying that, you know, work, you know, work to make sure that when there's a choice between politically diluting a population or politically empowering it, go with the empowerment and that way you'll have less challenges in the end. You work hard, you don't want a challenge at the end after you've done all you can do.

So thank you.

Any more questions?

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Senator McKinney.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Just a hypothetical. Obviously this is my first time on this committee and when we listen to people there are countless ways to draw the lines. That could make sense to a countless number of people.

But with respect to the congressional districts then would you suggest then in order to sort of maximize the influence of minority voters, that putting Bridgeport and New Haven, for example, in the same congressional district would achieve that goal more so than having them separate? Is that the type of thing that you're talking about us looking at?

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: I'm not going to make a comment on whether you should put Bridgeport and -- you said Bridgeport and New Haven together. But certainly if you did, it certainly would mean that there would probably be a black or Latino congressperson out of that district.

So yes, that's what I'm talking about, doing something to make the representation equal based on the number of people that we have. And I'm not saying that's the answer, but I'm saying that that certainly would be one of the issues to maximize the people based on race as opposed to diluting them. So that maybe put Bridgeport with Westport, Greenwich so and so, the whole Gold Coast and then you'll never have a person of color out of there. And there is something wrong with not having people of color representing people.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: Thank you. And I guess I don't know how many minority members of Congress we've had. I know we've had Congressman Franks, ironically a Republican from the old 5th Congressional District, but they have been few and far between.

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: Right. And we want more than few and far between.

SENATOR MCKINNEY: And I want Republicans and Democrats, so there you go.

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: And then you could get that. You know, black people will be Republicans, Democrats. Latinos are Republicans and Democrats. You'll be surprised. You can have it all.

A VOICE: We're politicians. We want it all.

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: I know and I want you to have it all.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: And we were able to elect Barack Obama without any special districts.

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: I know. Really, absolutely. Absolutely.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: And we've been making progress as a country and so we appreciate your testimony very much.

CYNTHIA JENNINGS: Thank you very much.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Next, Emmanuel Sanchez to be followed by Hilda Santiago. And right now Hilda Santiago is the last person who signed up. If you intend to testify, we've not called your name, you did

not signed up, you may want to stop by one of the desks with our staff and let folks know and we will add you to the list.

Mr. Sanchez.

EMMANUEL SANCHEZ: Hello and good evening, members of the Redistricting Committee. My name is Emmanuel Sanchez. I'm a resident of New Britain and a city councilman representing the 3rd Ward.

When considering redistricting, please be conscious on how you approach this matter. We are a very diverse state and I do believe everyone should and will be represented, however the dynamics of representation is very complex, this I understand. But culture, societal perspectives and values should be one of the focuses here.

In New Britain alone our Latino population is roughly 36 percent. In my district, 50 percent. I'm proud to say that I am a Puerto Rican an African-American male and we are -- we have our first state representative of Latino culture.

Just as an example with that being said, with such a high percentage of minorities in the 25th District you want to make sure that our leaders in these environments are aware and able to identify with a central population in addition to one and all.

Now can or is impossible for anyone of any race to represent everyone? Absolutely. I do agree with that, but culturally speaking it represents a representational linkage -- is key here and should be modeled to shape our congressional and state districts.

Thank you for your time.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thanks very much.

Are there questions?

Thank you.

Hilda Santiago. Good evening.

HILDA SANTIAGO: Good evening, President Williams and Speaker Donovan and committee members. Thank you.

As a Meriden resident, a councilwoman and a Latina I'm here to speak in support of keeping Meriden, New Britain, Waterbury and Danbury in the 5th Congressional District. There are cultural links to the populations in the four cities and it would be helpful to keep them together for purpose of representing representation in Congress.

These cities have residents from the same countries of origin and religious beliefs. These cities face similar issues in terms of minority business, neighborhoods, education and economic development. If one or more of these cities was to be redistricted out of the 5th Congressional District, the district would be more tilted towards rural and smaller towns.

My fear is the concerns and issues facing many minority communities could be ignored. The current makeup of the district assures that issues facing both small towns and cities get the attention they deserve.

Although all the congressional districts are currently held by Democrats, they remain highly competitive. This is proven by the

fact that Republicans have held three of the five in the past. For some of the same reasons I ask that the city of Meriden keep two of our three state representative seats entirely within the city.

Meriden is surrounded by the towns of Berlin, Middletown -- Middlebury, Wallingford, Southington and Cheshire. Although all the beautiful towns -- all our beautiful towns -- the issues facing Meriden are very different from those facing those small towns.

I understand there is always some shifting geographically depending on the population changes in our state, but I urge you to consider the issues I've mentioned before making changes to these districts.

Thank you for this opportunity and your time to speak on this very important issue.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thanks very much.

Are there questions?

Thank you.

Francisco Cuin. I don't know if I'm pronouncing that right, C-u-i-n. To be followed by Jeffrey Stewart as our new final speaker.

FRANCISCO CUIN: Good night. My name is Francisco Cuin. I'm a leader in the New Britain Latino community. I have been working for many years with the Latino community and my purpose has been to make them involved in the political issues of their city.

And I think that along with the composition of our representation and in the last ten years

we have accomplished a lot of successes. And I think it's because we have been taking consideration, the Latino population. So we are feeling that we are getting represented in the way that it should be.

And also that those are represented -- that have been hearing us, taking us in consideration. I'm saying this because I want you to take in consideration, because I want to know if you did what Emmanuel said, that is one of the representatives. I think I agree with him a hundred percent.

But I will say that we have accomplished, for example, that we have a Latino that is a state representative from New Britain. We are very proud and we have Emmanuel that is a representative in New Britain. We have a Latino commissioner from New Britain, that is me, and we have also -- and I'm speaking in my personal point of view, my experience, not as the commission because the commission came before and I bring the position on the commission.

I am asking the board listens to our concerns in considering when you are forming the districts, that our minorities composition and they are and they represent us, the representation they have. Because all this work that we have done in so many years and we have accomplished, I think that we want to maintain it.

We expect that in the future we can even have representation in the Senate of a Latino and I will work for that. I will support that as I have been working in the last ten years.

Thank you.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Cuin.

Are there questions?

Thanks very much.

Jeffrey Stewart of Hartford.

JEFFREY STEWART: Thank you very much. Good evening. Thank you for hearing me tonight. It won't be long. I know you've had a long evening tonight.

Jeffrey Stewart of Hartford, Connecticut. And I just briefly wanted to ask the committee to strongly consider to keep the six legislative districts in the city of Hartford.

In the last census that was taken we lost one assembly district. We went from seven to six. Even though we still have the seven, a number in the 2nd district shifted down to Redding, Connecticut someplace. And this time around the -- Hartford picked up 2,000 more additional citizens in the last recount population wise.

And I thought that we would be safe to maintain six assembly districts, but I was recently told that there's a possibility that we may lose our legislative districts because on suburban towns surrounding Hartford, that there's a bigger growth there. So we may lose some in Hartford.

And I just wanted to come here to ask if -- to ask the commission to please consider to keep the six assembly districts. Since 1960 we've lost about four seats. We've had about ten legislative assembly -- legislative districts in Hartford in 1960s and the assembly went down, but the trend is shifting now in terms

of population.

And I'm hoping that we would be able to keep the six legislative districts because those are important urban voices that are added to the Legislature when issues that affect the citizens of Hartford -- it's always good to have the diverse voices in the legislative assembly to address those issues and to educate people.

So for the sake of educating people and for the sake of helping Hartford out, I urge the commission to consider to please keep the six legislative districts in Hartford.

And I thank you again for allowing me to speak.

SENATOR WILLIAMS: Are there questions for Mr. Stewart?

Thanks very much. Is there anyone else who had not had a chance to testify who wishes to testify at this time?

Then seeing no further speakers we want to thank you for coming out and giving us your input this evening. This is the final public hearing. We've had public hearings in all five congressional districts, a total of six public hearings. So we want to thank you and all of the folks at all of the public hearings who came out to testify.

Again, thanks very much.