

CHAIRPERSONS: Senator Kevin Kelly
SENATORS: McCrory, McCrory, Formica
REPRESENTATIVES: Haddad, Candelora, Exum

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): I'd like to call to order this meeting of the Reapportionment Committee. We are very thankful to be welcomed by the City of Norwich and to this very, very pretty city hall to have a public hearing with regards to our duties as the Reapportionment Committee to get the citizens input with regards to how we would like to see the redistricting of State Senate, State House of Representatives and Congress seats. So with that, are there any, anybody have any comments or remarks they'd like to make? Seeing none, we have four individuals have signed up for testimony today to present to our Committee. They have been, I guess, randomly sampled and, so the first person is Kimberly Blake.

DR. KIMBERLY BLAKE: Sorry, I need glasses. So, I'd first like to thank all of you for coming to Eastern Connecticut to speak with folks here. I am Dr. Kimberly Blake, retired professor, and I represent the League of Women Voters of Southeastern Connecticut, I'm the new co-president. So I would like to say, Dear members of the Reapportionment Committee, most people are not aware of the importance of the maps that control who represents them in the State Assembly and in Congress. The public hearings are a good start to inform and receive input from the public. But more needs to be done to alert the public to the process.

The regular e-mails that Representatives send to constituents, as well as media coverage would be great places for you to begin. We also request that the Committee tell people how these maps are created. We would like to know what criteria are

being used to draw the new maps based on 2020 census data.

How can we find out what these criteria are? How will the population changes affect Congressional District 2, which as you know, is geographically the largest district in the state? What is the effect of the change to the way incarcerated people are counted? Have the maps been drawn already? How and when will the public have access to the maps? We noticed that one of the data files posted on the Committee website consists of the addresses of incumbents. Why is that information of particular importance? And how will it be used in determining new district lines?

We appreciate that you have stated that a fair process will be carried out by nonpartisan staff. However, to make this process truly fair and nonpartisan, it should be carried out by a Committee of citizens who are not beholden to politicians in any way. The process you outlined has not worked within constitutional deadlines for all districts since 1981, according to the National Conference of State Legislators.

We respectfully request that you make greater efforts to alert the public to redistricting that is currently happening, as well as informing the public as to how decisions within that process are made. And as a long range goal, start the process of changing the constitution to allow the redistricting Committee to be nonpolitical. Respectfully submitted, Kim Blake, Co-President, League of Women Voters and Irene Weiss, Voter Services and Advocacy League of Women Voters of Southeastern Connecticut. Thank you.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Thank you very much, Dr. Blake. Just one, I'm gonna say response, you brought up many good points. One place that citizens can go to get some of this information and look at maps is a website known as

davesredistricting.org, where that has census information, you can see how it's set up and draw your own lines. So that's one way that individuals can get information. But thank you very much for sharing your insight on the process with us this afternoon. The next individual is JoAnn Morella-Martin.

JOANN MORELLA-MARTIN: Hi, thank you. My name is JoAnn Morella-Martin. I am the former Regional Election Monitor for Southeast Connecticut, and I was also -- I am also the former Registrar of Voters for Norwich, Connecticut. So that is my perspective. When I was registrar, we had redistrict did our own polling locations to make them more equitable and to try and, to try and have some cost savings without impacting voters too much.

And so we did that and we went from 10 polling locations to five. At the time we had the 46th assembly district and the 139th assembly district. And then lo and behold, in 2010 I guess it was, we -- Norwich, so I'm also coming from the perspective of the city of Norwich, okay. So, we had an additional Assembly District, which is the 47th now.

So we went from a fairly, what we thought was fairly equitable and good for the voters and not so expensive. And then we had to add a polling location in in the 47th assembly district. So now as it stands as of the 2020 election in the -- I only was able to get registered voters in Norwich, the numbers of people are roughly twice what the actual voter registration is.

So this 40,000 people at Norwich, total registered voters is somewhere around 20,000. The 47th district as of the November 2020 election had 1989 voters. The 139th district had 6077 voters and the 46th assembly district had 10,131 voters. So not only did we have to add another precinct, and I don't know if you know anything about elections, but it costs money to have an additional precinct.

It costs money in a variety of ways. So that was a problem. And plus we had one polling location for less than 2000 voters. I think it was a problem that the 47th was added and I'm asking that you look at that, the cost to the City are the same as for a much larger district to staff, because you have to have mandated numbers of staff. And so, I just want you to look at that. Okay, thank you.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Thank you very much. Any questions?

REP. HADDAD (54TH): Not a question, but perhaps this is comment, and that is, I know that you testified sort of extemporaneously today without -- I notice you have some, some cards. It's good opportunity for me to just to say that we welcome written testimony in addition to any testimony that's delivered today. CT-N is here, they're recording the public hearing, that'll be available, linked on our website for folks to view.

But we also take written comments and we post them on our website with all other public testimony that's submitted. You don't have to arrive or appear at a public hearing in order to provide written testimony, it's just another avenue that people can use to communicate with the Committee. And the e-mail address is on our website, but it's reapportionment@cga.ct.gov. And so anybody can use that website address to communicate with the Committee, but thank you very much for your testimony.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Any other questions, comments? The next individual is Ben Gladstone.

BEN GLADSTONE: Yeah. So I'm Ben Gladstone from Mansfield, and I'm here to talk about gerrymandering. In 2010, the state was given two maps, that the judge basically chose for Democratic map out right leading to fight of Democrats elected

every year from 2012 to 2020 in the US House, despite never getting more of an, even 70% of the vote. Extremely disproportionate results.

As we've seen in other states gerrymandering leads to more and more extreme politicians being elected in this country, including Marjorie Taylor Greene, and also the process to make in these public hearings is using zoom looks as a company that censored Chinese dissidents talking about Tiananmen Square and how will you keep zoom from censoring constitutionally protected speaks in this year?

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Thank you very much Mr. Gladstone. The next person is David Nowakowski.

David Nowakowski: Yes, my name is Dave Nowakowski, I'm from Lisbon. I apologize, you don't have any written testimony today. Just to speak on a couple of items particularly affecting, I would say smaller towns, I know there's a reference to the redistricting that affected Norwich. But being from Lisbon a small town, I think one of the goals of the Committee should be that small towns of 5000 or so, every attempt should be made to prevent them from being split into multiple districts.

And again, I'm not talking about larger towns that have a population that requires multiple representatives from that one town or city, but a town like Lisbon of 5000 currently has half the town and most people in town don't even know which district they are in half the time. But half the town is split and is represented by Doug and half is Brian if they're over towards the Griswold side or whether you're towards the Canterbury side.

And I think the general perception of most people in those situations is that rather than having two representatives, for many people it feels like you have no representatives, because you're just kind of part of the other towns that are wholly represented. And also it does affect from a cost standpoint, a

town like Lisbon, as was mentioned with Norwich having to add a district anytime there is an election that requires the district component having to have two polling stations is a considerable factor for a small town like Lisbon.

And the last thing I'll mention is, I won't get into too much of the gerrymandering, but I think any maps you draw up, have to pass, I'll just say the eye test, because I think anything that has the perception of gerrymandering, when there's the curves and the snakes in the limited contiguity, I think it just for the general public creates a little bit of a sense of mistrust and the fact that something is being done to achieve other goals.

And again, we realize there is politicization in everything, but I know you talk about the Committee and all that trying to avoid the political components, but I think just the general perception of most people not involved in the political process is that if they see things that don't look right, there's a reason in their mind, be it true or not that it's being done for reasons other than the common good. So, that's all. Thank you so much for you coming here today. Appreciate it.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Thank you. Are there any questions or comments? Any? Is there anybody else in the audience? Come on down. Just give us your name and ...

IRENE WEISS: Sure. I'm Irene Weiss, Voters Service and Advocacy for League of Women Voters of Southeastern Connecticut. And as most, everybody knows, we are a nonpartisan organization, we don't support candidates or parties and we get into issues. And I want to just follow up with this last gentleman was saying because in looking at the issues with trying to prepare this testimony, it was clear that figuring out representative areas is so complicated and I think I just wanted to underline what Kim had said that for the public to have an

idea of how you make these decisions in terms of geographic area, whether a city should be split up, I live in Groton and part of us, a part of our, my representative is part of New London, my friends who live north of the highway, they have split with Ledyard. So I figured that's part of the decision. But I know there are other issues involved with redistricting.

And I think it would be just so interesting for the public to know what issues you're taking into account when you make these decisions, because I know it's not an easy job. And I appreciate the people who are working on it, but it'd be great to just know what, how you are doing, how are you going about doing this? What are the considerations that you're making? So, that's all I want to say. Thank you.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Thank you. Another individual? Please state your name for the record.

TERAN LOEPPKE: Yes. Hello. Teran Loepke, Common Cause in Connecticut. My question is, it's just a simple one. On the agenda for these hearings, it states that there'll be a review of the 2020 census data. Just wondering if there's a plan to do that during -- it's printed on the agendas for the hearings? That's it.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Do you want to go through that or? What? He asked item two is on the agenda. When are we going to deal with that? Review of the census data?

REP. HADDAD (54TH): I think the agenda was prepared by staff just intended to allow folks to comment on the census, on the 2021 census data. I would just add one thing, just as a point of clarification. You know, I think that these third party websites that are available to members of the public, Senator Kelly mentioned one earlier davesredistricting.org. There's another called Districtr without the er,

because they want to be trendy, districtr.org. And both of them provide access to the general public of the numbers that came out of the Census Bureau. And those are the numbers that will be used in Connecticut to put together Congressional Districts.

This past year, we did pass a, what's called a Prison Gerrymandering Bill and that will require some adjustment of the numbers as we take populations that are currently incarcerated in prisons around the state, and they will be reallocated to their home address. That is a process as outlined in the legislation and it's being currently conducted by the Department of Corrections and the Office of Policy Management. And I would like folks to know that when that, when those adjustments are available, we intend to post those, that data set on our website, and I know that at least one of these third party websites as inquired about whether that data would be available, we intend to make it available.

It's hard to pull apart if you're serving novice, but my hope is that the third party websites will incorporate that data set into their tools so that people can use the revised data set to come up with plans for both State House and State Senate Districts, because that's the data set that will be, that the subsequent commission will be using to put together those districts and so, but I think that the data was, the agenda was put together just so that we could incorporate any comments that people might want to make to this Committee.

I think we take seriously our task to listen closely to the input from people in the State of Connecticut and about what their hopes and aspirations are for our new redistricting plan. And we welcome additional comment, again either through the Committee e-mail address or at subsequent Public Hearings. There are two more Public Hearings. One will be Monday in Shelton, Connecticut at Shelton Town Hall at 1:00 p.m. And then our final Public

Hearing will be a zoom hearing that will be on Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.

I would make note of the fact that the sign up for the zoom hearing is really already open. You know, people should test, should send in an e-mail saying that they want to testify at the Zoom hearing, since there won't be any in person sign up. So those instructions are posted on our website as well. And we look forward to hearing from folks both virtually and in person at our future Public Hearings. I will, I do take seriously the matter that was raised around zoom and we'll discuss that with our technical staff just to make sure that everybody who wants to present a testimony to us via zoom that night will be able to and there will, there won't be any opportunity for malfeasance. So thank you.

SENATOR KELLY (21ST): Anyone else want to testify? Saying none? Any other comments from the members? We will then adjourn till Monday.