

Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission
Dec 4, 2020 Meeting Public Comment

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020

Method of Submission: SurveyMonkey ICRC Committee Meetings 12/4 – Public Comment Submission Form

Name: Davia Downey

Written Public Comment:

Jim Lancaster played an integral role in the formation of the independent redistricting commission and did so using a non-partisan framework. He is an able attorney and has intimate knowledge of the laws that bind the commission's work. He deserves a fair shake and serious consideration for this important position.

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020

Method of Submission: SurveyMonkey ICRC Committee Meetings 12/4 – Public Comment Submission Form

Name: Clint Hubbell

Written Public Comment:

Commissioners,

My name is Clint Hubbell, and I was able to watch the entire meeting today. I am making this comment as a member of the public.

First, thank you for your service to the People of the State of Michigan. I believe in the Constitutional mission of this Commission, and cannot overstate its importance in the way we choose our leaders in Michigan. In my view, this Commission has a very heavy, and important mandate. While doing your work, my sincere hope is that you never lose the idealism that no doubt informed you in seeking to become Commissioners in the first place.

Second, as an applicant for the General Counsel position, I would like to thank Commissioners Lange and Curry for speaking on my behalf today. I would have liked to see a similar recitation of all eleven candidates' credentials in the open meeting. While you may be limiting interviews to four candidates, it is important to demonstrate transparency in the process--especially when the Michigan Constitution specifically mandates it for this Committee. I express my sincere gratitude for your time spent reviewing my, and the other applicants' credentials.

While it is hard to be pigeonholed as a litigator sitting on shallow bench, I also appreciate the Commission's need for decisiveness. I disagree with Commissioner Lett on a number of things said today, but chief among them is the comment that "there is time." While the context of his comment was concerning the interview process, this Commission has an Amendment subsection (7) deadline racing at it. The next eleven months will pass in a blink, and the deadline will be staring the commission down in

no time at all. What time do the Commissioners think they have? It needs to act quickly and decisively in all things.

This is not a "business as usual" Commission. It has a unique and important mandate, and transparency is its founding principle. Its actions will be scrutinized. It will almost certainly be sued, in spite of apparent aversion to lawsuits among the Commissioners. Lawsuits are, necessarily, how we involve the judicial branch of our three-branch government, and banking on lawsuits not happening is pie in the sky. Make no mistake, this Commission is a direct threat to the power of some people who have enjoyed writing their own rules for a long time. Its actions will draw legal challenges if those same powerful people think it will allow them to keep some of their power.

I will follow the work of the Commission as an interested citizen, and know that I will be an advocate for an independent citizenry having a heavy hand in how our state's leaders are chosen--whether I am the Commission's lawyer or not. I wish the Commissioners success in their incredibly important job ahead.

Very kind regards,

Clint Hubbell

Date of Submission: Friday, December 4, 2020 11:26AM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Renee Blanchard
Subject: General Counsel Appointee

Good morning,
I respectfully request that Mr. Lancaster NOT be hired as General Counsel.

Thank you,
Renee Cialone-Blanchard
Concerned Michigan Resident

Date of Submission: Friday, December 4, 2020 11:19AM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Adam Moore
Subject: Lancaster

To Whom it May Concern;

I am writing with my concern that you are considering James Lancaster as general counsel. The person that is appointed to this position needs to come in a non-partisan manner and James Lancaster has been a hard left leaning advocate with many left wing donors and has supported many left wing causes. This position should come from a neutral general counsel standpoint and not someone that has already been partisan.

Thank you.

Regards,

Adam Moore

Date of Submission: Friday, December 4, 2020 11:05AM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Jan Reck
Subject: Please do not hire Lancaster as it's General Counsel

He is is a left-wing partisan -- just look at his campaign contributions.
Thank you!

Jan Recktenwald
White Lake, MI

Date of Submission: Friday, December 4, 2020 9:33AM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Kathleen Sansonetti
Subject: General Counsel Position

To the Redistricting Committee:
If the Redistricting Committee cares to have any credibility with the public, do not hire Mr. James Lancaster as your General Council. He is certainly, based on his donations, a very partisan person and will not give non-partisan advise to the commission.
He is a left wing activist and does not belong on a committee that should be and needs to be non partisan.
Sincerely,
Kathleen & Joe Sansonetti
Holly, Michigan

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 6:53PM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Raymond S. Perkins
Subject: General Counsel Position

I am shocked that the MI Redistricting Commission has James Lancaster as one of the two finalists for their General Counsel position. This guy is a left-wing partisan -- just look at his campaign contributions. Do not hire Lancaster as it's General Counsel.

There is no way this person could give non-partisan legal advice.

Ray Perkins

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 5:54PM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Dave Lambert
Subject: General Counsel Selection

Good Evening:

Please don't hire Mr. Lancaster as General Counsel. He is, based on his political donations, certainly a very partisan person and could not give non-partisan advise to the Commission.

Dave Lambert

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 4:51PM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Samantha Smith
Subject: For the commission: staff choices

Hello!

I have lived in the Lansing area my entire life. While I'm not part of the political scene in town (too busy raising my boys), I see a lot of how it works (both good and bad). I have taken the time to watch some of your deliberations and and concerned that your concerns about appearing "political" will lead you to hire staff not equipped to help you do your job.

One of the things President-elect Biden has been praised for is selecting senior staff that are 1) very experienced generally in government policy, and 2) very experienced in the specific areas in which they'll be working.

Someone mentioned at your meeting today that for legal counsel you wanted a specialist — a litigator wasn't what you needed. You need someone who knows state government, the federal and state constitutions, and especially the part of the state constitution on redistricting. When you are dealing with an issue as potentially explosive as redistricting, you need the very best advice.

The same applies to when you select your communications person. In my view you need someone with a broad range of specialized expertise: general public relations skills, a history of building support for public policy, extensive knowledge of state government and especially of the redistricting process enacted by the voters. A great PR person whose history has been working with non-governmental organizations or private businesses, with no political background, would probably be the wrong choice:

you'd end up with someone needing on-the-job training in the very specialized skillset needed for your Commission.

I'm a big fan of the concept of having regular citizens create the district maps rather than letting the Legislature do it in "smoke-filled rooms." I wish you all the best in your endeavors.

Sincerely,
Samantha Smith
Lansing

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 1:12PM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Karen Cortis
Subject: General Counsel

Dear Commissioners,

I urge you NOT to hire Mr. Lancaster as General Counsel. His history speaks for himself - not a choice we want.

--
Best to you,
Karen Cortis

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 1:12PM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: [REDACTED]
Subject: General Counsel

Dear Commissioners,

I urge you NOT to hire Mr. Lancaster as General Counsel. His history speaks for himself - not a choice we want.

--
Toward Healing The Planet,
One Patient at a Time,

Karen Cortis
Executive Director
www.thedr.com
[REDACTED]

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Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 1:06PM

Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>

Name: Tom North

Subject: Request to reject James Lancaster as unqualified as General Counsel


Dear Sirs/Ladies:

It has come to my attention that one James Lancaster is somehow a finalist for your General Counsel position. It is critical that you reject his application and select the other applicant, or reopen the process if necessary. My research reveals that Mr. Lancaster is unqualified and incompetent for such position. A position of this nature requires a general counsel who is unbiased and neutral politically. The whole concept of the redistricting commission adopted by Michigan's voters was supposedly to make districting less partisan and political. Mr. Lancaster is a "political hack", an extremist and activist. As an example, he served as lead counsel for "Voters Not Politicians" and was funded by left wing extremists in that position, which is an automatic conflict of interest with this position. He cannot objectively switch gears and leave such biases behind if selected here. A selection of him as general counsel would undercut the very stated purpose of the commission and its mission, and cost this new system its credibility. Therefore, it is essential that another applicant be selected. Thank you for your service and consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas North

former Probate Judge, Mackinac/Luce Counties (MI), 1993-2007



Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 12:52PM

Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>

Name: James Giddings

Subject: Selection of General Counsel

Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission

Dear Members:

I understand that Jim Lancaster is being considered for the position of General Counsel. I have known Jim Lancaster for over 30 years and if there are two words I would use to describe him, it would be intellectually honest. His intelligence, skill and abilities are, I'm sure, well known to this body. I would note, although you may already be aware of it, the immense amount of work he did in drafting this important constitutional change. He was successful in that endeavor because he exercised great care and cooperation in working patiently with persons representing an array of political points of view. And he did so with grace, objectivity and fairness.

He was able to do this because in his mind the principal objective was to create a new redistricting process which would be fair, non-partisan, workable and comport with constitutional standards. And it is fair to conclude from his work product and its favorable consideration by the Michigan Board of Canvassers and Michigan voters, that he was successful. His intimate and most valuable knowledge of the process which will help assure that the mechanism created by this commission will truly reflect the will of the people.

One of his critics declared that Jim Lancaster is too partisan, stating:

“Mr. Lancaster also has a clear conflict of interest. He served as one of the main legal attorneys for the political organization that drafted and supported Proposal I's passage in 2018. This creates a situation where the individual who drafted the language would now have to give neutral legal advice on the language he helped write.”

I do not understand this criticism. Who is better prepared to assist in the implementation of this vitally important constitutional mandate adopted by millions of Michigan voters than a man at the heart of the process which generated these fundamental changes in Michigan. It would appear that some of those who criticize Jim Lancaster are really criticizing the choice made by Michigan voters in 2018.

I would be remiss if I did not comment on some of the other criticism -- especially that of those who characterize Jim Lancaster as partisan. The majority of these are not accompanied by any factual presentation which would support their thesis of unacceptable partisanship. A few took the time to point out that Jim has contributed to many democratic candidates. In that regard, he shares that choice with millions of other citizens of this State.

I submit that this reveals nothing about Jim Lancaster's ability to fairly and objectively carry out the duties of General Counsel. I have been privileged to know many people on "both sides of the aisle" as they say. Some of my dearest friends, indeed members of my own family, consistently and strongly support Republican candidates for political office. And I can state without reservation that be they

Democrat or Republican, I far as I can discern in my 50 years of professional experience those contributions rarely indicate that they would somehow perform with a lack of objectivity or fairness in an important public or private capacity.

Would we really prefer someone in charge who is wholly ignorant of the political process? Frankly, I would be more concerned about some candidate for an important public position who had so little involvement in the political process they never contributed to a political candidate.

This nation, from its founding, and this state have experienced great challenges. But we have also enjoyed great success because we had leaders and movers representing a variety of political persuasions. That great success has rarely been compromised because of the political view of the actor.

You will find no better candidate for the position of General Counsel. I urge your favorable consideration of Jim Lancaster for this important position.

James R. Giddings

Circuit Judge Retired

Ingham County Circuit Court

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 11:58AM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Joe Green
Subject: General Counsel Position

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing today to voice my thoughts on 1 of the 2 finalists for the General Counsel position on the Redistricting Committee.

James Lancaster should not be considered for this position as I believe he cannot be the bipartisan leader a group like this needs to be able to effectively perform its duties.

Thanks for your attention regarding this matter.

Joe Green

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 10:22AM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Jackie
Subject: James Lancaster

To whom it may concern;

Please do not hire James Lancaster for the position of Executive Director or any other position in the Michigan Independent Redistricting Commission.

James Lancaster is not a non-partisan attorney. He is a left-wing partisan activists, who could never give non-partisan/unbiased advice to the Commission. Just look at all of his campaign contributions. He was also the lead attorney for "Voters Not Political's," the organization, funded by millions of dollars from out of left-wing out of state donors that led the effort to pass the redistricting ballot proposal.

The General Counsel is a crucial position for the Commission. They will be the ones offering the Commissioners official legal advice, which includes advice such as "according to state and federal law, you must do "x" or "according to state/federal law you cannot do "y."

We are having far too much controversy in our elections based on one sided mentality. Hiring James Lancaster would only further the Partisan issues. We need fair true non partisan professionals. I'd you excluded him bode you must exclude him again!

Thank you,

Jackie Zaplitny

[REDACTED]
Brighton, MI 48114
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 9:40AM

Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>

Name: Pattie Loft

Subject: General Counsel

James Lancaster is no way the person that could give non-partisan legal advice. He would most certainly steer the commission toward whatever would benefit Democrats. This is already an illegal and fraudulent election, and the fact that you are interested in this man for a prominent position is concerning.

He was also the lead attorney for "Voters Not Politicians", the group funded by millions of dollars from out of state left-wing donors that led the effort to pass the proposal that established the Redistricting Commission.

The General Counsel is a key position -- this person could steer the commission with advice like, "by state law, you cannot do X" or "by state law, you must do Y". We want a person that is sound in the values of the Constitution and not a puppet for the Democrat or Republican Party.

Patti Loft
Shelby, MI

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 9:37AM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Loretta Hill
Subject: No Vote for Lancaster

We the people of Michigan do not need another political hack from the Democrat party. Do not approve James Lancaster as the General Counsel for the Redistricting Commission.

A very concerned citizen
Loretta Hill

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 9:07AM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Fred Strozeski
Subject: General Counsel

Dear Committee.

Do not choose James Lancaster, a hard left partisan, as General Counsel which would defeat the main purpose of the Redistricting Committee.

Sent by Frederick J. Strozeski
[REDACTED]
Sterling Heights, MI 48314

God's mercy is limitless.

Date of Submission: Thursday, December 3, 2020 8:17AM
Method of Submission: Email To <Redistricting@Michigan.gov>
Name: Verna Stankevich
Subject: Reconsider not appointing Lancaster

In regards to appointing, James Lancaster... I'm highly opposed.
The redistricting should be bi-partisan... in which he would not be a good candidate.
His activism's should disqualify him, IMO.

Sent from my iPhone