
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: Meeting via Zoom

DATE: November 20, 2021
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMISSION PRESENT:

Justice John E. Wallace, Jr., Chair

Janice Fuller, Democratic Delegation Chair

Iris Delgado

Senator Vin Gopal

Stephanie Lagos

Jeffrey Nash

Dana Redd

Doug Steinhardt, Esq., 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

Roshard Williams

Office of Legislative Services

Commission Aides

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Meeting 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 LoGrippo
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 20, 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 remotely via Zoom on Saturday, November 20, 2021 at 10:00 AM.

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 must register online at <https://www.njredistrictingcommission.org/schedule.asp>. Registration is also available at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>. Select November 20 on the calendar and click on Redistricting Commission for the registration link. Registrations must be received by Friday, November 19, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Upon successful registration, you will view a printable receipt on screen. At a later date, you will receive an email with instructions for testifying.

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 by Friday, November 19, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Written testimony will be included in the Commission's record and distributed to all Commission members.

Issued 11/12/21

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JUSTICE JOHN E. WALLACE, JR. (Chair): Welcome to the fifth Public Hearing of the Redistricting Commission. It is a virtual hearing, as you know, and we're hopeful that it will go very smoothly.

The purpose of today's Hearing, as the others have been, is to hear from you. We want to receive your views as to what the district map should look like in the State of New Jersey. We will hear from those citizens who have indicated that they wish to testify and speak this morning.

Before we do that, I would ask that the Secretary please take the roll.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Redd.

MS. REDD: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Pagliughi.

MS. PAGLIUGHI: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Nash. (no response)

Commissioner LoGrippo.

MR. LoGRIPPO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Lagos.

MS. LAGOS: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Gopal.

SENATOR GOPAL: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Duffy

MR. DUFFY: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Delgado.

MS. DELGADO: Present.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Commissioner Ashmore. (no response)

Commissioner Albano.

MS. ALBANO: Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Chair Steinhardt.

DOUG STEINHARDT, ESQ. (Republican Delegation Chair): Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Chair Fuller.

JANICE FULLER (Democratic Delegation Chair): Here.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Chairman Wallace.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Here.

Thank you very much, Madam Secretary.

We have a full list of indicated witnesses for today, so I would ask that we get started. But before we do that, is there anyone on the Commission who wishes to make a comment?

MS. FULLER: Good morning, Chairman Wallace, thank you very much. We look forward, on behalf of the Democratic Commissioners, to hearing from everyone today.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you, Chair Fuller.

MR. STEINHARDT: Morning, Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MR. STEINHARDT: I am Doug Steinhardt; on behalf of our Republican colleagues, I wish everyone a good morning. I look forward to continuing an open and transparent process.

So thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And good morning; thank you.

I will give you the first five anticipated speakers, after which, midway through, I'll give the next five.

I have a Terri Tauber, John Hsu -- that's H-S-U Brigid Callahan Harrison, Joyce Leftly, and Gerald Pomper.

I will-- Without further ado, is Terri Tauber available?

T E R R I T A U B E R: I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Terri Tauber, and I live in CD7. I've lived in Summit for 33 years, before moving west along Springfield Avenue to Berkeley Heights a few years ago. I want to talk briefly about the communities along that Springfield Avenue, County Road 512 corridor. They share not only the county road, but also the Passaic River and the Morris-Essex train line, in particular the Gladstone Branch.

The Springfield Avenue Corridor includes many towns in CD7. We're going to take a little trip along it now. It begins at an intersection with CR 513 in Califon in Hunterdon County, goes through Tewksbury Township, then crosses the Lamington River into Bedminster Township in Somerset County. Through Peapack and Gladstone, passing the Gladstone Station -- the western terminus of the Gladstone train line -- and then Route 512 crosses the Raritan into Far Hills and continues on into Bernards Township.

After intersecting with County Road 651, it crosses the Passaic River into Long Hill Township, meanders over the Gladstone Branch and the Passaic River again, into Berkeley Heights in Union County, where it

becomes Springfield Avenue and it runs through New Providence and Summit before hitting its eastern terminus at Route 24. Springfield Avenue, as you probably know, is actually the main street for those three downtowns.

As you can see, there is a lot of overlap between County Road 512, the Passaic River, and the Morris Essex line. These neighborhoods have a lot of commonality and benefit from sharing a representative in Congress who understands their issues. The Passaic River has a strong environmental impact on the CD7 area, as well. There are many hiking trails and recreational areas along the river, and of course the area serves as a habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.

CD7 has benefitted from having Tom Malinowski represent us. He clearly recognizes the importance of the train line and has worked to secure funding for the Gateway Tunnel, which is of course ongoing. And he has been a hands-on Congressman, listening to the concerns of our Districts and working to fairly represent us in D.C.

Additionally, I would say that CD7 is clearly a fairly drawn district as it is, as evidenced by the close race last year. It seems counterproductive to the objective of this Commission to make it a less fair district going forward, and an added benefit of a fair district is that the representative has to take the time to get to know his or her constituents in communities, and that is just better for all of us.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

John Hsu -- that's H-S-U. (no response)

Is Mr. Hsu available?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: He's not here yet, Mr. Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, then the next witness should be Brigid Callahan Harrison.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: She's also not here yet, Mr. Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay. Joyce Leftly.

J O Y C E L E F T L Y: Hi, my name is Joyce Leftly, and I've lived in Lebanon Township, which is a part of Hunterdon County, for over 35 years.

As you may know, all of the municipalities in Hunterdon County are currently included in Congressional District 7, and I urge you to keep all of our towns there in the new maps that you'll be drawing. I'd like to tell you why.

Hunterdon County is a really interesting place to live. We have many large semi-rural townships interspersed with charming towns like Clinton, where we congregate together to shop, sip coffee, dine, and enjoy recreation with folks from other towns. We have many shared values and, of course, issues and concerns across our large County, with a special focus on environmental issues.

Our County fought the PennEast Pipeline, which was being built -- proposed -- across the Delaware River, and we won that battle. We do river and stream cleanups with watershed organizations every spring, and we have two major reservoirs which supply recreation and also water to other areas of the state when needed. We also have numerous farms and farm stands selling local produce, often organically grown.

Our County also places a high priority on education, and we share resources across municipalities to provide excellent quality. Although we have 26 municipalities, they are all served by only 5 regional high school

districts -- so families are very linked across the entire District. For higher education, we're served by Raritan Valley Community College, which is located in Branchburg Township in Somerset County -- also a part of CD7.

Other areas where our communities are melded together are in the Hunterdon Medical Center, which is our only hospital in the County, and in transportation resources and issues across the County. These are just a few examples of how our large County is a very tightknit community.

Since CD7 needs to add 14,000 residents to its map, it makes no sense to separate any part of Hunterdon County to another CD -- which could confuse voters, suppress votes, and would be detrimental to the services that we need from the Federal Government. Our current Congressman has an in-depth understanding of our County, and redistricting should not force us to lose the opportunity to continue getting that expertise in our area.

Many thanks for your time, and best wishes in your important work to ensure that our elections are fair and that our democracy is preserved.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Gerald Pomper, followed by Michael Li and Robert Pallante.

Mr. Pomper.

G E R A L D M. P O M P E R: Justice Wallace and members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on your important work.

My name is Gerald Pomper, I am retired from Rutgers, where I was Board of Governor's Professor of Political Science. During my 60 years there, I also Chaired the Redistricting Commission for Hudson County and

learned much about redistricting from Alan Rosenthal, my colleague at the Eagleton Institute, who twice chaired State commissions.

I am a resident of Highland Park in Middlesex County, and campaigned in the neighboring 7th Congressional District for Tom Malinowski.

Your work is very complicated and contentious. I would like to offer some guidelines.

Wherever possible, districts should be compact in shape, facilitating contact between officials and citizens, easing campaigning, and preserving communities' identities. The 7th District is a rambling district, as you know, compromising nearly 600 square miles -- twice the size of New York City. It extends almost 60 miles through 6 counties, across most of the state from the Pennsylvania border to New York suburbs -- making it very tough, I can tell you, for walking canvasses.

As I'm sure you'll notice, the 7th has an odd shape. Something like a bird, with a very elaborate neck and the short stub of a right wing. That neck and wing, strikingly -- and probably not accidentally -- are packed with Republican voters separated from their neighbors in Morris and Warren Counties.

Partisan fairness is another important goal in redistricting. While Tom Malinowski has twice won the District, he did so under the handicap of a District gerrymandered to benefit the former, and admittedly competent, Republican incumbent; or the party's current candidate, a favored "Young gun." In a state where Democrats comprised 58 percent of the voters, Malinowski had to overcome a biased mapping that reduced his party's ranks to a bare majority at the ballot box.

Third, Professor Rosenthal taught me to give the benefit of the doubt to incumbents, who bring experience in achieving the difficult decisions of politics. Perhaps those who drew the maps in the last decade followed this principle when they gerrymandered extra Republicans into the District. If so, it might now be time to return the favor by adding Democrats to representative Tom Malinowski's side.

Now, I know how hard the redistricting will be. Although I do not know all the problems, I would offer direction for the new district map. I would urge that you consolidate the 7th CD, and eliminate the awkward gerrymander by moving the portions now in Warren and some Morris County towns, such as Roxbury, Washington, and Mount Olive, to other districts.

The new 7th District could then be made still more compact by adding towns in the heart of the district -- Union County, such as Scotch Plains, Fanwood, and Rahway. These changes would both make the partisan division fairer and the total district more cohesive.

Thank you for this opportunity, and I wish you patience and success in your vital work.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments, sir.

The next witness is Michael Li, followed by Robert Pallante.

Mr. Li.

M I C H A E L L I: Thank you, Chair Wallace and members of the Commission, for having me here to testify. I'm Michael Li, I'm Senior Counsel for the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, where my work focuses on redistricting, voting rights, and elections. The Brennan Center also will be submitting written testimony, but I wanted to take the

opportunity today to highlight a few important considerations as you go about the process of drawing maps.

We don't have comments on particular, specific districts, but we really just wanted to sort of provide a framework for thinking about how you go about this complicated task. And it is a particularly complicated task in New Jersey, because the New Jersey Constitution, of course, is largely silent on the considerations that go into how you draw maps. So you have a lot of discretionary choices; but there are some best practices, and I want to talk about those. And these best practices really come from our study of redistricting around the country, in both the Federal and the state levels -- including in New Jersey, where we've worked on helping to establish criteria or recommend criteria for the Legislative Redistricting Commission. We're happy, of course, to follow up on this and provide additional information either on the subject of today's testimony or other topics. And as I said, we will be submitting more detailed, written testimony.

Of course New Jersey, like all states, must comply with the requirements of Federal law, and right now those are fairly limited. Mainly, it is the districts must be equally populated, and the state of course must comply with the requirements of the Voting Rights Act -- and of course, in that, you also can't intentionally discriminate. But those are fairly high level considerations.

I will add, though, that at least for Congressional redistricting, the rules are not yet fully or finally set, and that is because Congress is considering two pieces of legislation that could impact congressional redistricting. One is the Freedom to Vote Act, which would ban partisan gerrymandering by statute and impose uniform national criteria for line

drawing. The other is the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would clarify certain provisions of the VRA -- including, most importantly, clarifying that minority coalition districts are protected under the VRA, which is an issue that the Supreme Court has not yet decided on.

It's not yet clear, of course, whether that legislation will pass. The Senate would need to figure out a way around the filibuster, in all likelihood. But it could be by the first of the year; and even if it did come later, it would apply to New Jersey's maps, and potentially require some redrawing of the lines.

So given that there aren't many rules right now in New Jersey for drawing maps, what are our recommendations? We recommend that the Commission structure its criteria along the lines of the following: Of course, complying with the Federal requirement that you equalize population. We believe that it's important that you consider fairness for communities of color, making sure that communities of color are at the table, and that should be a high criteria. Preserving communities of interest, including, you know, municipalities and townships and the like, but also other sorts of communities. And lastly, ensuring partisan fairness and natural competition.

These recommendations are consistent with our model language on criteria and the guidance being given to people around the country. They also are broadly consistent with the provisions that Congress is considering enacting for congressional redistricting in the Freedom to Vote Act. And I will note in this, incumbent protection is not, sort of, one of the recommended criteria for any number of reasons.

I do -- in terms of talking about communities of color, I want to stress, of course, communities of color do have protections under the Voting

Rights Act, but that is not the only place that -- that is not the only-- VRA districts are not the only way that communities of color enjoy success in elections, and it's important to understand that. Sometimes when people talk about minority protections, they think about VRA districts and they think that if they created VRA districts, that they totally have got their obligations to communities of color.

And the reality is that in diverse states -- and increasingly around the country -- communities of color are being able to influence elections in lots of different ways and having success; and that is, you know, communities of color, in short, do not just elect in VRA districts, and you should not just consider your obligations to communities of color finished if you created any districts that might be required under the Voting Rights Act.

Now, I want to talk briefly about communities of interest. That is an important consideration, because not preserving communities of interest is one of the biggest complaints that you will hear from people about how maps are drawn. It's something they don't like, it's something that they complain about, and when it happens they perceive it as a sign that maps have been manipulated. And deciding how to do this -- the best source of information will be the communities themselves.

Lastly, I do want to talk very briefly about competition. Competition is not something that we generally recommend at the Brennan Center as a mandatory criteria. It is certainly something that is an important issue and can be a consideration, but it has to be balanced against other considerations. Over-emphasizing competition, in particular, risks viewing people of color as a means to an end, because the reality in most of the country is that the easiest way to make a district competitive is to increase or

decrease the number of people of color. And that can mean dividing up communities of color and diminishing their voice.

It's also important to distinguish between natural competition and forced competition. There are lots of places in the country where you can draw districts where there will be a lot of natural competition; but there also are places like Brooklyn, New York -- where I live -- that are so easily heavily one party or the other that you cannot draw districts without actually engaging in gerrymandering. And so it is -- competition certainly is a consideration, but it cannot be the paramount consideration.

So, in short-- I'll stop there. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify, and we at the Brennan Center are happy to answer questions or help move this process forward in any way that we can.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Li. Robert Pallante, followed by Sarah Morgan, and Giovanni Scè. Mr. Pallante.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Pallante is not here yet, Mr. Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, thank you.

Sarah Morgan. Is she available?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Sarah Morgan is not here yet.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Giovanni Scè.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: He is not here either.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Brad Van Arnum, followed by Barbara Cochrane.

Brad Van Arnum.

B R A D V A N A R N U M: Yes, hello. Can folks hear me?

JUSTICE WALLACE: Yes we can.

MR. VAN ARNUM: All right, and one more question. Can folks now see my map?

JUSTICE WALLACE: Yes.

MR. VAN ARNUM: Okay, terrific.

Well, first, thank you so much Chairman Wallace and members of the Commission for this chance to testify. My name is Brad Van Arnum, and I've been a resident of West Windsor in the 12th District for nearly a decade, and lived in Montgomery and Westfield for about a decade each prior to that. I truly appreciate having your time this morning, and I'm really proud of our state for having such an open redistricting process, with the opportunity for meaningful public input.

For the last two years, I have been deeply engaged with redistricting, and have spent many hours thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of our current map, as well as possible alternatives. A few days ago, I submitted a specific proposal for how New Jersey's congressional lines could be modified. Along with my map, I included a written document that outlined my thought process and provided details about how and why I drew each district the way I did.

Since Commission members already have that document available to them, I will use this statement to quickly highlight several broader points about my map. The map I submitted to the Commission reflects months of thinking about how our congressional districts could better represent the different regions of our state while staying close to the spirit of the current map.

My proposal -- which adheres to the Voting Rights Act, and has districts of exactly equal population -- stresses minority representation, competition, and, above all, communities of interest. To that last point, my map gives greater voice to distinct areas of the state, including the Jersey Shore, which I now have two dedicated districts for -- the rural northwest, which is less divided in my proposal than in the current map; and even the Pine Barrens, which I aim to keep more fully intact in my 2nd and 3rd districts.

In these cases and others, I strove to keep groups of people with shared interests and similar challenges in the same district, while still having multiple competitive districts that either party could win. This was not always easy, as there is often a tension between having competitive districts and respecting communities of interest, but I'm proud to say that my map still has four highly competitive districts that would remain closely contested throughout the upcoming decade.

Given how many other states have eliminated their competitive House districts so far this redistricting cycle, it's crucial that New Jersey not follow that same path. But overall, I try not to dwell so much on partisanship in my map, and the final product ended up something of a compromise, with features that both parties might support.

In my remaining time, I would like to briefly discuss several of my districts, and we'll start by looking at my new version of the 6th, which in many ways was the district that shaped the rest of my map. In my view, the single most important decision facing the Commission is how it plans to create a congressional district that gives more influence to the Asian American community of central New Jersey. For months, I have experimented in a

mapping program with the 6th, trying to figure out a reasonable way to make this district more representative of the growing Asian American community.

What I ended up with is a new 6th based primarily in Middlesex County, that is nearly 28 percent Asian American. My 6th District still extends into Monmouth County to include Long Branch and Asbury Park, but otherwise it aims both to keep Middlesex County as whole as possible, and to provide the Asian American community a stronger voice in one district.

But, with modest changes, the 6th can easily become a district that gives real influence to this community, whether it's to make their concerns heard in Congress, or to even someday elect a member of their own choosing. Given how concentrated the Asian American population is in the Middlesex area -- and in particular, the Indian American community -- it would truly be a missed opportunity to keep the district lines as they currently are, which both divide a distinct racial community and Middlesex County itself.

And I should note, my version of the 12th would still have a substantial Asian American community of its own, and at the same time my new 5th up in Bergen County could serve as yet another influenced district for the Asian American community in that part of the state.

My new configuration of the 6th is made possible by having the 8th District extend into Perth Amboy -- a change that also benefits the 9th District, which I'll briefly discuss in just a moment. My 8th actually ended up being quite similar to the old 13th District that existed during the 2000's. It is a majority Hispanic district, centered primarily in Hudson County, but also with part of Newark and Middlesex County.

Having the 8th come down into Perth Amboy not only enables the 6th to become an Asian American influence district, but it also allows the 9th to then take parts of the current 8th, bringing the 9th much closer to being majority Hispanic.

In my map, the 9th is about 47 percent Hispanic by total population, whereas the present day 9th is just 39 percent Hispanic. That increase could one day make all the difference in allowing the Hispanic population of northeastern New Jersey to elect a member of its own community and, more generally, to have an even stronger voice within the district.

All this is accomplished by switching just a handful of towns, and my 9th is still quite similar to the current version, being based mostly in Bergen and Passaic County.

In closing, although the Commission has a multitude of decisions to make about district lines throughout the state, I have highlighted the 6th, 8th, and 9th districts in particular because I feel they are arguably among the easier changes to implement in our next map. The changes I've proposed with these three districts would not force any current member of Congress to move, and the representatives of these districts would still have a group of towns and cities similar to what they currently know.

Yet, with these modest changes, our congressional map will recognize the growth of both the Asian and Hispanic communities in New Jersey over the last decade, providing real opportunities for greater representation in Congress.

And with that, let me say again how thankful I am to have had this chance to present, and how much I'm looking forward to seeing the map that the Commission eventually produces.

Thank you again for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you very much for your comments, along with the map that you have given us for further study.

The next witness is Barbara Cochrane, followed by Miriam Kohler, and then Andrew Smythe.

Barbara Cochrane.

BARBARA COCHRANE: Good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MS. COCHRANE: My name is Barbara Cochrane, Bethlehem Township, Hunterdon County resident in New Jersey District 7. Thank you for reaching out to residents and for listening to our concerns about the redistricting process.

The redistricting process must be fair and unbiased. I hope that the two GOP Commissioners selected by a current GOP candidate for New Jersey 7 will recuse themselves before making any long-term changes and decisions with regards to New Jersey 7 boundaries.

The recent census shows New Jersey 7 needs to gain population relative to other districts. It is an expensive area for young families. Younger people choose like-minded communities; we need younger people in New Jersey 7. We need diversity, and we need to have the right infrastructure for them.

You are the deciders, the designers of our new New Jersey 7 District, so please acknowledge that we need new families when modifying and redrawing our District.

For the past 15 years, I have been knocking on doors and reminding people that every year in New Jersey we have an election, and that our vote is the only way to choose the candidates that reflect our values. The outcome of the redistricting should reduce voters' apathy, and instill more trust in the system.

If the redistricting is done purely with political parties and rationales, then this Commission has failed to do its job. In the past, political gerrymandering has excluded and disenfranchised residents. Keep in mind that we all need to feel represented, and that it is just what I expect to come out from these public hearings.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Miriam Kohler is our next witness, followed by Andrew Smythe and Raphael (*sic*) Zimak.

Miriam Kohler.

MIRIAM KOHLER: Hi, good morning. My name is Miriam Kohler, I've lived in Long Hill Township for 35 years. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I'm going to speak about an issue that is so critically important to our state and our nation at this time. For anyone paying attention to the actions of state legislatures across our country right now, the implications for holding on to our democracy are indeed grave. States such as Arizona, Georgia, Florida, and Texas are doing all that they can to restrict voting, and

are even going so far as to take vote counting away from nonpartisan boards of elections and instead hand this critical function to decidedly partisan state legislatures.

Therefore, as one of a handful of states where it seems democracy still matters, it's more important than ever that New Jersey maintains its independent Commission to avoid partisan gerrymandering and preserve the democratic principles of free and fair elections.

My statement today is plain and simple. Let's keep elections across all districts in our state fair. This would include my district, NJ7. In fact, the principle of fairness pertains especially to NJ7 because we have a history here. For nearly 40 years -- from 1981 to 2018 -- NJ7 sent Republicans to Congress. During the previous redistricting, the Commission went so far as to draw this district to be safe for then-incumbent Leonard Lance.

But the voters changed that all in 2018. That year, Democrat Tom Malinowski defeated Republican Leonard Lance by 5 percentage points. In 2020, Representative Malinowski held his seat with a razor thin margin of 1.2 percent. Our district is already one of the most competitive districts in the nation. It's time for this Commission to make sure that it's fair.

We know that political bodies are renowned for making deals, and we have heard that there is talk about sacrificing NJ7 to Republicans so that the remainder of New Jersey's districts remain safe for Democrats. Making our district "safe" for the scion of any political dynasty would be completely unacceptable to the citizens of NJ7. We cannot allow this to happen.

As I wrap this testimony, I reiterate my plea to make NJ7 fair. Please do not sacrifice us.

Thank you for this time and this opportunity to speak before this august board.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

The next speaker is Andrew Smythe, followed by Raphael Zimak. Mr. Smythe.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, he is not here yet.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay.

Raphael Zimak, followed by Deborah Halpern.

R A L P H Z I M A K: Thank you very much for letting me speak. My name is Ralph Zimak, I am a resident of New Jersey for 46 years or so, and Union County for the last 42 to 44 years. We just recently, about two and a half months ago, moved from Westfield to Scotch Plains, and we thought we were staying within Congressional District 7.

We have been in District 7 for decades, obviously, and moving to Scotch Plains we, surprisingly, found out that our part of Scotch Plains -- which is literally blocks from the Westfield border -- is part of a different district; which seemed quite weird to us, honestly. We raised our kids in Westfield, we have friends that we obviously made over the decades we've been here, and we've enjoyed living here. One of the reasons we moved is I am now 71, going through -- not unlike a lot of other people my age -- hip replacement and knee replacements, and we were looking to move to a more senior-friendly location where we could be mostly on one level, as opposed to a split level which we've enjoyed for many years in Westfield.

So we moved here. We needed a house that was big enough, also, for our family -- part of our family lives out of state -- for them to come visit us. Westfield itself does not really have the kind of 55+ communities that would accommodate our particular needs. Scotch Plains did. So, again, we moved into here just a few blocks away from Westfield, and now we're part of a different district.

In short, we have made many friends here already, in the short time we've been here, of other former Westfield residents -- who are also not terribly happy to have been sort of separated from our District. It just seems part of Scotch Plains -- in fact, a big part of Scotch Plains -- is part of District 7, and a small part of Scotch Plains, for some reason, is not.

To break apart any particular township or town or city -- bigger cities I can understand -- but a small town of a similar size to Westfield, 25,000 to 30,000 people, does not seem to be really justifiable or fair to the process or to the people in it. So we are basically trying to propose that all of Scotch Plains be part of 7, rather than just most of it, and we feel that would be really the most fair way to go forward in terms of representing our particular town and our particular people who -- and by people, I mean the seniors, okay -- who live in the same area.

We still, in terms of our shopping and everything else, we still go into Westfield, that's still our town as far as we're concerned. Nothing against Scotch Plains at all, but I keep telling our vendors that we go to -- pizza shops, whatever -- they're not losing a customer, they're just losing a Westfield customer and gaining a Scotch Plains customer.

Anyway, just to-- Bottom line is, we feel that it is -- the process itself of splitting towns like this is not fair to the state, it's certainly not fair to the residents of this town.

Okay, anyway, that's it. Thank you very much for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments, sir.

Deborah Halpern, followed by Claire Toth and Ali Aljarrah.

Deborah Halpern.

DEBORAH HALPERN: Good morning. I am Deborah Halpern, I am a resident of Summit, New Jersey, in the 7th District.

I have lived in Summit for 39 years and have been an active member of the community, both as a professional and as a local volunteer. I deeply appreciate this opportunity for public input.

As a Summit resident, my husband and I raised our daughters here and participated in many activities in Summit, as well as being volunteers in the Summit schools. As members of a Summit synagogue, we also participated actively as congregants and volunteers on the Board of Trustees. We have connected and supported many local candidates for different offices both in Summit, the State, and in Washington.

We have also participated in a number of Summit-based organizations, including Summit Marches On, the Summit Democrats, and Summit Indivisible, to help people in need, as well as to encourage their participation in our democratic process.

It is very important to me to be active on behalf of my community in a positive and productive way. I am a social worker who has worked with patients and family members, both adults and children, whose lives have been impacted by a cancer diagnosis for over 20 years. Advocacy

is a big part of what I do, in addition to counseling and support, and I have always connected with the representatives in the 7th District for information and help for the constituents with whom I work.

Our current representative, Tom Malinowski, has made sure that he and his staff are available for responding to any and all questions and concerns, and have connected in a positive and impactful way with the families I have referred. I truly believe in our democracy and the importance of having a representative who is there to help constituents.

I am deeply concerned about the pending planning for the 7th District. When our district was redistricted in 2000, we lost a number of our local communities, whose boundaries and neighbors are in many of our towns. Parts of Union Township and Plainfield were moved to other districts. As noted by the previous speaker, Scotch Plains and Fanwood, both near Westfield, were moved out of our district, but Hunterdon County was added in.

The end result is a geographic spread, that has been noted by previous speakers, of non-neighbors with little history or connection from one end to the other. As noted by another speaker today, District 7 was gerrymandered to become a safe district for reelection by the incumbent of one party, and that was the status quo in the 7th District for 18 years.

I bring this concern to your attention, because communities who share neighboring borders often share and participate in houses of worship in nearby towns, which may not be their local hometown. They shop, visit, and support each other in a multitude of ways that adds to the vibrancies of their many communities. They learn about members of their neighboring communities and it brings understanding and caring.

And this truly benefits all of us. I am urging all of you to maintain the cohesiveness of the 7th District. We need to have this in order to best address planning for our communities, including, but not limited to, the environment, infrastructure, and meeting peoples' needs.

Splitting up neighboring communities into multiple districts will not accomplish this. What happens when a representative for half of the township has one plan, and the representative for the other half of the township does not share the same vision?

Lastly, I am asking for a commitment to fairness in considering the needs of New Jersey residents, as the decisions are considered for all the districts. Our country's Constitution and our democracy is based on fairness, not a guarantee of making a district safe for one group to be the winner of all future elections.

Thank you so much for your time, I appreciate this opportunity.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Claire Toth, followed by Ali Aljarrah.

C L A I R E T O T H: Thank you, good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MS. TOTH: I am Claire Toth from Summit, where I have lived for 25 years. In my professional life, I am a managing principal and the Senior Wealth Strategist at a New Jersey-based financial services company. My employer is in a highly regulated industry, and it has multiple locations ranging from Summit in the east, to Clinton in the west.

My employer prides itself on maintaining a unified culture across its presence in the state. When there are issues with regulators and other governmental agencies, it's important to have a single voice and response.

We have a business centered in a single congressional district, and it greatly simplifies that process. Our Representative knows us and understands our business. And that allows us, and similarly situated businesses in New Jersey, a single point of contact when issues arise.

In my volunteer life, I am part of several charities that either operate up and down the I-79 corridor, or that partner with other organizations along that route. They include SAGE Elder Care, Family Promise, and Impact 100 Garden State. These organizations have each built coherent communities, and dividing these communities in redistricting -- however facially neutral -- would be akin to Robert Moses running highways through defined neighborhoods.

Finally -- and personally -- when I moved to New Jersey in 1996, I had spent a dozen years living in Washington D.C. My first New Jersey election featured a few tight races, and it was empowering and exciting to cast a vote that mattered, in elections where the outcomes were not all forgone conclusions. And I think every New Jersey voter deserves to have that same experience in every election.

Keeping the electoral districts fair is going to continue to make that possible.

Thank you for your time and attention.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Ali Aljarrah, followed by Michael Laser, followed by Laura Bush.

Ali Aljarrah.

ALI ALJARRAH: Good morning. My name is Ali Aljarrah, and I'm a former Little Falls resident and a proud New Jerseyan. I come here today with my testimony to shed light regarding the redistricting of the 10th and

11th Congressional Districts. I'm speaking today to oppose any move by this Commission to push all of Montclair entirely into the 11th District.

My testimony today reflects the importance of community representation on a congressional level, and how this redistricting process could hurt constituents currently living in the 10th District.

As an Arab and as a Muslim growing up as a middle class kid in North Jersey, I never had a representative that looked like me or shared the same perspective, especially when it came to the struggles of being an Arab and Muslim in a post-9/11 world. This is important when it comes to the creation of policy and policy decision making -- when my former Congressman voted for the authorization of the Iraq War, which resulted in the death of my uncle and created a chaotic environment for my family members who were still living in the country.

I'm not asking for the Redistricting Commission to create a district for someone who shares the same background as me, but rather, I am asking the Commission to empathize with the constituents who don't share the same background as the rest of the district -- and by that effect, their congressional representative.

For example, affordable housing is an important issue for Montclair's residents living in the 10th Congressional District, who are majority renters; whereas residents in the 11th Congressional District are majority homeowners. The 11th is also one of the wealthiest districts in the entire country. Additionally, factoring race makes it apparent that working class Black and brown residents living in the 10th District would have different interests than the overwhelmingly upper-middle class white residents living in the 11th District. And, as a young person of color who

lived in the 11th District, I can confirm these disparities have an effect on which issues take priority during a congressional campaign.

I have often felt unrepresented in areas such as reform and social justice, student loan forgiveness, and the plight of Palestinians. Because the 11th is overwhelmingly white, the interests of communities of color are not taken into account.

I hope my testimony today gives the Commission a reason to oppose moving the entirety of Montclair into the 11th District.

Thank you, Commissioners, for allowing me to voice my perspective.

Please enjoy your day.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Michael Laser, followed by Laura Bush, followed by Judy Warmingham.

Mr. Laser.

MICHAEL LASER: Hi, I live in Montclair in the 10th District, and I've lived here for the last 27 years. The last speaker made many points that I would support and echo, and I will not repeat, but I just wanted to say it's my understanding that the Commission is considering redrawing the lines to put all of Montclair into NJ11.

I can see why it would seem to make sense since it's all one town, but as you just heard, that change would move a majority Black community, which is our South End and 4th Ward, out of the 10th District, which is a majority Black district, and put it into the majority white 11th District.

I do understand that NJ10 has a lot more voters in it right now, and some of those voters are going to have to move somewhere, but I just

want to stress that moving Montclair's southern half into NJ11 would dilute our local Black community's power.

And there are other ways to accomplish the required population shifts. There are parts of NJ10 that are majority white, and moving those into other less-populous districts would be a fairer way to redraw the map, instead of moving half of Montclair into NJ11.

So finally I'll just say: Please keep Montclair's South End and 4th Ward in the 10th District.

Thank you for listening.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Laura Bush.

L A U R A B U S H: Yes, thank you very much, Justice Wallace, and thank you to the Commission for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

I live in Readington, New Jersey, with a Flemington mailing address, like much in Hunterdon County, so I am in Congressional District 7.

I have-- The main concern I want to raise today is about Hunterdon County and the importance of keeping it together in Congressional District 7.

I strongly believe that our County is a community of interest, as a whole. We have many common economic interests -- for example, we have our larger towns like Flemington, the County seat; Clinton, with our shopping restaurants and the excellent Hunterdon Art Museum; Lambertville, which is a tourist destination. And Lambertville, of course, is one of our popular river towns, like Milford and Frenchtown, which also has

a new art center. And there's even a magazine for our river towns, showing the cohesiveness of them as a sense of a unit.

These towns have important roles in terms of economic development, but also, in particular, the river towns have common interests and concerns like flooding. And indeed, environmental concerns are a common concern across the County, and as other speakers have mentioned, many people banded together to fight the PennEast Pipeline. And there's a very common concern about preserving open space and the environment, more generally.

We also have a common love of our natural space. I'm personally a cyclist, and involved in a local cycling group. And like many, I hike throughout the County from the north, say in Ken Lockwood Gorge and Round Valley, down to the Sourlands in the south.

Transportation ties us together, too -- both in our County and with the rest of our district -- through the Route 202 corridor traveling east along Routes 22 and 287. And many people from my area, and even west of me, commute into New York along those corridors. I commute along that same route, although not all the way to New York, as I work in Iselin. And of course, many of us use the Raritan Valley Line, many for commuting and also for getting into New York for other purposes, as well as the Trans-Bridge bus line.

I also think it's important that we have that connection between the County and County government, and our congressional representative. We saw this in a recent crisis like COVID, where there was good coordination of information between the County and our Representative, Tom Malinowski. I volunteered to participate in an effort, led by Representative

Malinowski early in the pandemic, to check on local seniors to ensure that they had groceries and any of their other needs met.

That coordination is also valuable for situations like the recent terrible flash flooding caused by Tropical Storm Ida, where seven people in Hunterdon County died, and where we needed the FEMA disaster declaration; and many needed information later about how to apply for that FEMA assistance. So that coordination between the County and our representative in Washington is extremely valuable.

These concerns also raise the need for continuity of representation, so that voters can continue to know to whom to turn for help. And of course, major changes can lead to confusion and voter suppression.

And in that context, I just want to bring up the broader concern of fairness, which many people have mentioned. I would strongly encourage the Commission to adopt an anti-gerrymandering standard. Now more than ever, with nationwide partisanship at seemingly record levels, and nationwide efforts to suppress voting rampant, fairness is more important than ever.

I'm glad that we've always had an independent Commission in New Jersey for redistricting, but of course we know that has not always protected us from gerrymandering. And it's well known, as many have mentioned, that the 7th District, that I'm a member of, was previously gerrymandered to try to protect a Republican incumbent, Leonard Lance. And in spite of that, with a strong grassroots effort that I and many others participated in, the District elected a Democrat, Tom Malinowski, in 2018, who has a strong sense of the needs of the members of the District, and the popularity of his positions is of course why he won and was reelected.

So, again, I would respectfully ask the Commission to adopt an anti-gerrymandering principle.

And I'd just like to end with a very brief personal note. My father was a U.S. History teacher in high school, in Somerset County where I grew up. He was very passionate about U.S. History and the Constitution, and he shared that passion -- he gave that passion to me. And he was always so proud of our country and our Constitution. And with what's going on today, I wonder sometimes how he would feel about some of the things going on in our country; and I also have a great fear for the future of our country and our democracy.

And I know this Commission can't solve all the grave political challenges facing our country, but of course you as Commissioners have an incredibly important role in helping preserve our Constitution and the values of our democracy, and ensure they are respected and maintained. Because we all know that it starts at the local level and comes down to the local level.

So, again, I thank you for taking so seriously this important work that you're doing, and I really appreciate the opportunity to speak today. And again, I encourage you to adopt an anti-gerrymandering standard in your work.

Again, thank you very much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Judy Warmingham, followed by Amanda Greenblatt, followed by Jayashree Chatterjee.

Ms. Warmingham.

J U D Y W A R M I N G H A M: Thank you. My name is Judy Warmingham, and I'm a resident of New Jersey's 7th Congressional District.

I live in Lebanon Township and have for 30 years. I've been canvassing for various candidates since 2017.

One of the things that resonates with people, especially when I door knock, is when I say that the vote will be close and that their vote will potentially make a difference.

I therefore urge the Redistricting Committee (*sic*) to keep New Jersey Congressional District 7 a fair race. This will keep our voters engaged, our elected representatives in tune with and responsive to the needs of our district, and our democracy healthy.

I have heard that states all over the country are drawing maps with various degrees of gerrymandering, which in my mind is antithetical to the foundations of democracy. I firmly believe that the voters need to pick their representatives, rather than the reverse, and making New Jersey congressional districts safe for any politician is a slap in the face to the thousands of volunteer hours and door knocks that have helped motivate and engage voters in this New Jersey 7th District.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Keep New Jersey Congressional District 7 fair.

Thank you for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Amanda Greenblatt.

A M A N D A G R E E N B L A T T: Hi, good morning; thank you Chairman Wallace, Chairs Fuller and Steinhardt, and members of the Commission for your commitment to this daunting challenge -- the fair redistricting of our state.

I thank you for taking the time to hear our testimonies, and urge you all to maintain our district's makeup so that it is as close as possible to how it is currently drawn. For me specifically, CD7 residents deserve a fair map to ensure all our voices are heard.

My name is Amanda Greenblatt, and I have lived in Summit for 25 years. I've lived and worked in Union County since my job offer in 1997 brought me back home to New Jersey after I finished my MBA.

Like many here today, in addition to my professional life, I have been a volunteer over the past 25 years, really getting to know my community. I'm a past President of the Junior League of Summit, and I am currently serving as the Chair of the Junior League's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Taskforce. I currently serve as a Trustee on the Board of Temple Sinai in Summit. I am a Court-Appointed Special Advocate -- that is a CASA -- working with children in the foster care system in Union County. Most of my advocacy has been on behalf of children in foster care in Plainfield, but my current case is advocating for a child living in care in Cranford.

My volunteer work has widened my awareness of issues important to our community and, because of that, I've become more involved in our local politics. In fact, I am also one of the four leaders of Summit Marches On, a local, grassroots organization with more than 800 members, which was formed after the Women's March on Washington in 2017. Summit Marches On works to empower voters and hold our elected officials accountable, in addition to doing charitable work in our community.

When I think of the organizations I am part of, each serves several communities. My temple draws its membership from multiple towns

-- Summit, New Providence, Berkeley Heights, Chattam, Milburn, Warren, Watchung -- most of which are part of CD7. So when we have an issue that we want to address with our member of Congress -- and sadly, with the rise of antisemitism, this is not an infrequent occurrence -- it makes sense that our Congressperson addresses his or her actual constituents.

Similarly, the Junior League of Summit serves several communities -- Summit, Chatam, Berkeley Heights, and New Providence. Again, we tackle significant issues. Most recently, we have focused on food insecurity by launching GRACE, which has become one of the fastest-growing weekly community food distributions centers. Having the ear of our member of Congress, one who serves all of us, just makes sense.

Finally, overall, I think about where we live and what impacts our everyday workday. Within the current CD7, we share many of the same issues -- those mentioned early, plus the train line, the Gateway Tunnel, etc. This is a significant issue that impacts our day-to-day lives. Anyone who works in New York City knows that while MidTOWN DIRECT may be an asset, getting in and out of New York City is a challenge on any given day. We should have the ongoing benefit of working with one member of Congress who understands these issues and the impact on their constituency.

I've raised several topics, but each of these situations speaks to why it is important for our districts to remain intact -- specifically CD7. We need the continuity of having a member of Congress who knows us and our issues.

I want to thank you all again, and hope that your Commission will work to maintain a fair map, not only for CD7 but for our entire state.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Jayashree Chatterjee, followed by Vincent Kearney, followed by Miriam Kohler (*sic*).

The Chatterjees.

J A Y A S H R E E C H A T T E R J E E: Good morning everyone, and thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you. My home is in Franklin Township; I enjoy living here. I am of Asian Indian heritage, and my neighbors come from diverse ethnic groups and are all good friends. Also, our Indian Community Center and our temple are in this township, and I've taken my neighbors of non-Indian heritage, and my grandchildren, to the Community Center just so that they can know a little more about where we come from.

But Somerset County's Indian population is spread out in different townships, some of which belong to different districts. This dilutes our voices. I feel that Franklin Township needs to be added to District 7, so that the Indian community can be represented by one congressman with whom we can communicate, and who can therefore understand our needs; and who equally can tell us about regulations or things we need to keep to. This will keep this state of ours truly great.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Vincent Kearney, followed by Miriam Kohler, and then Greg Remaud.

Vincent Kearney.

V I N C E N T K E A R N E Y: Good morning to you, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen of the Commission. My name is Vincent Kearney, I am a resident and Councilman in the Borough of Garwood, Union County's

small town with a big heart, which I think of as the heart of the 7th Congressional District. Before moving to Garwood in 2009, I grew up in the Township of Union, which I'll get to in a moment.

First I want to thank the Commission for meeting in a variety of locations and formats, making this a very accessible process.

I am here today to speak about a topic of vital importance to my community -- the setting of fair districts in the State of New Jersey by this Commission. As a former resident of Union, the history of how the current 7th District came to exist illustrates exactly why we must all demand better redistricting in 2021.

Because the creation of so-called "safe districts" was entertained by previous commissions, it is possible to cross a street in my old hometown and have a different Representative in Congress. Prior to moving to Garwood, despite living in Union, I was somehow in the 10th Congressional District. I know this odd experience also applies in nearby Scotch Plains, as another speaker referenced.

Ladies and gentleman, having a municipality in a state as densely populated as New Jersey represented by two members of Congress is frankly ridiculous, and certainly disruptive to residents and local elected officials like me when something is needed at the Federal level, as many others have noted here. We're facing issues as unique as a global pandemic to severe flooding, which affect entire regions. Yet in many parts of our state, communities are chopped up into gerrymanders, which negatively affect everyone's representation in Congress -- representation which we desperately need to be our advocates for resources and support, both when disaster strikes and for long-term investments that our communities require to thrive.

We need our municipalities to have consistent advocacy in Washington. We need our districts drawn fairly so that the voice of the people is heard. We do not need to create new safe seats. The current 7th District was drawn to be one of those safe seats. The election of 2018 proved no seat is safe forever, and that voters should have the ultimate say on who represents them based upon the issues most important to them.

I am asking this Commission, please do not punish the people of the 7th District for choosing to make a change in 2018. We need a representative who will advocate for this District on issues as varied as salt deductions, to transit, to flood control. That will not happen if this Commission slices and dices the 7th District up, turning my neighboring town of Westfield into the eastern border of yet another safe district designed to serve the narrow interests of a legacy politician rather than the people of New Jersey.

I urge this Commission to make Union Township and Scotch Plains whole as parts of the 7th District, and to consider the importance of what I've said here today when addressing the need to balance both population and fair local representation throughout the State of New Jersey.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Miriam Kohler, followed by Greg Remaud, and then Tracy Keegan.

MS. KOHLER: Thank you; I already spoke. I'm not going to take time to explain why, but I don't need another turn.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you very much for pointing that out.

Greg Remaud.

GREGORY A. REMAUD: Hi, good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MR. REMAUD: Thank you, Judge Wallace; Chairs Fuller and Steinhardt; and to the Commission for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Greg Remaud, I am the Baykeeper and CEO of New York/New Jersey Baykeeper. We're a nonprofit conservation organization that's worked for 30 years to keep waters clean and accessible to the public around the New York/New Jersey Harbor Estuary.

Today, what I want to talk about is the importance of keeping Congressional District 6 a coastal waterway district. As opposed-- Some districts, it's hard to tell how they got to where they are or what the connections are. Physically, it's very clear in this district that almost all the towns are connected by waterways or along the coast. All of them, all of the -- I'm sorry, out of the 32 towns, 26 of them are located either along the Raritan Bay Shore, the Atlantic Coast, Raritan River, or the Arthur Kill.

In addition, many of these towns are on multiple waterways, including the Shrewsbury and Navesink rivers. To be more specific, I'll just run through the towns and their locations. Asbury Park, Loch Arbour, Alleghurst, Deal, Long Branch, Monmouth Beach, and Sea Bright -- including the Sandy Hook recreation area -- all border the Atlantic Ocean. That's adjacent to Raritan Bay, where the Highlands, Atlantic Highlands, Middletown, Kingsburg, Union Beach, Keyport, Aberdeen, Old Bridge, South Amboy, Sayreville, and Perth Amboy are located on that Bayshore next to

the Atlantic Ocean. And Perth Amboy, Woodbridge and Carteret are along the Arthur Kill. Sayreville, Woodbridge, Edison, Highland Park, New Brunswick, and Piscataway are all along the Raritan River.

So, again, 26 of the 32 towns are connected by these major waterways, and the other 6 are impacted by waterways in both positive and negative ways, which I'll get into briefly here.

Every one of these communities shares a daily tide that comes from the Atlantic Ocean. Twice a day, nutrients come in on the in tides and flush out waste on the out tide. That happens in every single one of these -- or 26 out of the 32 communities in this District. Along with the physical connection by water, there is ecological -- all these waterways, fish move throughout these waterways, that's how they're managed by a Federal agency -- natural resource agencies like NOAA and the National Marine Fishery Service.

They are also connected recreationally and socially. People fish in these waterways together, they sail, they meet up at yacht clubs that go between these waterways and between these communities. And of course because of that, there's shared issues and policy, as well as programmatic administration. And that's why it's so important to keep these unique coastal communities together.

When Baykeeper talks about flooding on the Raritan Bayshore, we can go to a Bayshore Mayors council, where there's 11 towns. Mayors get together and speak specifically about what is happening on the Raritan Bayshore. There's shared interest in things like Superfund sites, for example, that impact multiple communities within the district. For example, the Old Bridge Superfund site along the Raritan Bayshore directly impacts

municipalities along the Bayshore that are both in Middlesex and Monmouth County -- normally they'd be divided, but here, they're united. And it's a good thing, because that's helped move that cleanup much more quickly between the counties and between the municipalities in each county.

There's public waterfront access issues shared by all these communities. There's the connections to the Harbor Estuary Program, there's concerns for funding that comes through the Army Corps HAT studies -- HATS, which is Harbor And Tributary Study -- that has billions of dollars of flood control at stake. These are all shared by the congressional districts (*sic*) in Congressional District 6.

Along with that, and I'll wrap up, is a shared concern about ferry and waterborne traffic; shared interest in Port Authority -- the New York/New Jersey Port Authority shipping and environmental issues all impact these communities. And so all of these require a massive amount of Federal support, and it's imperative that we have a single voice that can represent these critical issues for the unique communities along the coast.

As an organization that's spent -- that deals directly with water issues, legislation, and policies, and practices every day -- and has done so for 30 years -- we know how important it is to have a Federal representative who can speak with a singular voice.

So we strongly advocate to keep these coastal communities together in Congressional District 6.

Thank you very much, again, for the opportunity to speak.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Tracy Keegan, followed by Judith Augustino.

TRACY KEEGAN: Good morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good morning.

MS. KEEGAN: Thank you, Justice Wallace and Commissioners, for your time and hard work during this important process.

My name is Tracy Keegan, and I have been a resident of CD7 for most of my life -- nearly 43 years, having been born and raised in New Providence, and now raising my own family in Summit. I'm an avid community volunteer, especially with our senior citizens.

There are many reasons why I feel passionately that CD7 should stay intact with a fair map, and not one gerrymandered to favor any particular party. But today I come to you as a mother who has been advocating for the past 19 years on behalf of one of my children, a college student who was born with Phenylketonuria, or PKU, an inborn error of metabolism diagnosed at birth.

In order to avoid devastating neurological and physical damage, PKU patients must maintain a strict, lifelong medical diet and consume a special medical formula multiple times per day. It's because of this that, for our family, continuity of congressional representation is critical. I'll explain why.

As you can probably imagine, insurance coverage is absolutely critical when dealing with a serious, lifelong issue like PKU. PKU families who are lucky enough to have health insurance are constantly wrangling for coverage with insurance companies, and it's no surprise that these companies give us such a hard time, as the costs are exorbitant. My daughter's formula alone costs \$8,000 per month.

When you first have a child with a disorder of PKU, the importance of your congressional representation is not the first or even the

hundredth thing that comes to your mind. But as we have found out over the years, who represents us is extremely important. As my daughter got older, I worried about her future ability to obtain her own health insurance, and that worry was only exacerbated by our former Congressman Lance, who showed no interest in fighting on behalf of the many constituents who asked him to act to ensure that healthcare is treated as a right, not a privilege.

Given the devastating effects this inaction would have on my daughter's future when it comes to her ability to afford to stay healthy, I joined with thousands of others in our district to flip the seat in favor of a representative who listens and acts on behalf of their constituents, not their party.

After we flipped the seat, I attended a constituent roundtable with our new Representative, Congressman Malinowski. I told him how insurance companies are not compelled to cover for life-saving formula and foods, and how I have had to fight to renew coverage for it every six months of her life -- continually having to prove that she does, indeed, have the genetic condition she was born with. I shared with him how I worried what would happen to her as she enters adulthood and has to rely on the luck of the draw when it comes to her own health insurance.

Given I've been working with other PKU families for years to implore Congress to pass the Medical Nutrition Equity Act, or MNEA, which would mandate across-the-board insurance coverage for medical foods and formula, I asked our new Congressman if he would help us fight for it. I was hopeful but realistic about the outcome of my request, given our years-long odyssey to get someone to care.

Less than two weeks later, I received an email from his office letting me know that he was becoming a co-sponsor of the MNEA, and would work with us to ensure that our child, and others like her, would have a secure future when it comes to their healthcare. The bill is still in the House, and Congressman Malinowski continues to advocate for us.

This is why, for our family, continuity of representation is critical. It could literally have life-altering consequences for us. My family implores you to ensure that CD7 remains intact and fair, and that our fight to ensure our daughter has the ability to live a healthy life as she embarks out on her own is assured of a good outcome.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Judith Augustino, followed by Jack Moundjian, followed by Erica Dubois.

Judith Augustino.

JUDY AUGUSTINO: My name is Judy Augustino. After living in Westfield for 26 years, my family moved to Scotch Plains 15 months ago. I'm here this morning to give you reasons why I believe our town of Scotch Plains should not be split into two congressional districts as it is now.

Our old Westfield home was two blocks from the Scotch Plains golf course, and was closer to downtown Scotch Plains than to downtown Westfield. Our move was a natural and comfortable transition for us, because although we lived in Westfield, our library, our post office, our CVS, and several of our favorite shops and restaurants are in Scotch Plains. It feels as though we moved from one neighborhood to another without changing much of our daily routine.

We still attend churches in Westfield -- in fact, several of my Scotch Plains neighbors attend the same church in Westfield. Despite being involved in local elections, I was quite surprised to learn that my new Scotch Plains home is in a totally separate congressional district than my Westfield home, was -- in CD7.

Objectively, Scotch Plains should not be split between two congressional districts for the following reasons. The school district: All public school students in Scotch Plains attend the school of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional School District, which serves all students in Pre-K through grade 12 from the borough of Fanwood and the Township of Scotch Plains. There is *one* high school, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Regional High School, that serves both communities in their entirety.

Transportation: Before we retired, my husband and I both commuted to New York from Westfield. We know firsthand the frustration of that commute, especially for those of us along the Raritan Valley Line. As commuters in a train town, we have similar interests to other communities along the Raritan Valley Line, including Westfield, Cranford, and the towns that extend way out to Hunterdon County. When advocating for issues like a one-seat ride to Manhattan, it's important that our voices are unified.

I encourage the Commission to consider these train towns to be communities of interest, and to keep them together in as few congressional districts as possible.

The media market: Our Scotch Plains weekly newspaper is the *Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times*, which is also the publisher of the *Westfield Leader*. When reading the newspapers, residents have a sense of a broader community among the three towns.

Senior issues: Many people from Westfield did as my family did -- we chose to retire in Scotch Plains. The style of housing and the availability of 55+ communities make it a natural and easy move, knowing that our daily routines wouldn't change very much. Entire communities are better served by a single representative. Prior to the 2010 census, the entire Township of Scotch Plains had been part of CD7. By having one member of Congress representing us, residents of our entire community will have an easier time connecting with that representative for requests and clarification of social services.

One additional point. The entire Township of Scotch Plains is located within a single State Assembly district. For all of these reasons, I ask you to return the entire Township of Scotch Plains to the CD7.

Thank you, Commissioners, for your time and your consideration this morning.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

MS. AUGUSTINO: You're welcome.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Jack Moundjian, followed by Erica Dubois, followed by Mara Novak.

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Chairman, Mr. Jack Moundjian is not here.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you.

Erica Dubois.

ERICA DUBOIS: Yes, hi, thank you so much; and thank you for pronouncing my name correctly, because most people do not, so it is greatly appreciated.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Well, you're quite welcome. I'm sure I have not done justice to others, but I try.

MS. DUBOIS: I appreciate it.

First, I want to thank Justice Wallace again, for your time and commitment to this hugely important job. Thank you for holding several hearings on this very impactful decision. Thank you for holding these via Zoom; during the current state of our world, I appreciate allowing as many voices to be represented as possible.

Again, my name is Erica Dubois. I've spent nearly my entire life living in CD7. I grew up in Union, I briefly lived in Cranford, and I currently reside in Springfield with my husband and two daughters. We recently purchased our first home here back in August, after living in an apartment for the last 13 years.

I am a mother, teacher, and government representative on the local level. I was actually Mayor of Springfield in 2019, and I am still a Committeewoman here. I tell you all of this to demonstrate my deep-rooted connection to CD7. I have worked closely with many grassroots organizations that spent numerous hours leading up to the 2018 election to elect our current Congressman.

With this experience, I know that we are very much a purple district. I believe that voters, not maps, should choose their representation. Competitive races are what is best for all community members.

Maintaining the cohesion of the current district is part of your job. You must establish districts with equal populations. Based on the 2020 Census, several thousand residents must be added, and there are many ways to do so.

Adding Scotch Plains -- completely adding Scotch Plains and Fanwood to the District is one way to do it. I have very personal connections there; my oldest daughter attends Union County Voc Tech half-day, and I work my summers at the JCC in Scotch Plains. So I know that Westfield and Scotch Plains-Fanwood residents are already a community, but they are in different districts.

I know that Springfield, Cranford, and Garwood -- along with the aforementioned towns -- are very much interconnected. Whether it be by schools, as I've already mentioned, or religious institutions, many residents of these towns share a commute to NYC, New York City, via the Raritan Valley Line, for example. So they have worked across municipality lines to band together to voice their concerns and advocate for changes in regards to their commutes. They are all connected via several highways, Route 22 being most notable.

Perhaps the biggest connection between these communities, that has reared its ugly head this fall with Hurricane Ida, is the ongoing flooding. I share these examples as current issues that connect these communities and demonstrate the importance of consistency in representation. Municipalities and counties should therefore not be divided amongst congressional districts.

In closing, lack of competitiveness is a form of voter suppression. Safe districts should not exist on paper. Candidates should have to work for their votes no matter their party affiliation. As a political representative myself, who once lost a race by two votes, I know firsthand that voter empathy and voter engagement is of the utmost importance. Voters must feel their vote matters. Fair district lines are paramount to democracy.

Thank you again for your time, and thank you to all of those who took time out on their Saturday to be on this call. I really appreciate all of you who are speaking your minds.

Thanks again. Have a great day.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Mara Novak, followed by Lauren O'Brien, followed by Steve Barcan.

Mara Novak.

MARA NOVAK: All right, good morning Justice Wallace. Thank you so much for the time; I am Mara Novak -- and again, you pronounced my name right, too. You're on a roll.

I am Co-Executive Director of New Jersey 11th for Change. We're a grassroots group with about 8,000 members. We're dedicated to advocating for all the people of New Jersey's 11th District. We foster an engaged and informed community with the power to shape our political representation so that it is transparent, responsive, and accountable; and so that it reflects the values of fairness, compassion, inclusivity, and a decent quality of life.

I thank the Commission for having public sessions, both virtual and in-person; they are really important. And my comments are directed at making this process even more open and accessible to everyone.

First, I'd like the Commission to release a complete schedule of all the upcoming meetings as soon as possible. It's really difficult to get public participation, particularly for the in-person sessions, when we only get a few days notice in advance. We would have more members, for example, from our District if we could get more notice.

And secondly, CD11 currently contains 54 North Jersey towns divided between 4 counties, including 3 in Essex County that are split between CDs 10 and 11. We're all about North Jersey districts, so we need to know when and where the promised North Jersey sessions, in-person sessions, are going to be, as soon as possible, so we can have our members attend.

And then finally, I'd like to request that you both release your proposed maps for public review and comment, and that you schedule additional in-person sessions in North, South, and Central Jersey -- which does exist -- after the release, so that the public can share their thoughts on the maps before final review and approval.

And thank you, again, so much for your time and for scheduling these sessions.

Thanks.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Lauren O'Brien, followed by Steve Barcan, followed by Mark Eisenberg.

Lauren O'Brien.

L A U R E N O ' B R I E N: Good morning, Justice Wallace.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Morning.

MS. O'BRIEN: Thank you so much for this opportunity to participate in this discussion. I am really heartened by so much testimony I've heard today in favor of Scotch Plains and Fanwood being returned to Congressional District 7. I feel like what Erica just said is like she lives right next door to me, as I'm listening to a lot of common voices here.

I am here independently, but I have worked extensively with several nonprofit organizations, campaign teams, elected officials, and political organizations as an activist, both professionally and as a volunteer. I am also commenting as a 10-year resident of Scotch Plains, a native New Jerseyan, and an involved neighbor with school-aged children.

And first, as a community member and mother of children in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood district, I want to emphasize the importance of keeping our *two* municipalities together in a voting district. Because even though we are technically two towns, the community is absolutely one with shared institutions, resources, sports teams, associations, and so much more.

To me, the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Parent Teacher Association is example enough of an institution of why we need to stay in the same voting pool. But next, to my family, Scotch Plains, Fanwood, and Westfield are one common community of interest residing only blocks from Westfield. I think it's important to note, as it has been noted before, that businesses I frequent in downtown Westfield are because those services and goods are not available in my community -- such as certain supermarkets, stores, and certain types of restaurants.

My children grew up in the Westfield pre-schools where I am still -- I am a member still of the YMCA there, in that program. My children have done years of camps and participated in recreational programs there. My husband was a commuter to New York City with our CD neighbors for many years on the same systems we have dealt painfully with -- all the transportation conflicts that we are fighting right now through Congressman Malinowski.

I almost have to consider CD7 as my district even though it is not, because it has been so much part of our community and culture for so many years. And we know that in 2012, Scotch Plains was divided into two congressional districts. A thousand-plus people above Route 22 remained in CD7, and the rest of the thousands of us were cut to CD12 to favor a former Congressman's victory.

A municipality should not be carved into pieces to fit a political puzzle, and neither should a common community/community of interest.

My volunteer activism and professional work has awarded me many positive relationships with elected officials at local, county, and State and Federal levels, and familiarized me with political and democratic processes -- and, most importantly, has engaged me in many conversations with many voters about issues they are passionate about.

One example, in 2015, is I founded the Union County chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense. Our leadership team was 70 percent CD7 and 30 percent from Scotch Plains-Fanwood. Our activity hubs were based in Fanwood, Westfield, and Cranford. During those 18 months of leadership and building hundreds of members, it was clear those municipalities made up a community of interest.

Another example is my volunteer work with METAvivors of New Jersey, a state chapter for metastatic breast cancer patients and advocates. Similar to what Tracy said, this is about affording better healthcare, insurance, and research funding, and this is to turn a terminally ill disease that kills 115 Americans a day into a chronic but manageable one. My experience with this work since April 2019 shows big activity hubs in Scotch

Plains, Fanwood, and Westfield, and emphasizes the need for them to exist in one congressional community.

Finally, I am currently working in the climate justice space and, again, I see strong commonality among these same constituencies in supporting Federal legislation to combat climate change, and provide us with urgently needed resources for clean energy and overall resilience. Congressman Malinowski of CD7 is a strong leader in this mission.

Our District 12 representative is Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, who I greatly admire and respect. She is an excellent representative, and I am proud to be a supporting constituent and activist in her district.

But in conclusion, Scotch Plains-Fanwood would be best served by returning to CD7 and joining our larger community of interest, so let's aim for accurate representation and voting fairness, and align these communities in District 7.

Thank you so much for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Steve Barcan, followed by Mark Eisenberg, followed by Andy Meissner.

STEPHEN BARCAN: Good morning, members of the Commission; Co-Chairs, Justice Wallace, and everyone here.

My name is Steve Barcan. My wife Bette and I have lived in CD7 for over 50 years. We moved to Westfield in 1970 and raised our family there. In 2017, 47 years later, we downsized to a 55 and over community in neighboring Garwood. And other than the size and location of our home, not much has changed. We still belong to Temple Emanuel in Westfield, we

travel to New York via the Raritan Valley Line, we use doctors in Fanwood, dine in Cranford, and grocery shop in Garwood.

By way of background, I grew up at the Jersey Shore in the 1950's in the small town of Bradley Beach. My parents and everyone they knew were Democrats. There was still conversation of the Depression, World War II, and FDR. I went to college in New York, a Democratic city, and then we moved to Westfield, whose decades-long leadership by Republicans was well known and considered to be invincible.

That all changed in 2017, when Democrats swept our local elections; built on that majority in 2019, and swept again this month. I'm not sharing this to brag, but to point out that there is a Democratic shift taking place in communities like Westfield. Our representative in Congress was a Republican from 1970, when we moved to Westfield, until 2018 when Tom Malinowski won -- 48 years of Republican representation.

But we've seen things change not just in Westfield, but in the entirety of CD7. Regular citizens like myself decided that we had had enough of ineffective and unresponsive Republican representation in Congress, and we became engaged in the political process. We phone banked, knocked on doors, distributed literature. I'm proud to have been part of this army of volunteers. Hard work matters, as it should; and of course you need to have excellent candidates.

I learned a lot knocking doors. Shockingly, for example, many households have split party affiliations. This makes canvassing even more important; sometimes as, I say, even taking care to speak to the Democrat in the home. We, the voter, should not be penalized for the hard work we did to flip CD7. As I have become more politically active, and as others have

said in their remarks, I have learned that CD7 was drawn to be a safe district for our then-Congressman Leonard Lance.

Had that Commission adhered to New Jersey's longstanding anti-gerrymandering principle in 2010, our current map would be very different from the 7-to-5 map drawn then. Not coincidentally, Thursday's *New York Times* had an article on the front page describing how politics, and therefore gerrymandering, can impair even independent redistricting panels.

Despite the gerrymandered 2010 map, voters in New Jersey have chosen to elect Democrats to 10 seats. I implore the Commission to return to using a partisan fairness analysis when drawing our new map. As I said before, the voters have spoken, and they should not be punished.

Furthermore, as states across the country redraw their maps to disenfranchise voters, it is more important than ever that New Jersey retain its independent commissions as truly independent. This Commission should focus on fairness as you decide what map will dictate our representation for the next 10 years.

The Commission should not be considering a dramatic change to CD7; there is no need for it. The Commission should keep Westfield, Garwood, and Cranford together. But it also makes sense, as had been said here, to make Scotch Plains whole and bring it and Fanwood into CD7, as our communities share train lines, churches, synagogues, shops, groceries, professional services, restaurants, the JCC, and the Westfield Area Y. These separate municipalities are a community of interest, and as the Commission draws this map, keeping these communities of interest in one congressional district should be a defining factor.

Thank you very much for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Mark Eisenberg, followed by Andy Meissner, and then Carol Johnson.

Mr. Eisenberg.

MARK EISENBERG: Chairman Wallace, Delegation Chairs Fuller and Steinhardt, and Commission members, I want to thank you for the opportunity to address the Commission in this open forum with this very important task of congressional redistricting.

My name is Mark Eisenberg. I am a licensed attorney, a longtime business executive in the music technology arena, and a 29 year resident of the town of Westfield in Union County.

The impetus behind my providing testimony today is to ensure fair and democratic processes in respect of voting, and the meaningful representation of our communities in Washington, D.C.

My wife and I have raised two wonderful children who attended public schools in Westfield, and recently have earned college degrees from institutions of higher education in St. Louis and Upstate New York. As a parent, I have -- or at least I hope that I have -- consistently instilled in my children the importance of regularly casting a vote in public elections as a means of representing both individual and community values.

As we grow to learn over the years as adults, parents, and members of our society, community values derive from shared perspectives, comprised of what we learn from civic leaders, education, good fortune, and misfortune. Voting is both a right and a duty, and we must ensure that when we vote it has maximum, meaningful impact.

When we vote for our congressional candidate, it's a thoughtful exercise, not an ephemeral proforma event which has no intended effect on our lives. Voting for our congressional representative is not, and should not, be tantamount to voting for the starting lineup of the MLB All-Star team; or to liking an Instagram story. Voting signifies a bilateral contract between us and our chosen representative. As voters, we have an obligation to select a congressional candidate who best represents our interests, and the winning candidate has a commensurate obligation to fight for and represent our interests.

I referenced civic engagement generally in my remarks, because we're living in some very trying times these days. There is a cancerous cynicism, skepticism, and oftentimes repulsion attendant to the very idea of voting in our country. There are myriad factors which contribute to this -- the unabated influence of money in politics, new protocols necessitated by the pandemic, antiquated voting machines, calculated efforts to achieve voter suppression, and the amplifications of falsehoods and conspiracies about certified election results aimed at delegitimizing the election process overall.

Which is why the redistricting process is so important; so critical to implement in a just and fair manner to dispel notions of inequity, unfairness, and disenfranchisement. Much has been written in recent weeks about the specter of backroom deals amongst existing political parties to safeguard seats or divide up the map, creating a safe capital-R Republican district, or a safe capital-D Democratic district. That is antithetical to free and fair elections.

Trades and barter exchanges do not represent the will of the people. They defy principles of fairness, and they are just plain wrong. And

it fuels the cynicism we feel about the electoral process, and contributes to the loss of faith we have in our governmental institutions.

So with that as a backdrop, I would like to bring some focus specifically to my current Congressional District, District 7. The 7th Congressional District was drawn as a result of the redistricting previously undertaken. Created from a Republican Party proposed map, it was presumed at the time that the 7th District would be a safe Republican district. That presumption held true until the 2018 contest, when a large grassroots movement flipped the seat to Democrat. The succeeding contest in 2020 proved to be similarly competitive, as is the anticipated contest scheduled for 2022. That is a healthy, vibrant, and trusted democracy at work.

Given population shifts in our state, reflected in the recent census, the 7th Congressional District will need to add to its constituency, and certain urban centers in New Jersey, which increased in population, will need to be reconstituted. Principles of fairness would dictate that changes made to New Jersey districts be effectuated to achieve continuity of representation and communities of interest. Districts should not be drawn capriciously, or with injurious intent to dilute the vote of communities of interest; or otherwise to disenfranchise persons of similar interest, background, and experience.

Contiguity of location is also important as it reflects such commonality, as contrasted with maps that resemble Swiss cheese or amoeba on a microscope slide. The current makeup of Congressional District 7 embodies these principles in fairness and communities of interest.

As a resident of Westfield, I am actively involved in my synagogue, Temple Emanuel, which attracts congregants from Westfield,

Scotch Plains, Cranford, Mountain Side, Berkeley Heights, New Providence, Springfield, and Summit. And together, we participate in community initiatives together -- like feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and providing refuge for immigrants and refugees.

I've been involved for many years in educational and recreational activities at the JCC in Scotch Plains, which similarly casts a net on these communities of interest in CD7. My children spent their formative tween and teen years immersed in local athletics, where they donned the same soccer and basketball jersey with teammates from our nearby towns in CD7, in some instances where they competed intensely against their neighboring town rivals, Westfield Blue Devils against the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Raiders.

My experience in CD7 similarly links communities of interest in my work as an appointed member of the Westfield Green Team, a mayoral Advisory Council which provides expertise, guidance, and human resources to make our community more sustainable. Our Westfield Green Team routinely shares a commonality of interest with the CD7 towns of Berkeley Heights, Summit, and Scotch Plains to develop best practices for our greater community.

My volunteer work also extends to human rights advocacy for the New Jersey chapter of J Street, which similarly draws from shared circles of interest across CD7. Members of our group regularly meet with our congressional representative and district staffers to advise them of our community's desire for a cessation of global hostilities and a peaceful resolution to internecine conflicts.

Our CD7 shares so many critical communities of interest. For example, daily commuting on the New Jersey Transit Raritan Valley Line, which brings residents of Westfield, Scotch Plains, and Garwood to New York City -- sometimes in 50 minutes, often closer to an hour and 15 minutes; a plaguing issue that our congressional representative has been addressing and is studiously working to resolve after countless, countless meetings with our community of interest.

And of course, CD7 shares other serious issues of critical infrastructure, climate resiliency -- which were similarly addressed after intense investment of time and learned study by our representative.

Continuity of representation is critically important, our representative knows our district, he understands our commonality of interests. Dismantling, severing, or dividing CD7 would harm our communities. The principles of fairness can best be accomplished by extending the existing community of interest across those parts of Scotch Plains-Fanwood which are not currently in CD7, or perhaps across the Raritan Valley Line train corridor to Roselle Park.

We need to restore faith in our governmental institutions, as representing the will of the voter and the needs of the constituents. The goal of redistricting should be to achieve fairness. We should resist any efforts by any political or partisan group to usurp our small-d democratic values. That is the message I would like to share with this Commission, and which I continually impart to my young adult children when they ask about the future they will inherit.

Thank you very much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Andy Meissner, followed by Carol Johnson.

A N D Y M E I S S N E R: Yes, good morning, thank you very much. Good morning Commissioners, Justice Wallace, and my fellow speakers.

My name is Andy Meissner, I am a long-term resident of Mount Olive, which is a fast-growing, increasingly diverse suburban, somewhat younger town in Morris County. Although I am currently retired, I worked for 35 years commuting from my home in Mount Olive to many corporate locations throughout Somerset County, like so many others here in Mount Olive.

I applaud the Commission for conducting these hearings and ensuring an honest, open, and transparent process. It's essential for everyone to have an opportunity to be heard, feel they have an equal voice in the process, and that the process is not favorable to any one group or person. I've learned that the last time these districts were drawn, the Commission broke with tradition and created the gerrymandered map to favor sitting members of Congress. This included Representative Leonard Lance in the 7th Congressional District.

This year, the Commission has the opportunity to return to an anti-gerrymandering principle of map/district creation. New Jersey 7 should not be subject to a map that once again favors a well-connected, legacy politician. Voters in CD7, despite a gerrymandered map that favored the Republican, voted for the Democratic candidate in both 2018 and 2020. These voters should not now be penalized for how they voted. This is the same for the other three districts -- 3, 5, and 11 -- that also elected Democrats despite a map that made these wins nothing short of amazing.

The residents of CD7 have benefitted from the services of a Congressman focused on the specific environmental, transit, and taxpayer issues of most concern to our local suburban residents. This was quite evident across CD7 during Tropical Storm Ida, as homes and businesses flooded. Constituents knew who to turn to during their most difficult days. Continuity of representation in Mount Olive is important, so that constituents continue to know who to call for help.

Furthermore, on a topic I personally feel strongly about -- to continue to attract active, concerned citizens into the process, the political process needs to be viewed as fair. Political parties and candidates need to be confident that those who have the best ideas and work the hardest to promote them have a fair chance of winning, and do not start off with built-in disadvantages.

Voters also need to feel their voices will be heard. Democracy works when people from all backgrounds are engaged and participate. Any perceived unfairness leads to lack of participation and a sense of being disenfranchised. Redistricting should promote inclusion and engagement, and not discourage or marginalize voters. Fairness is giving people what they deserve and what democracy needs.

I urge the Commission to continue with this open and fair process, to protect communities of interest, keep residents of all backgrounds in mind, and preserve continuity of representation.

Thank you very much for allowing me to participate today.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Carol Johnson, followed by Peter Chen.

Carol Johnson.

CAROL C. JOHNSON: Hi, everybody. My name is Carol Cathcart Johnson, and my husband and I moved here from the Midwest 44 years ago, so we've spent all our adult lives here. We are very, very grateful for the wonderful people who surround us here in CD7.

We live in Clinton, and have lived here for 38 years, but we first lived in Fanwood, New Jersey, for 6 years, where I was an extensive volunteer for the churches and for the community; and I can tell you that Scotch Plains-Fanwood, Westfield, Plainfield were all very connected to each other and should be part of the District.

My husband was a research chemist for Exxon Mobil; we raised -- we moved to this location 38 years ago, raised 3 kids, and I am a registered nurse; I worked but I did lots of volunteer work in the community. We intend to stay here, retired and paying taxes until we die. We love this diversity of the talented people here. For Jack and me, New Jersey is our beloved community.

What I am asking the Commissioners to do is to adopt an anti-gerrymandering standard. And I understand that New Jersey has always had that as their standard, until 2010 when the independent Commissioner allowed his close personal relationships with members of Congress, both Republican and Democrat, to effect the map.

Leonard Lance lives a five-minute drive from me. This plot of land, which I consider my little slice of paradise, was owned by his parents -- and yes, they moved to Hunterdon County in 1738. But that doesn't mean he should have a district drawn to make his legacy continue.

Despite that gerrymandering map, we voters in NJ7 worked hard to elect Tom Malinowski. We should not be punished for our votes, and we should not be punished for the hard volunteer work that flipped this district.

I look across the United States and I mourn. Partisanship is ruining our democracy. I grew up poor in Kansas, so I am acutely aware of all that goes on in that state to blatantly disenfranchise the voters -- many, many family members there who I am very, very close to. I am also well aware of the dark money that will come from the Koch brothers who are excessively rich, and whose industry was based in Wichita, Kansas.

When this election starts, dark money will pour back into NJ7, trying to defeat Tom Malinowski. These dark ads will lie about him; he is *my* beloved Congressman. He is hardworking, he is brilliant, and he is kind. And these campaign ads will tear down democracy in the process. And Tom Kean, who ran against-- He will kind of have trouble supporting those ads. He'll pretend they aren't part of it, but they are. And tearing down democracy is wrong, and tearing down an honest, hardworking Congressman is also wrong.

So I ask the Commission to use a partisan fairness analysis. Draw the map with anti-gerrymandering principles.

Yes, I am wearing a necklace that Leila Lance, who was my good friend, and the aunt of Leonard Lance, made sure that I got because of a lot of volunteer work that I did at Clinton Presbyterian Church. They are a lovely family, they are good people. I miss Leila. But I will tell you, I will work hard for Tom Malinowski.

And if true democracy is restored across the United States, we will once again become a beloved community -- all of us, all of us. And I

think that's what good citizens of the United States want, is for peace to come to this country.

Thank you very much; thank you for all you are doing for democracy. I appreciate it.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Peter Chen, followed by Nancy Matthews and Lisa Vandever.

Peter Chen.

P E T E R C H E N: Thank you so much to the Commission for allowing me to testify today. I have submitted written testimony, and I'll just breeze through some of the points in there.

The first is to echo some other folks, encourage the Commission to include public comment *after* the drafting and public distribution of draft maps. I feel that this is important to ensure that the public actually gets an opportunity to have meaningful input, especially because so many of these concepts are very abstract.

I'm sure, as other folks have identified, what is a community of interest -- whether it's included or not included -- can only really be seen after the lines are drawn, and so it's difficult to provide comment without seeing a map and knowing what it contains. So, again, we encourage the Commission to allow public testimony after the maps are completed.

Second, I really want to encourage the Commission not to focus solely on competitiveness. Although competitiveness is an important principle to guide the drafting of district lines, preserving communities of interest, as we're hearing extensively today, as well as ensuring that electorates reflect New Jersey's racially and ethnic diversity is extremely important.

And I want to get to this final point, which is about reflecting New Jersey's diversity. We have become an even more racially and ethnically diverse state over the last decade, and over the last three decades. And beyond that -- even beyond the sort of traditional categories of white, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian American -- there's diversity within each of these groups, and we're seeing more people who identify as more than one race. Lots more people are identifying as some other race. And there are of course diversity -- there's diversity within each of these groups. Different racial and national origin groups have a wide range of opinions and coherent communities, not all of which are necessarily included in crude estimations of, sort of, just the figures that are available with the census redistricting numbers.

So I really want to encourage -- based on, certainly, the demographics of the folks who testified today -- encourage the Commission to make sure that they're really getting public input from a wide range of stakeholders, including those communities of color that may not be as able to appear in some of the public testimony. I think there's a real concern that communities of interest, particularly Black and Latinx communities, are being left out of the process and need a stronger voice.

And the last thing I'll mention along those lines is that New Jersey-- As I mentioned in my written testimony, the state average population for non-Hispanic white is 52 percent, and 7 of New Jersey's 12 current congressional districts have white non-Hispanic populations above that -- meaning that the minority population voice has been diluted by being concentrated in other districts.

So again, I encourage the Commission to really consider racial and ethnic diversity more strongly as they consider drawing district lines.

Thanks very much.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Nancy Matthews.

Nancy Matthews. Is she available? (no response)

Next is Lisa Vandever, followed by John Holt.

Is Lisa available?

L I S A V A N D E V E R: Yes, I am here.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, you may begin your presentation.

MS. VANDEVER: All right. I am Lisa Vandever; I am a 16-year resident of Rahway. I grew up originally in Oregon, moved out to the east coast and lived in Brooklyn for nearly two decades, and then was coaxed across the river by my husband, who grew up in Union County. We bought our house in Rahway 16 years ago. I love it very much, I appreciate its rich ethnic diversity. It's a mix of a main street downtown and pastoral tree-lined streets. I am an active volunteer in the arts in Rahway, and was 2019 Volunteer of the Year -- I don't get to mention that too often, so I'll throw that in.

While I am speaking independently, I am also a part of Indivisible Rahway -- District 10, which was founded in 2016 following the Presidential election of that year. That was with the intent of encouraging more engagement in our residents in the political process. Because District 10 is overwhelmingly Democratic, there is a tendency to take that process for

granted, and there is also a sense that we ourselves are taken for granted, leading to a great deal of complacency.

Because of that, it was incredibly invigorating to be able to canvas for Tom Malinowski in District 7 and to see the result of those efforts. I think of Congressman Malinowski as our unofficial representative, and appreciate that he speaks to the needs of our Central New Jersey region and holds regular town meetings nearby.

Geographically, our inclusion in District 10 makes absolutely no sense whatsoever, and would actually be a perfect illustration of the concept of gerrymandering. If you look at your map, you have Newark, you have Jersey City, you have Montclair up there. We somehow skip over Elizabeth, which is part of District 8, and then Linden and Rahway are kind of glommed into the mess.

Residents of Rahway share interests with our neighboring towns that don't align with those of the cities that make up the majority of District 10. We're all part of the same waterways that make up our parks and sometimes flood our basements, we share similar issues relying on New Jersey Transit to commute to and from NYC, and we face common struggles with our local roadways. Our students face off against others in nearby towns in sporting events.

I regularly attend art events and visit theaters in neighboring Cranford and Westfield, and go to restaurants and shops in those same towns; and their residents, in turn, visit Rahway. Generally, the only time I find myself in Newark is to make a transfer on New Jersey Transit. My rare visits to Jersey City are usually a halfway meet up as I go to Manhattan friends across the Hudson for a visit.

With all due respect to Congressman Payne, I ask that the Commission consider removing Rahway from District 10 and allow us to join our neighboring towns in a common district. That move would bring additional diversity to District 7, and give our residents a greater sense of engagement in our political process.

Thank you Justice Wallace and the Commission for your time.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

John Holt, followed by Guru Chakravarty, followed by Mita Sinha.

Mr. Holt.

JOHN R. HOLT: Yes, thank you, Chairman Wallace.

I simply want to focus on the principles of redistricting. There are four basic principles: contiguity, that is, a district should be composed of areas that are next to each other; compactness, that is districts should be relatively contained rather than spread out, as the famous gerrymander image reminds us; they should represent a community of interest; and four, they should represent municipal boundaries in so far as that is possible.

I understand that the New Jersey State Legislative Districts follow three of those principles -- contiguity, compactness, and municipal boundaries. The community of interest, in the discussion so far, have mentioned such matters as race and culture, and I would tend to favor the idea of a community of interest as simply being determined by a municipal boundary. That is, people live in a particular municipality. They choose to live in a particular municipality.

So they have a common interest automatically by living in that municipality. If they don't like the municipality, they leave to go to another.

All right, therefore the (indiscernible) way of determining a community of interest (indiscernible), retirees, natural environment, etc.

So, that's all. And finally, I would certainly agree with all the various comments saying that we should avoid gerrymandering -- that is, avoid creating safe districts in as much as possible, but rather to have a principle of fairness.

Thank you very much, and I appreciate the work that you're doing.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Guru Chakravarty, followed by Mita Sinha.

Guru?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chakravarty is not here.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, thank you.

Mita Sinha, followed by Catherine Smith.

M I T A S I N H A: Hello.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Yes.

MS. SINHA: Oh, my.

My name is Mita Sinha; I am of Asian Indian heritage. I have been a resident of New Jersey for the last 40 years. We moved from Randolph, New Jersey, to Somerset because we have a lot of friends in this area.

I am an active board member of Ananda Mandir, that has a temple and an Indian community center in this area, in Somerset. I am closely involved with the temple's religious activities and cultural services. Asian Indian populations of Somerset County are scattered in different townships, and some are in different districts. I think it is important that

Franklin Township can be added to District 7; our voices will carry more weight, and the Asian Indian community will have a congressman with whom we can communicate and who will understand our needs.

It is important that our voices are not to be diluted by being split into multiple congressional districts.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: And thank you for your comments.

Catherine Smith, followed by John Isemann.

CATHERINE SMITH: I am Cate Smith from Millburn; I moved here five years ago after living in Australia, and since 2018 I've been very happy with Tom Malinowski's work for District 7, and for my community in particular.

When I first heard about the redistricting efforts, I became worried that this would effectively lose, for those of us who live in Milburn and Short Hills, our representation in Congress. When Ida hit at the beginning of September, it overwhelmed Milburn. Businesses were flooded and homes were seriously damaged or lost. More than that, so many people were already close to despair from the long process of coming out of COVID, and Ida's huge hit took away a great deal of the hope and optimism that they had left.

Our community did its best to rally around the people who needed it most, but one leader who really stood out was Congressman Malinowski. He took the time to come to town to talk to people and encourage us, and his office was relentless in getting help for the people who needed it.

And it's still not over. Many people are going into winter still not completely back on their feet. It's beyond reassuring to all of us to know that Congressman Malinowski has our backs. CD7, as you know and as we've become painfully aware, is connected by the Rahway River, the primary source of our floodwaters. Unfortunately, it's very likely that we'll experience devastation like this again.

I want our community to remain with the other towns in District 7 and have a congressperson who knows the lay of the land, literally and metaphorically, and how to respond to this kind of disaster; and who is now familiar in our community. I do not want Milburn-Short Hills to be placed in another district where the voices in our community will not be as powerful, effectively diluted by other equally pressing concerns.

And finally, on a personal note, I would like to add that I lived in New Orleans for several years, and I can tell you that once you've personally witnessed the devastation of flooding, and once you've known people who lost their homes or even their lives, your outlook shifts considerably. As you move forward, you are keenly aware of how drastically and how quickly rising waters can change your life.

It makes all the difference in the world to know that if disaster strikes, your voice will be heard and amplified by the people tasked with representing you, and that you have some continuity through these disasters.

After all that Milburn and Short Hills suffered with Ida, it seems only fair to allow us to stay with a representative who has demonstrated that he is both capable of and committed to getting us back on our feet when the unthinkable happens.

Thanks so much for letting me speak today.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

John Isemann, followed by Susan Wilder, followed by Sandra Russo.

John Isemann. (no response)

Is Mr. Isemann available? (no response)

We'll move onto Susan Wilder, then.

Susan Wilder.

S U S A N W I L D E R: Hi, yes; this is Susan Wilder, I live in Bethlehem Township, Hunterdon County.

I first moved here when our District was Rush Holt; and then several years later it got gerrymandered and Leonard Lance, as a good old boy, took hold. And then, in 2018 when Tom Malinowski ran, I didn't think he had a chance in running because of how gerrymandered our district was.

But, lo and behold, he did win. And it seems to me that what the new districting might involve is to gerrymander it to punish Tom Malinowski, and that is really against democracy. If you look at the percentage of white people in LD7, it's about 72 percent; you look at the map and it's heavily configured to the non-Democratic party.

I would like to see townships be intact, like some people were saying, Scotch Plains, Fanwood, and some of the others. I'd like to see a more contiguous line across the state if the district is going to be across the state. Keep LD7 whole and include in that discussion the diversity that LD7 deserves, instead of making it even more homogenously white, favoring the Republican candidate.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Does that conclude your statement?

MS. WILDER: Yes; sorry. (laughter)

JUSTICE WALLACE: That's all right, thank you very much. I just wasn't sure.

MS. WILDER: Okay.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Sandra Russo. (no response)

Is Sandra Russo available?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, she is here, and Mr. John Isemann is also here. They don't seem to be responding when you're calling on them.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right.

I also have a person that signed up, a Jacob Smullyman, S-M-U-L-L-Y-M-A-N. Arun Ayyagari, Maita Lockhart, and Barbara Chilmonik, Maria Wynn.

Do any of those persons wish to testify? (no response)

Is there anyone else who is on the website that would like to testify this morning -- now afternoon?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Mr. Chairman, on my list I have Kathleen Horgan, John Isemann, Stephen Leftly, and Sandra Russo.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, I called Isemann and Russo. And what was that -- Stanley? What was the name again?

MS. MARTINEZ KRUGER: Stephen Leftly.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Oh no--

J O H N I S E M A N N: Isemann is present, but no comments.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Okay, thank you Mr. Isemann.

S T E P H E N L E F T L Y: Steve Leftly is here.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Do you wish to speak, Mr. Leftly?

MR. LEFTLY: Yes, I do, thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, you may go right ahead.

Please state your full name.

MR. LEFTLY: Okay, my name is Stephen Leftly, and I live in Lebanon Township and I'm a 36-year resident of Hunterdon County.

Plus, I would like to say thanks to all of the Commissioners on this program. You've shown great patience on these long sessions. I would just like to add a comment on the community of interest dimension, in regards to Hunterdon County.

One, I would like to note that while I'm a Democrat, I am sure my comments apply equally to Republican party members too. Our government and major political parties are organized along municipal, county, State lines. In CD7, we are fortunate enough to have the entire county -- the entire Hunterdon County -- in CD7. This makes for a simpler, more cohesive relationship between the county parties, and the CD7 candidates, and elected officials, and Federal representatives.

This community of interest also extends from the county commissioners to the Federal representation. It makes for a more straightforward and efficient line of communication. I believe that maintaining the strong links between the county parties, commissioners, etc., and their Federal representatives is of vital community interest to the citizens of Hunterdon County, regardless of which party one belongs to -- even if one is unaffiliated -- and what party the representative belongs to.

Therefore, I urge the Commission to keep the whole of Hunterdon County in one congressional district.

Thank you so much for your time, and I'm done.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, and thank you for your comments, Mr. Leftly.

Is there anyone on the call today that wishes to testify who has not already spoken?

KATHLEEN HORGAN: Yes, Judge Wallace; Kathleen Horgan from Red Bank.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, Ms. Horgan would you please (indiscernible).

MS. HORGAN: Thank you; thank you Judge Wallace and members of the Commission for holding this Public Hearing today and allowing me to speak.

My name is Kathy Horgan; I'm a Councilwoman from Red Bank, where I've served for 14 years and lived in Red Bank for 22. I wanted to speak about the special relationship between three towns in Monmouth County: Red Bank Borough, Long Branch City, and the City of Asbury Park. For many years, these three municipalities were always a part of the same congressional district, until after the 2010 redistricting, where Red Bank was placed in the 4th District and Asbury Park and Long Branch remained in the 6th.

I am asking the Commission to once again join these three towns into the 6th Congressional District. Often referred to as the Tri-Cities, these three towns share many commonalities -- in fact, there is even a local publication called the *triCityNews* that focuses on arts, culture, and politics in these three towns.

Among many interests that these communities share, Red Bank, Long Branch, and Asbury Park are considered to be the urban centers of

Monmouth County -- with large walkable downtowns, multiple modes of public transportation, and large populations of ethnic and racial diversity.

These three towns also share many of the same challenges, from density and affordable housing, to educating first-generation children. Long Branch and Red Bank are also home to two major hospitals, Monmouth Medical and Riverview Medical Center, respectively, which serve the large eastern Monmouth areas.

All three municipalities have large populations of minorities. According to the 2020 census data, 46 percent of Red Bank's residents, 43 percent of Long Branch residents, and 61 percent of Asbury Park residents are Black, Hispanic, or Latino. Undoubtedly, race and ethnicity should be considered communities of interest, and I urge the Commission to not deny these towns and their residents a collective voice to choose a member of Congress that represents them.

In addition, arts and culture are among the many connections. Historically, and still true today, these three towns are the epicenter of arts and culture in Monmouth County and in New Jersey. With Count Basie and Two River Theaters in Red Bank, West End Art Center and the New Jersey Repertory Theatre in Long Branch, and Convention Hall and Stone Pony in Asbury Park, some of the largest names in music and theater pass through these towns on a yearly basis. All three municipalities have vibrant downtowns with dozens of art galleries, nationally recognized eateries, and boutique shopping stores. More and more, arts and humanities rely on Federal support. It is imperative to its survival, and so important to our communities.

Having these towns share a congressional district will help ensure that we have a common voice in our representative who can advocate for our collective needs.

When drawing your map, please consider joining Asbury Park, Long Branch, and Red Bank into the 6th Congressional District.

Thank you for your time, and I wish everybody a very happy Thanksgiving.

Thank you, Judge.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much, Councilwoman Horgan. And I apologize for not having you on my list originally.

MS. HORGAN: No worries, it was very interesting to hear what was going on today, so I learned a lot.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Well, welcome, and glad you could be present with us.

Is there anyone else that I have omitted or failed to include as a speaker today? (no response)

I wish to announce, as most of you know, our next public meeting will be tomorrow at the Ocean County Library in Toms River, at 101 Washington Street. We will begin at 12:00 pm. We look forward to seeing, of course, all the Council members; and those of the public who have signed up to not only speak, but those who will also attend tomorrow afternoon.

I wish to wish everyone happy Thanksgiving. Before we do that, is there a motion, or any other comment, before we take a motion to adjourn? (no response)

Hearing none, do I have a motion to adjourn?

MR. STEINHARDT: Motion.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Moved.

Is there a second?

MS. FULLER: Second.

Thank you, Chairman.

JUSTICE WALLACE: It's been moved and seconded.

All in favor, please say "aye" and/or "we adjourn."

ALL: Aye.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, this meeting is adjourned.

Stay safe, and we look forward to seeing you tomorrow afternoon
in Ocean County.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)