
Commission Meeting

of

NEW JERSEY CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

*“Testimony from the public on the establishment of Congressional districts in New Jersey
that will be in effect for the next 10 years”*

LOCATION: Chamberlain Student Center
Rowan University
Glassboro, New Jersey

DATE: November 15, 2021
6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMISSION PRESENT:

Honorable John E. Wallace, Jr., Chair

Janice Fuller, Democratic Delegation Chair

Iris Delgado

Senator Vin Gopal

Stephanie Lagos

Jeffrey Nash

Dana Redd

Doug Steinhardt, Republican Delegation Chair

Michele Albano

Jeanne Dovgala Ashmore

Mark Duffy

Mark LoGrippe

Lynda Pagliughi



ALSO PRESENT:

Raysa Martinez Kruger
Office of Legislative Services
Commission Secretary

Jessica Oestreicher
Office of Legislative Services
Commission Aides

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey

DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS

Janice Fuller
Delegation Chair

Iris Delgado
Vin Gopal
Stephanie Lagos
Jeff Nash
Dana Redd



REPUBLICAN MEMBERS

Doug Steinhardt
Delegation Chair

Michele Albano
Jeanne Ashmore
Mark Duffy
Mark LoGrippe
Lynda Pagliughi

NEW JERSEY CONGRESSIONAL
REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

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John E. Wallace, Jr.
Chair

REDISTRICTING COMMISSION NOTICE

TO: MEMBERS OF THE REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

FROM: JOHN E. WALLACE, JR. – CHAIR

SUBJECT: **REDISTRICTING COMMISSION MEETING – NOVEMBER 15, 2021**

The public may address comments and questions to Raysa Martinez Kruger, Commission Secretary, or make scheduling inquiries to Sophie Love, Secretary, at (609)847-3890 or email: OLSAideREDC@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the Commission by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The Redistricting Commission will meet on Monday, November 15, 2021 at 6:00 PM at Rowan University, 201 Mullica Hill Road, Glassboro, New Jersey, 08028. The meeting will take place in the Chamberlain Student Center, Eynon Ballroom.

The purpose of the meeting will be to take testimony from the public on the establishment of congressional districts in New Jersey that will be in effect for the next 10 years.

Members of the public may view the proceedings via the New Jersey Legislature home page at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/> or via the Commission's home page at <https://www.njredistrictingcommission.org/default.asp>.

Those wishing to testify may register online in advance of the meeting at <https://www.njredistrictingcommission.org/schedule.asp>. Registration is also available at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>. Select November 15 on the calendar and click on Redistricting Commission for the registration link. Advance registrations must be received by Friday, November 12, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Upon successful registration, you will view a printable receipt on screen.

Registration will also be available on site. To ensure that all who wish to testify can do so, the Chair will limit public testimony to 5 minutes per person. Extra time will be allotted for those needing the assistance of a translator.

(OVER)

If you require language interpretation services to testify, please contact the Office of Legislative Services at (609) 847-3890 to discuss and arrange for interpretation services in advance of the meeting.

You may also submit written testimony instead of, or in addition to, oral testimony by email to OLSaideREDC@njleg.org. If providing written testimony in addition to oral testimony at the meeting, please bring 17 copies for distribution to Commission members. Written testimony will be included in the Commission's record and distributed to all Commission members.

This meeting will observe the COVID-19 protocols in place at our host location. All attendees must wear a mask when entering the Chamberlain Student Center.

Parking is available in the Townhouse Garage just off Route 322. Please enter the campus at the Welcome Gate located at 1 Memorial Circle, Glassboro, NJ 08028. You will be directed to the Townhouse Garage parking area. The Chamberlain Student Center is a short walk from that location.

Issued 11/8/21

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For changes in schedule due to snow or other emergencies, see website <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us> or call 800-792-8630 (toll-free in NJ) or 609-847-3905.

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Submitted by
Patricia Wenzel
Private Citizen

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mej: 1-21

JUSTICE JOHN E. WALLACE, JR. (Chair): Good evening, and welcome to the fourth Public Hearing of the Redistricting Commission.

Before we begin our proceedings tonight, I would certainly like to thank Rowan University for allowing us to be here, and at this time I would like to introduce Provost Lowman.

ANTHONY M. LOWMAN, Ph. D.: Thank you; thank you to the Commissioners for joining us here down on our campus. We're certainly delighted to have those of you back who have visited before; I see some faces I've seen before. And for those of you who haven't been here, we're glad you came down; and as you heard today, we'd love to show you the campus in all its glory when it's light out, and show you the great developments.

So we're excited to be a part of this process; I know we have a few students from different classes here, thanks to Ben Dworkin and our RIPPAC center for getting students out. And it's an exciting night.

So for those of you who haven't visited Rowan before, we are one of the five fastest-growing research universities in the country, in just a span of about seven years. We've grown from 11,000-12,000 students, classified regionally as a Bachelor's granting institution; and now we are knocking at the door of the highest classification of research universities in the country -- we're at R2, we want to move to R1 -- and we have a little over 20,000 students here on our campus now in our broad range of offerings.

So we're very excited to host you, to play our part in the process, and see where it goes. And to all of our guests, I want to welcome you to campus, and I hope everybody enjoys their evening and what I assume is going to be a very, very interesting dialogue and exchange tonight.

So welcome to Rowan and thank you, everybody, for coming.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much for your comments, and we certainly want to, again, thank Rowan University for hosting this event tonight.

The purpose of tonight's Hearing is to hear from you. We want to receive your views as far as what the map of New Jersey should look like in the future. Before we do hear from our speakers this evening, I would ask the Secretary to please call the roll.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Redd.

MS. REDD: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Pagliughi.

MS. PAGLIUGHI: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Nash.

MR. NASH: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner LoGrippe.

MR. LOGRIPPO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Lagos.

MS. LAGOS: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Duffy.

MR. DUFFY: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Delgado.

MS. DELGADO: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Ashmore.

MS. ASHMORE: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Republican Chair Steinhardt.

DOUGLAS STEINHARDT (Republican Delegation Chair):

Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Democratic Chair Fuller.

JANICE FULLER (Democratic Delegation Chair): Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Chair Wallace.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Here. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

Before I call our first speaker, I would ask if there is anyone on the Commission who would like to make a statement at this time.

MS. FULLER: Thank you, Chairman Wallace. I just want to thank Rowan University for having us here tonight; thank my Co-Commissioners Delgado, Lagos, Nash, and Redd for joining us here tonight. We look forward to hearing the testimony that we will hear this evening at, as our Chairman said, our fourth public meeting, with additional to come.

I particularly want to thank Mayor Redd for her assistance in making tonight possible here at the University, and we will be joined by Senator Gopal shortly.

Thank you.

MR. STEINHARDT: Thank you. On behalf of my Republican Commissioners -- I'm Doug Steinhardt, joined by Commissioners Ashmore, Pagliughi, LoGrippe, and Duffy; Commissioner Albano is not able to be with us this evening.

Just, I want to thank our gracious hosts here at Rowan -- the campus is certainly beautiful. We look forward to an open and interactive exchange of thoughts and ideas with the folks here tonight, as well as with the Commissioners, and look forward to concluding this process in the early part of next year.

So thank you very much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

And now we'll get to our speakers. The first speaker this evening is Donna Williams. Donna Williams. (no response)

Perhaps she got delayed in traffic. Is there an Alexander Micharski? Micharski. (no response)

Walter Levy.

WALTER I. LEVY: Good evening, everybody. Commissioners.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MR. LEVY: My name is Walter Levy, I have been a resident of Bridgewater in Somerset County since 1992. I am not an elected official, nor am I a subject matter expert on Redistricting. I do care about election fairness.

In life, I was first a chemistry teacher, I was a scientific programmer, and now that I'm retired, I sub for the fun of it. I was a certified whitewater canoeing instructor -- got to have a hobby.

I live in New Jersey's 7th Congressional District. It was drawn to be a safe Republican seat; CD7 became competitive -- that is a good thing, let the best person represent us. Changing demographics, and a proactive candidate, and engaged grassroots movement did what nobody thought was possible. We flipped a 40-year safe Republican seat and elected a Democrat. Competition should be healthy.

We got a lot together, and learned about how government works. We marched, we attended town hall meetings, we held rallies and peaceful protests. We educated ourselves on the issues, our candidate's background, and where he stood on the issues. We canvassed, we phoned, we wrote letters to the editors. And to our great surprise, we won. We won and did it legally, fairly, peacefully, and democratically. We followed all the rules, we worked

within the system. We did this with a map that was drawn to favor Republican incumbents. We won because we had better candidates and a better campaign.

I was a young'un. I was never interested in politics despite my family's influence in both directions. "Stay out" were my mother's words. When I saw-- I'm jumping myself, sorry. When I saw the cost of my Rx -- my prescription Gleevec, I got interested. I was diagnosed with CML -- Chronic Myeloid Leukemia. CML has the unique status of being the first biologic prescription. Life expectancy *was* 3 years -- now it is 30 years.

In all the primary research, the money came from NIH and other grants, so why was the Gleevec so expensive? The price jumped from \$15,000 to \$30,000 to \$50,000 when I was first diagnosed. It climbed to \$150,000, and then dropped as a generic to \$125,000. Okay, Medicare D pays for most of the cost. My annual copay is about \$8,000; I can afford it, Medicare D pays the other \$130,000. That is my taxpayer dollar at work. That's when I got interested in politics.

The other reason why I'm here today is this. Back in the day of the rotary dial phones -- hope some people remember them -- when I was in high school, I learned the term *gerrymandering*. Okay, whatever; tick tock. In college, I learned in geology what a meander was. I assumed it was the same grammatical root. When I was subbing, I learned from some website of bad gerrymandering -- what they look like.

CD7 is a very competitive district; Congressman Malinowski won by the narrowest of margins of any Democrat in the House of Representatives. I'd say that's a competitive district. This Commission should not make any radical changes to the map. Voters in the 7th District

should not be punished because they voted for a Democrat despite a map drawn to favor Republicans. I understand that the 7th District is underpopulated, and we need to add some towns, and I would suggest that this is the time to unify Somerset County. I would like to share a story of why this makes sense to me. The second thing, that is. While I was subbing, I learned what gerrymandering looked like. A quick search of the web yields hundreds of websites under "Most Gerrymandered." A few websites include: *thefulcrum.us*, *rantt.com*, *worldpopulationreview.com*, *azavea.com*, *act.represent.us*.

If I subtracted one map for another, it should look more like measles -- minor changes; not like a Rorschach Test -- everything rewritten. But voting maps should not look like a dendrite -- the nerve cell, a coastline, or a dendritic pattern of a watershed or a squashed centipede. I mentioned canoeing. When I look at topographical maps, I look for water sheds, high flood areas, hills, and low, flat plains and other natural boundaries.

Thank you for listening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Sir -- just before you leave, I want to make sure that I understood you correctly. When you were talking about the cost of your drugs, I thought I heard you say at one time it was \$150,000.

MR. LEVY: Yes.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Did you mean a different number than that, or is that the correct number?

MR. LEVY: 1-5-0-0-0-0 annual cost.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you-- Oh, annual cost.
All right.

MR. LEVY: That was the cost for the brand name, Novartis.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, thank you very much.

MR. LEVY: When it became generic, they used the name Imatinib and the price dropped. It was another price drop I can't figure out.

JUSTICE WALLACE: That's all right, I just want to be clear that I heard you correctly.

MR. LEVY: Yes.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you, sir, thank you for your comments.

Teaira Parker.

T E A I R A P A R K E R: Good evening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MS. PARKER: My name is Teaira Parker, and I am the Pastor of Broad Street United Methodist Church in Burlington, New Jersey, which is a part of District 3. As a Pastor within the United Methodist denomination, I have the unique opportunity to live and experience several districts.

Sorry, I'm nervous.

Every few years, the denomination sends Pastors to different churches within the State of New Jersey. In my first appointment, I resided in West Berlin, New Jersey, which is a part of District 1. It was my first knowledgeable experience with county lines drawn so that townships are separated in ways that enforce segregation. As a native of Maryland, I knew and learned that the southern states actively worked to oppress people of color by redlining, gerrymandering, poll taxes, and Jim Crow.

It was to my utter amazement that New Jersey was and is still dealing with these same issues. It was in West Berlin that I learned that if I

wanted to go to the library, I had to go to Berlin Township to use the library. The West Berlin Shop Rite was known as the “Black grocery store,” with produce being near expiration. For people like me who wish to eat plant-based foods, I have to go to the grocery store in Morristown, where the food options are better and good customer service seems to be a part of the training.

Some of my parishioners had to send their children to schools in different counties because West Berlin did not have a high school. The regional high school is overpopulated and safety for the children is an issue. My doctor’s office is in Evesham, and my mechanic is in Mount Laurel. Though this is not an *if A, then B* statement, I found that commuting to other townships for healthy living options is necessary. I recognize that I possess a privileged position to be able to commute to these places, while there are some people living in West Berlin who have no other options.

District 1 lines need to incorporate better living options for people of color in this area. Still, it wasn’t until my move to Burlington Township that I really saw and experienced how redistricting and gerrymandering affect each and every one of us. I live in Burlington Township and work in Burlington City. I asked several people why Route 130 separated two towns like that. The only answer I received consistently was gerrymandering.

Burlington Township has wonderful grocery stores, shopping centers, gas stations, food establishments, farmers markets, and even dog parks. The roads, for the most part, are smooth. We have working street lights and police that regularly patrol the area. I fell in love with my new community.

On my first Sunday at Broad Street, I drove into Burlington City to find six police cruisers confronting one unhoused individual at the Riverline stop. When I spoke to my congregation about what I had witnessed, I was told that Burlington City was a poor, underserved community of Black and brown people. The city is dangerous, as there are drugs, gangs, and shoot-outs. The city has a plan to gentrify the community by pushing out the people of color. They began by building a condominium building on the Delaware River. The members of my congregation commute to church, and are not representative of the surrounding community.

As a member of the cloth, I find this disheartening. Burlington City has no grocery stores, plenty of liquor stores, and an over-abundance of crime. I would be remiss and derelict in my duties if I did not include Theology. In the Bible, Matthew 25:35-40 says, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer Him, Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes, and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, truly, I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me.”

The work you as a Congressional Committee are doing is, in fact, God’s work. You singlehandedly hold the future of New Jerseyans in your hands. Their maps are essential to making sure our voices are heard and we get the representation we need to correct the issues identified in District 1 and District 3. As a degree holder of African-American Church Studies, I

learned that, historically, the church has been known as the clarion call for the liberation of the marginalized and the oppressed -- from slavery, to the Civil Rights Movement, to today.

The church recognizes that the ministry of Jesus Christ was to call out those in charge which misuse the system for personal gains. The clarion call sounds again. Will you answer the call?

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments, Pastor Parker.

Jasmin Jones.

J A S M I N J O N E S: Good evening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good evening.

MR. STEINHARDT: Hi.

MS. JONES: My name is Jasmin Jones, and I use she/her pronouns. I grew up in Mullica Hill, New Jersey, which is one town over from Glassboro -- and predominantly white.

I attended elementary school through part of high school at Kingsway Regional School District, but I graduated from Deptford High School. After attending my first year of college out of state, I came back to New Jersey and chose to attend Rowan University. I am a senior Law and Justice major, with a minor in Sociology, and a Certificate of Undergraduate Study in Social Justice and Social Change.

I am the President of our Rowan NAACP chapter, the President of the Gamma Chi Law and Justice Club, and a member of the executive board for the Black Student Union on campus. I also live on Rowan University's campus, now in Congressional District 1.

My testimony today as an undergraduate student is important because, as a student, I belong to a pool of future leaders and trailblazers of my generation. We are research-oriented, fact-finding, self-educators, and our voices are essential to our community.

As a transfer student, I understand just how important place and community are. It took me a while to find my place on campus and attend events and meetings within those spaces. Many students call it “Black Rowan,” and they are referring to the population of Black and brown students that are heavily involved on campus.

It is a growing network of individuals who take initiative, educate themselves, and are passionate about impacting their community. In finding my place on campus, I also found my voice and became the President of our NAACP unit on Rowan University’s campus. Though my University is predominantly white -- a predominantly white institution -- the student body and the residents of the surrounding community are becoming more diverse.

Rowan University has a great 3+1 Program that allows students from Rowan College of South Jersey to take classes on and live on campus. This program allows students from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds to obtain a degree from Rowan University, and be a part of the college experience. The University has a growing Black and brown multicultural community growing on campus.

Glassboro community is bordered by the downtown Pitman area, where Rowan students often conduct grocery and retail shopping. Students often support and shop at small businesses, businesses, and bakeries in the area. This community also encompasses Alcyon Lake, which has a beautiful view within biking distance of campus. It surrounds Glassboro High School,

the new Inspira medical center in the Technology Park by the on ramp to Route 55. This all encompasses District 1 currently.

Our Rowan-Glassboro community is a lot like other diverse towns, with a significant population of young people; places where students can be seen walking, biking, and commuting in the surrounding areas. We are not very similar to some of the more rural and less-diverse communities of the south.

Please do not take the Rowan community out of our current District just to put us in one where our voice would be drowned out by communities that do not resemble ours. We especially do not want our community cut up in the next round of maps. As required by the State Constitution, the Redistricting Commission will be holding at least three public hearings in different parts of the state -- as of today, you've had five.

One of the six Game Changers for all NAACP units is voting rights and political representation. The goal of the Game Changer is to encourage units and branches to assist members of our community to protect democracy, enhance equity, and increase democratic participation in civic engagement.

We cannot do such without adequate notice of future meetings. Therefore, we are asking today that the dates of the remainder of the meetings be published no later than Wednesday, November 17, 2021. It is understood that there are logistics with obtaining locations for such hearings; however, even dates without locations will help us assist NAACP members and members of the general community to testify at these important hearings, like I am today.

Thank you for your time today.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Next speaker is Michael Nash.

M I C H A E L N A S H: Good evening. Hi, my name is Michael Nash, and I live and study at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, and I'm a junior Political Science major.

I spent most of my time growing up in the Mount Laurel, Burlington County area, where I learned a lot about my hometown's history. Outside of that, I am also the President of the Men of Color Alliance -- also known as MOCA -- and I'm also a participating member of the NAACP chapter here on campus as well.

I am here to testify about the important features of not only my campus, but my hometown community as well, and I will be reading from a pre-recorded statement, just so you guys know.

My community includes Pitman, Sicklerville, and many other small towns that include family-owned shops. So I typically eat at these smaller restaurants, like Mariachi or Ryan's Bagel -- which can be found on Rowan Boulevard and in the surrounding areas -- because being a college student, money can be tight sometimes, and I use the Rowan Bucks in order to get by, and use those shops in order to get food in between classes and things like that.

It also includes Rowan University and Glassboro High School in the surrounding area, and the Cooper Healthcare Center. And my community is predominantly in Congressional District 1. I know from personal experience how important it is to be well-represented in your community. When I came here, I noticed that there necessarily weren't a lot of people that looked like me, so I decided to start the Men of Color Alliance

in order to showcase, you know, professionalism and a different image that can be portrayed in the media.

So in the Glassboro area, like I said, people typically have this idea about what they see just off of the media and different things like that, so that was what that organization seeks to address. When students feel like they have a voice in government, I feel like it would lead to people being more inclined to come to these meetings and testify on their behalf, and use their voice in order to be heard and feel like they have a say in what's truly going on. We don't want to be moved, because we don't want our voices to simply be drowned out in an area where we won't really matter, in a sense.

And lastly, one of the six Game Changers of the NAACP is expanding the youth and young adult engagement. Young adult engagement will be campaign policy research, development and advocacy at all levels, and in different levels if we want to expand and grow in our state. And our task is to provide clear messaging for the community regarding strategies and plans, and provide training so that members can adapt the aims of the plan and needs for the community, and move it into action.

We want to help prepare the youth and young adults to testify, but cannot do so without adequate say so of when the meetings will be, as my President stated. And we are asking for no later than Wednesday, November 17, 2021, that the Commission post on the New Jersey Redistricting website the dates of future public meetings.

So thank you for your time.

MS. FULLER: Thank you.

MR. STEINHARDT: Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

The next speaker is Brigid Callahan Harrison.

BRIGID CALLAHAN HARRISON: How are you all? Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission.

I am testifying as a resident of the Borough of Longport in Atlantic County, New Jersey, in the 2nd Congressional District where, in 2020, I was an unsuccessful primary candidate for that Congressional seat. I am also a professor of Political Science and Law at Montclair State University, where I serve as the Department Chair. And my research interests for the past 25 years have centered on Congressional elections, reapportionment, and redistricting. And I'm grateful to have the opportunity to speak before you this evening.

Throughout these hearings, you have heard testimony -- both organic and arranged -- from constituents urging you to protect their member of Congress. Rest assured, that will not be the theme of my remarks this evening.

Rather, I wanted to call your attention to the importance of the role that redistricting plays in fomenting the partisan tensions and vitriol that are threatening our democracy, and urge you to act in a manner that serves to protect democracy rather than specific incumbents. While considerations of equal protection -- I'm sorry -- equal population, as stipulated in the Voting Rights Act and the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment -- and also the criteria of contiguity and compactness must be part of your deliberations, I would also urge you to allow competitiveness to be a factor in your decision-making.

The effect of true partisan competitiveness on a healthy democracy cannot be overstated. Competition means that voters become

better informed. Research indicates that competition results in higher voter turnout. Research indicates that competition provides a method of legitimizing elected representatives, and therefore increases efficacy among voters. Competition checks corruption, and perhaps most importantly, competition mediates the behavior of incumbents, incentivizing members to work on a bipartisan basis.

In recent decades, we have seen the culmination of two forces in our democracy -- the increasingly sophisticated partisan gerrymandering made possible with GIS mapmaking, and also the self-sorting of American voters into homogenous distributions of like-minded voters convinced of the rightness of their ways and the wrongness of everyone else's.

The result of both intentional and unintentional gerrymandering has been that the number of competitive districts in the United States has declined drastically. Using the Cook Political Reports PVI range of a D+5 to an R+5, the number of swing states (*sic*) in the United States has declined from 164 in 1997 to 78 today. The number of R+5s has increased from 148 to 192 during that same period of time, while the number of D+5s has increased from 123 to 165. When narrowing the PVI range, the number of truly competitive House races in the United States in 2020 dropped to 27 -- two of which were in New Jersey. In my own Congressional District, the incumbent won by .47 percent, and the other one was CD7.

When using Fair Votes methodology, which relies exclusively on prior voting patterns to make predictions, partisanship has become *the* primary determinant of electoral outcomes, outweighing other factors including incumbency, money, name recognition, and candidate quality. What that means is that typically, using this modeling, it's possible to predict

the outcome of 82 percent of House races within 99.7 percent accuracy before an opponent has even declared their candidacy. That's not democracy.

We know that, today, voters are less likely to split their tickets, and only 16 Congressional Districts can be categorized as crossover districts, where voters voted for a presidential candidate of one party, and a House candidate of another. Just four years ago, there were double the number of crossover districts. In 1996, there were nearly seven times as many.

The result of lack of competition is clear: Candidates and House members are penalized for bipartisanship, inclusion, compassion, and moderation. They are rewarded for vitriol and divisiveness. We get a polarized political system where candidates embrace and are rewarded for hyper-partisanship and extremism, where our Capitol is violently stormed, and where undermining the legitimacy of our elections is commonplace.

I'm not suggesting that New Jersey's congressional districts be designed in a manner that would create 12 competitive districts, and I know that many of the members of this Commission will argue for minimal disruption -- a reality that will likely not be possible at the end of the day.

What I am suggesting is that true competitiveness -- that is, districts that are drawn as close to the 50-50 mark as possible and are not drawn as "lean" districts -- play an incredibly important role in fostering tolerance and bi-partisanship, in creating opportunities for dialogue among citizens of opposing parties, and of creating candidates and House members who strive to address the needs of their constituents, rather than kowtow to the demands of party leaders in Washington, D.C.

And so Justice Wallace, I speak to you when I urge you not to be the tie-breaker on this Commission, not merely to pick from the partisan

menus presented to you that look out for the parochial interests of this House member or that political party. Instead, I urge you to be the independent member -- the sole person on the Commission charged with protecting the polity and the voters -- and encourage the members of this Commission to present you with maps that include significant numbers of truly competitive districts, which will serve the interests of the voters, the State, and our democracy.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much for your comments.

Chloe Soremekun.

CHLOE SOREMEKUN: Good evening, everyone.

My name is Chloe Soremekun. I am currently living in Sicklerville, New Jersey. I previously lived in Blackwood, New Jersey, and prior to Blackwood, I lived in Voorhees. I have family members who have lived in New Jersey for the last decade -- the last two decades, excuse me -- which heavily influenced my decision to attend medical school here in New Jersey. I've been studying at RowanSOM in Stratford for the last three years, and have become increasingly more immersed in this community.

I am aware that as a medical student, we are a very important piece of the culture and the community, as evidenced by the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, strongly supported by our medical student volunteers who aided in the protection of our community from this preventable disease.

I am here to testify about the importance of representation today, pertaining to the New Jersey Redistricting Commission. As a medical student at RowanSOM, I believe it is very important that we are

appropriately represented in this next round of maps. As a student doctor in training, it is very helpful to have one representative that students can reach out to, to discuss Federal funding for topics ranging from vaccine rollouts to tuition.

Having multiple representatives splitting our community would make talking to these representatives about these issues that matter to us most -- that would be increasingly more challenging. Outside of students or colleagues who live with their family members or significant others, a decent majority of students reside in or around RowanSOM Stratford campus in the cities including, but not limited to, Williamstown, Glassboro, Blackwood, Lindenwood, Sewell, Clementon, and Voorhees Township.

Personally, I buy groceries in Sicklerville and Clementon. Infrequently, I eat out in Turnersville and Williamstown, New Jersey -- I am a medical student. I service my car in the Turnersville Auto Mall. My community is largely made up of diverse suburbs that share many similar interests and issues, encompassed geographically congruent with the current Congressional District 1.

Aside from my university campus, my community includes the surrounding Gloucester Premium Outlets, Truman Hall, Camden County College, Jefferson Stratford Hospital, the Lindenwood Patco/New Jersey Transit Station, New Brooklyn Park, and Timber Creek dog park. The landscape which I have just shared with you is the community I am most familiar with, and the one in which I feel safe.

Accordingly, I do not interact as much with the regions beyond the regions I have just mentioned. I would not want my community to become divided into multiple congressional districts and subsequently

combined with regions that I, nor my community, have strong connections to.

To sum this all up, we are a close-knit, interdependent, neighborly community. We certainly do not want to be masked or have our voices overlooked by surrounding districts that cannot relate to our everyday lived experiences. Please do not separate our community into separate districts, which would not allow us to have appropriate representation to address concerns that are near and dear to our community members.

I would like to thank the Committee (*sic*) for listening to me today, and ask that you keep my community together when drawing new maps to the extent that is possible, without diluting the voting power in the communities of color, or otherwise violating the law or fair redistricting principles.

And before I leave, I would like to thank the New Jersey Institute of Social Justice and the New Jersey NAACP Youth Works Committee.

Again, thank you for listening to my testimony.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Tammi Bathke. (no response)

Is Tammi Bathke here? Ralph Cooper. (no response)

Om Savargaonkar. (no response)

Ibrahim Sulaimani. (no response)

Is there anyone else present this evening who would like to address the Commission? (no response)

Donna Williams again, and Alexander Micharski. (no response)

All right, well I want to thank you very much for appearing this evening. That concludes the members that have asked to testify.

Our next virtual hearing will be this coming Saturday, beginning at 10 o'clock. Please check our website for getting onto the virtual hearing.

The next one after that will be the following day, and that will be at Ocean County College, I believe.

MR. STEINHARDT: Ocean County Library.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Ocean County Library? All right, thank you.

And with that, any additional comments from any member? (no response)

All right, hearing none, do I have a motion to adjourn?

MS. FULLER: Motion.

MR. STEINHARDT: Second.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Voice vote, all in favor say "aye."

ALL: Aye.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Any opposed? (no response)

All right, again, thank you Rowan University for allowing us to be here this evening for this hearing. Safe trip, everyone.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)