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# *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”*

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**LOCATION:** Ocean County Library  
Toms River, New Jersey

**DATE:** November 21, 2021  
12:00 p.m.

### **MEMBERS OF COMMISSION PRESENT:**

Justice John E. Wallace, Jr., Chair

Janice Fuller, Democratic Delegation Chair

Senator Vin Gopal

Stephanie Lagos

Jeffrey Nash

Dana Redd

Michele Albano

Jeanne Dovgala Ashmore

Mark Duffy

Mark LoGrippe

Lynda Pagliughi



### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Nicolas Soto

Roshard Williams

*Office of Legislative Services*

*Commission Aides*

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

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DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS

Janice Fuller  
*Delegation Chair*

Iris Delgado  
Vin Gopal  
Stephanie Lagos  
Jeff Nash  
Dana Redd



NEW JERSEY CONGRESSIONAL  
REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

STATE HOUSE ANNEX • P.O. BOX 068 • TRENTON, NJ 08625-0068

REPUBLICAN MEMBERS

Doug Steinhardt  
*Delegation Chair*

Michele Albano  
Jeanne Ashmore  
Mark Duffy  
Mark LoGrippe  
Lynda Pagliughi

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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 21, 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.*

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**The Redistricting Commission will meet on Sunday, November 21, 2021 at 12:00 PM at the Ocean County Library, Toms River Branch, 101 Washington Street, Toms River, New Jersey, 08753. The meeting will take place in the Mancini Hall.**

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

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

Those wishing to testify may register online in advance of the meeting at <https://www.njredistrictingcommission.org/schedule.asp>. Registration is also available at <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>. Select November 21 on the calendar and click on Redistricting Commission for the registration link. Advance registrations must be received by Friday, November 19, 2021 at 3:00 PM. Upon successful registration, you will view a printable receipt on screen.

(OVER)

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

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](mailto:OLSaideREDC@njleg.org). If providing written testimony in addition to oral testimony at the meeting, please bring 17 copies for distribution to Commission members. Written testimony will be included in the Commission's record and distributed to all Commission members.

This meeting will observe the COVID-19 protocols in place at our host location. At this time, the Ocean County Library does not require members of the public to wear face masks, but strongly recommends them for both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals in indoor settings where there is increased risk. For more information see: <https://theoceancountylibrary.org/branch-updates>.

Parking is available at the Toms River Township Parking Garage located at 34M E Water Street, Toms River, New Jersey, 08753 (corner of E Water Street and Horner Street). The upper level of the garage is right behind the library, with access at the corner of Horner Street and Wilsey Way. All downtown parking at the garage and on Washington Street in front of the library is free on Sundays. For more parking options, visit the Toms River Parking Authority website at <http://www.tomsriverparkingauthority.com/parking-information.html>.

Issued 11/17/21

For reasonable accommodation of a disability call the telephone number above, or for persons with hearing loss dial 711 for NJ Relay. The provision of assistive listening devices requires 24 hours' notice. CART or sign language interpretation requires 5 days' notice.

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

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**JUSTICE JOHN E. WALLACE, JR. (Chair):** Good afternoon, and welcome to the Redistricting Commission's sixth meeting.

It is a public meeting, open to the public, and we certainly wish you to give us your views as far as what you think our maps should look like to better our districts.

Before we hear from you all -- persons that indicated they wish to speak -- I would ask the Secretary to please take the roll.

MR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Redd.

MS. REDD: Present.

MR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Pagliughi.

MS. PAGLIUGHI: Present.

MR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Nash.

MR. NASH: Here.

MR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner LoGrippe.

MR. LoGRIPPO: Here.

MR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Lagos.

MS. LAGOS: Here.

MR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Gopal. (no response)

Commissioner Duffy.

MR. DUFFY: Here.

MR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Delgado. (no response)

Commissioner Ashmore.

MS. ASHMORE: Here.

MR. WILLIAMS: Commissioner Albano.

MS. ALBANO: Here.

MR. WILLIAMS: Delegation Chair Steinhardt. (no response)

Delegation Chair Fuller.

MS. FULLER: Here.

MR. WILLIAMS: Chair Wallace.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Here.

All right, thank you very much. Our first witness for today is Jeffrey Laurenti. Mr. Laurenti.

**J E F F R E Y L A U R E N T I:** Chairman Justice Wallace, members of the Commission; my name is Jeffrey Laurenti, I reside in Trenton. And let me begin by saying that our citizenry should have greater appreciation than it probably does of your efforts to make a transparent process, even soliciting public input of what had always been undertaken behind closed doors.

My own direct experience of redistricting dates back to when it was handled by the Legislature, so let me start with some historical reminiscences to illuminate how we can continue to make improvements over what had been done in that system.

My experience first dated back to the 1972 redistricting, when the majority party in the State Legislature rushed through a redistricting bill that created a new district in northwest New Jersey, with no incumbent for the then-Senate Majority Leader. No hearings, no committee reference -- a quick floor vote, and poof, a new map which produced its intended results for one election.

A decade later, as Executive Director of the then-Senate Majority, I was more deeply involved in what was a rather messier process. These were, after all, Democrats at that point, whose wrangling was painfully public. Every wannabe congressman had his finger in the pie; so did all of the Democratic incumbents. Of course, there were no committee hearings;

Democratic State committee staff came up with a map, and the arm twisting followed to get the 41 and 21 votes, respectively, in the two Houses.

The result was what was, in that year, one of America's more brazen maps featuring the flying swan that connected Marge Roukema's hometown of Ridgewood, and indeed Alpine, up the Hudson River at the one end of a flapping wing; to Hopewell in Mercer County, the other often no more than one municipality wide, all along the state's borders; the fishhook from Elizabeth through Princeton to Marlboro; and the horse, fittingly with its head at Colts Neck, and its body in Ocean and Burlington.

Senate President Pro-Tempore, Matty Feldman, somewhat defensively called the map, "A thing of beauty; a work of art." The intent was to knock off three Republican incumbents, but even in a Democratic year, voters in 1982 foiled the mapmakers. Only in Feldman's home county of Bergen did the intended beneficiary actually win.

The artistry was also not appreciated by Federal judges, who overturned it two years later and accepted an alternative offered by Republican plaintiffs. That map did accomplish its goal of taking out a veteran Democratic Congressman, and shoring up the Republicans who had survived the 1981 maps. I felt this particularly keenly, since it re-scrambled the district in which I was seeking my party's nomination for Congress.

Redistricting fever might grip the State House political class, but the public was the innocent bystander and, often, collateral damage. Fortuitous circumstances led to the unlikely adoption of the bipartisan commissions three decades ago -- which has successfully suppressed the wild, if perhaps diverting excesses of redistricting by the Legislature itself. The bizarre shapes that used to characterize mapmaking back in the days are

largely gone; the only one such shape on the current map is what you might call the *witch's finger*, crooked up from Mercer to Union County -- what looks like a gnarled finger reaching up to snag Plainfield.

I should add that my home district's incumbent congresswoman very much wants to keep Plainfield and Franklin Township in Somerset County in the 12th District. I infer her argument is demographic -- that these towns, Black communities, add ballast for a critical mass of Black voters helping a minority candidate to win, potentially, in the Democratic primary later this decade, and general elections.

In any event, it shows that you don't need to, "pack the Blacks," as it were, into a 70 percent Black district, or Latinos into a 70 percent Hispanic district. New Jersey's electorate is -- or should be -- well beyond the crude racial politics that we still see in the rural South. In fact, the Commission should take pains to ensure the districts have more ethnic diversity, rather than less. In particular, I hope the Commission will provide for a critical mass of our newest immigration -- namely, Asian heritage citizens.

The current 6th District in Middlesex and coastal Monmouth counties already has the makings of such a critical Asian mass, which I hope your handywork will not dilute. It is currently represented by someone of a, what we might call, *legacy immigrant community*, who is well into his fourth decade in the Congress. And presumably we should be thinking of these districts as lasting another decade.

Of course, Andy Kim's improbable success in the current 3rd District, which has very few Asians, suggests you don't always need to have a solid cohort of your own ethnic or racial minority to win an election. Partisan

identification is the supreme cue for voters. I suspect Representative Kim would not regret adjustments along the border with the 4th District, that right size both districts and take in, perhaps, the Mercer County town adjacent to his hometown in Bordentown, with then corresponding allocations in this county.

One pernicious practice in the Commission's recent maps -- and recent decades -- has been the division of municipalities between districts, in the pursuit of the unicorn of perfect population equality. The standard of absolute population equality was set by the courts, actually, in that 1984 case, *Karcher v. Kean* (*sic*), and the then Republican countersuit that replaced the last map that was ever enacted by the Legislature. But it's not hard to see that the court in that case was looking for a reason to consign the flying swan, the fishhook, and the horse to the museum of political history.

The craziness of having voters in the same polling district voting on separate machines, depending on which side of the street they have been put into a congressional district -- in the 4th or the 12th District, in the previous redistricting -- should not come back in the 2020's.

Please keep municipalities as intact as possible, or if a very large municipality can't be assigned to a single district, try to follow established ward boundaries.

Let me conclude by noting that simply by having a bipartisan Commission with a neutral Judicial and judicious tiebreaker of a Chair, you are already a vast improvement over the secretive and self-dealing system that New Jersey used to have, and that so many other states continue to follow. I am confident, Mr. Chairman, that you will curb whatever partisan temptations or excesses of the party-appointed Commissioners you are

shepharding, and that together you all will produce a plan -- fair to Congress people, congressional candidates, and most of all, the citizenry.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much for your comments.

Mary Harrison.

MARY JAMIE HARRISON: I'll take the fresh microphone, thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Go right ahead.

MS. HARRISON: Mary Jamie Harrison. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am a veteran -- United States Army -- 1964 to 1968 -- and a retired nurse.

I have used the VA clinic in Brick for healthcare in the past, usually when private insurance was unavailable or unaffordable to retired people who were too young for Medicare. It was clear then that the facilities needed upgrades. Parking space was very limited and very difficult for veterans with disabilities. Services were spotty, and often required difficult travel up north for specialist services such as Ear, Nose and Throat, or CT scans. Mental health services were very limited.

Congressional District 3 has many senior veterans, as well as younger people who served more recently and live in the area. We are grateful for the great work done recently to bring us a bigger and better facility. People have been talking for decades about the urgent need to improve the VA clinic, and only recently has it been done. With the joint base location in CD3 as well as the large number of veterans, seniors, and others who live here, it makes good sense to keep it all together.

I have lived in CD3 since 1998. This district, as viewed on a map, seems to have been gerrymandered in the past. But the district has developed into one characterized by competitive elections, and represents an example of a district where the voters chose their representative -- not the other way around. I would like to see the present boundaries maintained.

Thank you.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you for your comments.

Michael Brantley.

**MAYOR MICHAEL BRANTLEY, DDS:** I'm Dr. Brantley, Mayor of Neptune Township. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I've heard some history, and they sound pretty good. We all hear the news, how redistricting has been handled -- statewide and nationwide -- and a lot of people are not happy about how it's being done, or how it's been done. The fact that you are addressing it again now is-- I'm optimistic that you'll take a lot of things into consideration that haven't been in the past. I understand that this is more open than it has been, and that's good, that's more transparent.

I am here to urge the Commission to join Neptune Township and the City of Asbury Park into the 6th District. Historically, these two towns have been a part of the same district, and only recently were they separated after the 2010 redistricting process. The residents of Neptune Township and Asbury Park share many commonalities -- especially among the African American population.

According to the 2020 census, Neptune Township and Asbury Park are made up of 35 and 38 percent residents, respectively, who are Black. When the Redistricting Commission separated these two adjoining

municipalities, they effectively diluted and disenfranchised the voices of Black and brown residents. For many residents -- the African American communities in Neptune and Asbury Park -- these two communities are essentially one in the same. For generations, families have lived across these two towns with grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc., living between them. They share many cultural bonds.

Many residents in Neptune attend church in Asbury Park, and vice versa. They shop, eat, and drink and receive medical care between the two towns. Two municipalities share the same challenges like affordable housing, density, policing, healthcare, and education parity with our surrounding communities.

It is essential that these two communities of interest share a common Federal representation that can advocate for unique challenges they share. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act prohibits against voting practices and procedures, including redistricting plans, that discriminate on the basis of race, color, or membership of a language minority group.

I implore this Commission to not dilute the voices of the Black and brown residents in Monmouth County by keeping Neptune Township and Asbury Park separated. Please consider joining these two communities into the 6th District, the 6th Congressional District.

On a more personal note, from infancy to the sophomore year in high school, I lived in Asbury Park. And from that point on until now, other than going away to the college, and then the army and the dental school, my residence was Neptune. I learned over the years that a lot of people moved back and forth between these two municipalities, and they have families where some families moved to Neptune from Asbury.

So you have part of a family in Asbury and part of the same family in Neptune. This week, Thanksgiving Day, no doubt there will be people walking two minutes from Asbury to Neptune to enjoy Thanksgiving with their relatives, and vice versa. There are a lot of adjoining activities between these two towns. We have a lot in common -- we have Wesley Lake. I was on the Asbury Park Wesley Lake Commission, to clean up Wesley Lake. That's a joint venture between the two towns, because they're right next to each other.

We have Asbury Park Neptune Minister's Alliance. And there are other issues -- we have the MURC, Midtown Urban Renaissance Commission, a community activism organization that represents both Asbury and Neptune. Asbury and Neptune have been basically one in the same since I grew up, and it was very disappointing to see them split into two districts when that happened in 2010.

We would like to have the same representation with two districts. We have a lot of things we need to improve. As Mayor, we seem to be competing for the same grants and other things. If we were in the same district, we would get more balance. We don't want to look at each other differently and say, "You have more grants than I have." If we have the same representation, that will help us both in realizing the dreams of our constituents. And I implore you to consider returning Asbury Park and Neptune into the same 6th District.

We will all have a voice. The families will not be -- essentially be divided. They're so closely involved, they're small enough that you can just walk basically between the two. Our police department is in close communication with Asbury Park, and essentially if there's a crime in Asbury

Park, they can walk two blocks and be out of Asbury Park, into Neptune; and vice versa. So getting grants for the police department-- We don't have the same representation, so we don't have the same kind of balance in how we can handle our districts, our communities.

So it's essential and it's important to us in Neptune that we be joined back with Asbury in the 6th District so that our voices will not be diluted, and our representation and other issues, other than what I mentioned, would be more balanced.

Take that into consideration. And I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Thank you very much, Mayor, for your comments.

John Pawlowki.

**J O H N P A W L O W S K I:** Good afternoon.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Good afternoon.

MR. PAWLOWSKI: Just for starters, I did submit a written copy of my statement for everybody, but I noticed that I put the wrong date on it, so I'll mention that.

JUSTICE WALLACE: That's all right.

MR. PAWLOWSKI: My name is John Pawlowski; I live in Waretown, in District 3. I'd like to thank the Committee (*sic*) for holding these hearings, and making them available live on the internet and available to replay at later times. This is a very refreshing process, and I wish that all public hearings in all walks of the government were handled this way.

I am proud to say I've viewed every minute of these meetings, and have found them to be interesting and educational -- although, I haven't been able to find a link for yesterday's meeting, I did miss that one.

As a brief follow-up of last week's meeting at Rowan University, I was glad to see that the suggestion of listing upcoming dates of meetings met with acceptance, and this website updated. This is beneficial to those across the state who may wish to testify.

All public testimony should be given consideration during deliberations. However, three testimonies from individuals, to which I have no personal affiliation with, I found particularly impressive: They are the testimonies of Philip Hensley on October 23, Eugene Mazo on October 30, and Brigid Callahan Harrison on November 15. I recommend those testimonies, as well as all others, be taken into careful consideration.

Those testifying have had minimal dialogue with the Commission, and have been more or less expressing their views. Perhaps some dialogue or interaction with some of the constituents could lead to some interesting conversations.

Looking forward into the future of these proceedings, after the scheduled public testimonies have been completed, it would be great if the following deliberations of the Commission be made available in the same manner over the internet, as well as open to the public if viable.

Publication of proposed maps submitted by the public, as well as proposed by the Commission, should be made available with additional public comment afterwards, prior to any finalization.

Now, I would like to discuss CD3, the district in which I reside and the district these proceedings are being held in today. CD3 primarily

encompasses the majority of Burlington and Ocean Counties. CD3, in my opinion, is a great example of how a district should be represented. The district is very diverse, including some economically challenged communities, affluent communities, urban, rural, and tourist areas -- representing many walks of life. It includes many veterans, seniors, and small business establishments.

Whomever the congressional representative is represents a great cross reference of society. This gives a great overview of society -- not only of New Jersey, but the entire country. This microcosm of society by CD3, all of America, allows for great insight for the officeholder into the various lives and lifestyles not only of CD3, or New Jersey, but America as a whole.

In addition, CD3 has recently had some of the closest Congressional races the last few terms -- not only in New Jersey, but also in the entire country. This requires any representative to be more cognizant and responsive to their constituents. This competition amongst candidates can only benefit the constituents of CD3.

Any altering of CD3 in any way could be considered, either in reality or perception, to be gerrymandering. It is with that in mind my recommendation would be to leave CD3 intact as it is, as it is a great representation of a diverse and competitive district, allowing equality for the constituents of this district.

Thank you.

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

Arun Ayyagari. (no response)

Does Mr. Ayyagari wish to speak today? (no response)

Okay, thank you. Is there anyone present today, who I may not have listed, who would wish to make a comment? (no response)

All right. Again, I thank you very much for appearing this afternoon. Our next session will be held on December 1, and that will be by Zoom. Just check our website for the time, I think it's 12:00 pm. It's a little different, it's a weekday hearing, and we'll begin on 12:00 pm on that day.

I wish you all a happy Thanksgiving and a safe return to your homes.

Do I have a motion to adjourn?

MS. FULLER: Motion.

MS. REDD: So moved.

JUSTICE WALLACE: Moved and seconded. All in favor say "aye."

ALL: Aye.

JUSTICE WALLACE: All right, this meeting is adjourned.

Again, thank you very much for your attendance.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**