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MICRC

07/01/21 5:00 pm Public Hearing

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>> CHAIR KELLOM: Good evening. Let's try this again. I like to have a little energy in the room. Let's get rid of those nerves. Good evening! I like that. Wow, hey Grand Rapids!

As Chair of the Commission, I call this meeting of the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to order at 5:04 p.m.

This meeting is being live streamed at YouTube.

For anyone in the public watching who would prefer to watch via a different platform than they are currently using, please visit our social media at Redistricting MI to find the link for viewing on YouTube.

Our live stream today includes closed captioning. Closed captioning, ASL interpretation, and Spanish and Bengali and Arabic translation services will be provided for effective participation in this meeting. Please E-mail us at Redistricting@Michigan.Gov for additional viewing options or details on accessing language translation services for this meeting.

People with disabilities or needing other specific accommodations should also contact Redistricting at Michigan.gov.

This meeting is being recorded and will be available at www.Michigan.gov/MICRC for viewing at a later date.

This meeting is also being transcribed, and those transcriptions will be made available and posted on Michigan.gov/MICRC along with the written public comment submissions.

There is also a public comment portal that may be accessed by visiting Michigan.gov/MICRC. This portal can be utilized to post maps and comments which can be viewed by both the Commission and the public.

Members of the media who may have additional questions before, during or after tonight's meeting should direct those questions to Edward Woods III, our Communications and Outreach Director for the Commission. WoodsE3@Michigan.gov. That's that young man you see walking down the aisle that is our communication and Outreach Director he is the handy dandy expertise friend on all things media and the reason why it's going smoothly today on top of our staff.

For the purpose of the public watching and the public record, I will turn the Department state Staff to take note of the Commissioners present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Thank, you Madam Chair and Commissioners.

Please say present when I call your name. If you are attending the meeting remotely, please announce during roll call that you are attending the meeting remotely. And

unless your absence is due to military duty, announce your physical location by stating the county, city, township or village and the state from which you are attending the meeting remotely.

I'll start with Doug Clark.

- >> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Juanita Curry.
- >> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Anthony Eid?
- >> COMMISSIONER EID: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Brittini Kellom?
- >> CHAIR KELLOM: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rhonda Lange?
- >> COMMISSIONER LANGE: Present, attending remotely from

Reed City, Michigan.

- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Steve Lett?
- >> COMMISSIONER LETT: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Cynthia Orton?
- >> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: MC Rothhorn?
- >> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rebecca Szetela?
- >> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Janice Vallette.
- >> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Erin Wagner?
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Richard Weiss?
- >> COMMISSIONER WEISS: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Dustin Witjes?
- >> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: 12 Commissioners are present and

there is a quorum.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much Department of State staff. If there is no objection, I would like to provide a small presentation.

Hearing no objection, I'm going to provide the welcome and introductions for this evening.

Hello again. My name is Brittini Kellom and I'm the Commissioner and current Chair of the Commission. And I want to welcome you to the MICRC public hearing in Grand Rapids.

This is our last hearing for the first round of public hearings. And so this is truly a momentous and exciting occasion, part of the reason why I want to create good energy,

to let you all know you are truly part of something we are excited about. And this has just been so, so, so much fun.

We are also happy you are here to learn about Michigan's new redistricting process and how you can engage throughout this process to ensure your voice is heard. In looking at the agenda, please note that the vast majority of our time this evening is spent listening to you.

We are eager to hear your ideas either in person or remotely about drawing Michigan's Congressional, House and Senate districts.

In addition to hearing about District lines, we also want to hear your ideas about communities of interest.

At this time, I would like my fellow colleagues who are sitting right here with me to introduce themselves and share where they live in Michigan, the Great Lakes state. You have heard from our Commissioner Lange joining us virtually, so I will start with Commissioner Rothhorn and go along the back and then come up this way.

>> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Good evening, Grand Rapids. Thanks for being here. My name is MC Rothhorn. I'm from Lansing, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER LETT: Good evening and welcome. We are glad to see you. My name is Steve Lett and I currently live in Interlochen up by Traverse City. I'm kind of the northern western Commissioner since I actually grew up and lived in the Lansing area. So I'm somewhat familiar with this side of the state also.

Welcome, glad you are here.

>> COMMISSIONER WEISS: Thank you for so many of you coming out to see us tonight. My name is Richard H Weiss. I live in Saginaw Township in Saginaw, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Good evening. My name is Dustin Witjes. I like all of my esteemed colleagues up here are excited to hear who you have to say. And depending on what day of the week it is, I'm either from Howell or Ypsilanti, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Good evening. My name is Cynthia Orton and I currently live in Battle Creek, Michigan. And we are excited to see so many of you tonight and hear what you have to say.

>> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Welcome everyone. My name is Janice Vallette and live in Highland, it's a little Township outside of Detroit about 50 miles.

We are all anxious to hear everything you have to say.

So welcome again.

>> COMMISSIONER EID: Hello, Grand Rapids. Wow, you have a beautiful City out here, I got to say.

My name is Anthony Eid.

And I'm from one of the Metro Detroit suburbs, Orchard Lake, Michigan.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Good evening, everybody. Thank you for having us here tonight. I'm super excited to hear what everyone has to say. My name is Rebecca Szetela. I'm from Wayne County, Michigan.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: And for the third time this evening, I'm Brittini Kellom. I am born and raised from the City of Detroit. And I am so still living there so very happy to be here. I had lunch by the water. And I always enjoy a good waterway. And I'm just so happy you are here, however you are here, whether you are going to share your voice tonight or just listen. I want you to know you are part of an amazing thing.

So in 2018, oh, my goodness. Charge it to my brain and not my heart. Please, forget my introduction, my two buddies over here introduce yourselves.

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Welcome. I'm very pleased to have all of you here and we are excited to listen to what you have to say. My name is Douglas Clark and I'm a Commissioner from Rochester Hills, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Good evening, everyone. I too am pleased to see all of you and we are anticipating your comments and your thoughts about how you want this redistricting done. So feel very free, comfortable to say what you have to say. Juanita Curry. I'm from Detroit, Michigan.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: We are a fun group. We are a little tired but we are here. So in 2018 more than 61% of Michigan voters intentionally and deliberately passed proposal two, which is a ballot initiative for voters and not legislatures to take responsibility for map fairness and public feedback in the redistricting process and created the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. For the first time in Michigan's history, the MICRC will lead the redistricting process to draw fair and independent maps.

Comprised of 13 randomly selected Michigan citizens, that includes four who affiliate as democrats, five who affiliate as independents and four who affiliate as republicans through a lottery run by the Michigan Department of State. The MICRC has the exclusive authority in this new redistricting process for Michigan's Congressional, House and Senate districts.

As fellow residents, the MICRC understands your expectations to draw maps in an open and transparent manner, that meets constitutional mandates. Our mission and vision exemplifies our resolve, not just for today but for future generations as well. In your interaction with the MICRC and its staff, you should witness the core values of integrity, respect, transparency, and being purposeful. Once again, we are glad that you're here. And we look forward to hearing from you.

We are sitting a little further apart today.

So, next, if there are no objections, we will have our Executive Director, Sue Hammersmith, provide a presentation.

Hearing no objection, please proceed, Executive Director Hammersmith, and tell us a little bit about the public hearings.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: Thank you, Commissioner Kellom. Good evening. And I'm so happy that everyone is here tonight. It's great to see a nice turnout to share your thoughts with this Commission.

So a little bit about the public hearings purpose.

Okay, I have a dead clicker.

Magic.

Okay, the clicker is not working very well.

So before these Commissioners can draw the first line on a map, they have to hold at least ten public hearings according to the Constitution.

Our Commissioners are over achievers, this is their 16th public hearing over the last eight weeks.

[Applause]

There are three purposes of the public hearings.

First, to inform the public about the redistricting process.

Second, to share the purpose and responsibilities of the Commission.

Thank you.

And, thirdly to solicit input from the public, and that's the most important one. We are here to hear from you.

So what is redistricting? Every ten years the lines have to be redrawn throughout the whole United States including in the State of Michigan.

The process is called redistricting.

And it changes because the population changes.

People are born, some people die, we have people who move around, so to different places.

So that's why the lines will be drawn differently.

The process of drawing the lines is known as redistricting here in Michigan the Commissioners will draw 13 Congressional districts, 38 Senate districts and 110 House Districts.

So the Commissioners purposes and responsibilities include being the one and only entity responsible for drawing the lines.

To operate in an impartial and transparent manner that instilled integrity in the process.

And they conduct public outreach that represents fairness, awareness, transparency, and engagement seeking to obtain meaningful participation from you, the citizens of our state.

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They also adopt the three sets of maps for the Congressional, State Senate and State House districts.

They ensure integrity, public availability and accountability for the data.

Public comments and the Commission information.

And, lastly, they will draw lines to comply with State and Federal laws.

So there are seven criteria for redistricting.

These also are stated in our Constitution.

And these are in rank order.

So the first one is the most important.

That's the Federal law to ensure equal population and adhere to the Voting Rights Act.

Secondly, the lines have to be geographically contiguous.

We can't join little islands of the state together.

Third, we take into account communities of interest.

And I'll share a definition in a minute.

The fourth and fifth have to do with partisanship or lack thereof I should say.

So there can't be a disproportionate advantage given to any political party.

Or we cannot favor or disfavor an incumbent or a candidate for office.

Sixth, they have to reflect the City, County and Township lines. And, lastly, the lines have to be reasonably compact.

So what are communities of interest? Communities of interest may include, but are not limited to, populations that share cultural or historical characteristics or economic interests.

They don't include relationships with political parties, incumbents or political candidates.

What does the MICRC want to know about the communities of interest? First of all, we would like you to name your community of interest.

We would like to know where it belongs on a map.

We have opportunities for you to go on our website and actually draw a map.

We want to know what common bonds you share.

What is important to you.

Where you want to be connected to or not connected to.

So lots of questions that anything you can do to describe your community of interest in a more thorough way will help us understand where that goes on a map.

And why are we here? To hear directly from you.

We want to hear from you.

The public, the citizens of our state.

And we also want to learn about communities of interest.

So why should you care? This is a historic process for the first time ever citizens have a voice in the redistricting process in the State of Michigan.

It's a new method of operating.

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Openness, transparency, and public engagement represent the principles of this new redistricting process.

And as the third criteria in the process we want to hear about communities of interest, people that have shared likenesses and characteristics and want to be represented by people who will represent their interests.

So these districts will last for the next ten years.

So this is your opportunity and we thank you for participating.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much, Executive Director Sue Hammersmith. At this time, if there is no objection, we will now have the guidelines explained to us regarding public comment.

Hearing no objection, I will give the floor over to our General Counsel, Julianne Pastula, who will provide public comment guidelines.

>> MS. JULIANNE PASTULA: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, Grand Rapids.

Thank you so much for the warm welcome.

It's an honor to be here and to serve as the Commissioner's General Counsel.

I just wanted to briefly cover some of the public comment guidelines for this evening's event.

No, there we go.

I apologize.

I am doing whatever I feel like with the buttons tonight.

I apologize.

So here we are on the proper slide.

This evening in-person public comment will occur first followed by our remote public comment participants.

Time limit for each public comment speaker is two minutes.

You will see a timer on the screens to either side of the stage.

And there will be an audible timer alarm that goes off when the timer reaches zero.

Please conclude your remarks when the timer when you hear the timer or see zero.

If any person disrupts the orderly progress of this meeting or refuses to comply with applicable MICRC guidelines and rules, the Chairperson may rule that person out of order and/or order their removal from this meeting.

We encourage the public to pride their comment and submit proposed maps in the Commission's public comment portal which is available at www.Michigan.gov/MICRC. And as has been stated numerous times the Commission is very much looking forward to hearing your comments this evening, thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much, General Counsel. If there is no objection, we will now begin our in-person public comment. Hearing no objection, we will now proceed with public comment.

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So a little bit of the reminders that our General Counsel just explained, individuals who have signed up and indicated that they would like to provide in-person public commentary to the Commission will now be allowed to do so.

You'll step to the nearest microphone when I call your number.

Please feel free to introduce yourself.

You do not just have to be a number to us. If you don't want to introduce yourself, that's totally fine as well.

You will have two minutes to address the Commission.

Please conclude your remarks when your two minutes has ended and you hear the timer.

A timer, again, will be displayed on the screen.

I typically do not interrupt people.

I just ask that if your sentence ends with thank you, you don't say and thank you for, you know, another paragraph of public commentary.

So we want to honor everyone's time.

If you feel like you've been cutoff or you are extra spirited and you have more to say or you think you want to talk about another area of the map or anything, we encourage you to please submit those comments on our portal.

Again, you will have this website memorized, www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

Because we have quite a bit of you commenting, and that is a good thing, I'm going to call four numbers.

Obviously, only one person can speak at a time, but just know you are on deck or on cue.

I'm going to have the odd numbers come to my left at this microphone.

And the even numbers go to the right at that microphone.

If you have mobility issues or you plain old just don't feel like walking all the way to the other side and you are an odd or even number, you are free to walk to the microphone that is closest to you.

Is that okay?

All right, so to start off our public comment. I'm going to call numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4.

1 and 3 should hang over here if they can.

Are you number one, ma'am? In the blue?

>> Yes, right here.

>> My right, your left.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Don't feel -- I feel back when folks are walking all the way across the room.

And, number one, when you are ready to speak you can.

>> Thank you for your Commission to redistricting.

My name is Dorothy Munson.

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I'm a representative of the nonprofit, non-partisan group proactive here in Grand Rapids.

Proactive works with underserved people primarily on the south side of the Metro Grand Rapids area.

It works on voter registration, voting rights, vaccine distribution and other community issues.

20 months ago I decided that getting 100 people to vote safely and regularly was a worthy legacy.

My husband and I developed funded and, with friends, distributed packets of nonpartisan, bilingual, permanent absentee voter sign up information to 14,000 residents of 22 of these underserved Black and Brown Metro Grand Rapids precincts.

Metro Grand Rapids now has two State Representatives.

Their districts are split as the inner city and an outer city including some other areas.

Population wise, Grand Rapids should have two representatives.

It should be split north and south.

These areas are distinctly different populations and both need dedicated representation.

For instance, in one area there are 17,000 Black families that are served by five schools, five high schools that were full service.

Due to educational cuts, four of the five are now specialty schools, lacking sports and other after-school programming.

Representation counts.

Ideally the cities of Wyoming and Grandville would be another State House District as these communities have many things in common.

They share similar school systems, working class populations, community services, parks, utilities and water and sewer systems.

Getting this right, we will have the power to provide voices for justice, balance, equity and shared resources for those who have been gerrymandered and left behind.

Thank you for your commitment.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Dorothy, thank you so much for taking the time to address the Commission.

We appreciate you.

Two.

>> My name is [inaudible] and I've lived in Kent County for 32 years, 7 in the City of Grand Rapids, 25 in Grand Rapids Township.

21 of those years I was a teacher.

I've been here half my life.

I thank you Commissioners for your time.

Yours is a complex and difficult task.

I'm delighted that this process seeks to be nonpartisan.

I supported prop two to get a proposition passed, that vote shows deep support for a fresh start with new maps that emphasize fair and competitive elections. Justin Amash, a Michigan Congressman, rep three, to the last has acknowledged our area as gerrymandered. And I heard him speak at a town hall meeting at the high school and he perfectly supported fair redistricting, quote, even though it will make my reelection more difficult.

We don't want to see edits to the old maps, gerrymandered maps. We want to start new.

I live in Grand Rapids Township now.

Me, my families and my communities activities and interests center around this.

Grand Rapids Township and neighbors, Kentwood, and East Grand Rapids. Examples of three neighbors share the Woodland Mall and East 28th shopping home. Grand Rapids, who has a bigger hub, for example, Kentwood, East Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township all use Grand Rapids city sewage and water services.

My recommendation is this: Kentwood, East Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township have significant commonalities and ties. And keep them as a community of interest.

And the current guidelines, Kentwood makes the least sense. At the Federal level, it is split between two house seats while parts of Monroe County, Calhoun County are Michigan three.

At the State level, Kentwood is in District 72, separate from the contiguous partner cities.

Similarly, Grand Rapids Township should not be with rural Townships. And East Grand Rapids should not be with rural Townships, which it currently is at the house level. Kentwood should not be with rural Townships outside of Kent County at the house level and different districts the Federal level. And similarly keep Kentwood, East Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids a community of interest together.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to provide commentary to the Commission.

We appreciate you.

Three.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. Thank you for adhering to a democratic process which allows citizens to share our thoughts and concerns.

My name is Cynthia Davis. And I have called Hudsonville, Georgetown Township, Ottawa County home for nearly 50 years.

There is a diversity of communities of interest in Hudsonville, Georgetown Township and Ottawa County.

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The Hudsonville Public School District covers approximately 80 square miles, which include zip codes for Hudsonville, Jenison, Allendale, Zeeland, Hamilton, Byron Center and Grandville.

And Hudsonville is called the salad-bowl city because of the rich tradition of agriculture that it shares with all of Ottawa County and yet manufacturing is fast making inroads in the geographical counties.

And the services of the Hudsonville Public library are used by patrons from Jamestown Township, Blendon Township and Georgetown Township just as Hudsonville patrons might use those libraries as well.

These communities have been friendly rivals for decades and yet they support and share in community activities and events.

Georgetown Township was ranked by an Mlive as Number 30 of the 75 largest cities and Townships in Michigan.

Hudsonville is the third largest City in Ottawa County.

Ottawa County is the fastest growing County in Michigan. All of this means that the community of interest identifying today for redistricting may not be the same community of interest in five years.

My further concern is that the community of interest assigned to me may not represent me.

We need to keep intact the diverse communities of interest to ensure that citizens are represented equally.

Therefore, I would urge the Commission to funnel the standards by the Michigan Supreme Court and to keep Ottawa County intact at both the State and Federal levels rather than basing redistricting on communities of interest, which might change or might not even exist in a few short years.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Cynthia, thank you for taking the time to address the Commission.

Four?

>> Good evening.

My name is Connie. I have lived in the Georgetown Township, Ottawa County for almost 45 years.

This is my community of interest.

My husband and I have raised four of our five children here. And along with three of our five grandchildren have and are currently attending public schools in Jenison and Hudsonville, which are second to none.

I worship here.

Volunteer here.

And I take advantage of our breathtakingly beautiful West Michigan lakeshore.

I strongly believe that we do not need to change in Districting. And I respectfully ask the Commission to please leave Ottawa County intact.

I believe in the adage if it's not broken don't fix it.

Thank you for the time and effort you all are putting into this monumental task.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to provide your public comment, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

5, 6, 7 and 8.

>> Hello.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and for your hard work on the Commission.

My name is Elaine OverBeck. I was born and raised in Grand Rapids area and I have lived in several areas of the City.

I retired recently to Kentwood.

I supported prop two and feel starting over with a clean slate with citizens making decisions. The State of Michigan has gone through so many changes over the recent past demographically, economically and culturally.

We need districts to reflect these changes.

The most important thing in the democracy is the right to vote and to have that vote count.

Fair districts solves the gerrymandering problem.

The growth in and around the City has changed dramatically.

The colleges and universities, more apartments built, and diverse groups of people moving to downtown.

I believe that the south side of Grand Rapids, the cities of Wyoming and Kentwood share the same demographics, economics and diversity to make a great city of interest. They are all in Kent County with touching borders.

While I live in Kentwood, I attend church on the west side.

Spend time working with the underserved in the Heartside Neighborhood.

I have seen many changes in the Kent County area over the years and realize we need to start over with a clean slate to reflect the changes.

Fairness to all, citizens is the American ideal.

Only when every voice is heard can we continue to be the standard for the rest of the world.

Thank you for your time and attention.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to provide public commentary to the Commission.

Six.

>> Hello. Hi. My name is Betty Ann. I'm from here.

Mecosta County, the lower part of this dumbbell District, the 102nd. So I advocate to have Mecosta and Isabella comprised at 102nd. And for the 33rd, add Clair and Gratiot Counties as well.

My COI or my emphasize is the watershed and the waterways, the Pine River, the Chippewa and the Muskegon Rivers.

One fifth of the world's freshwater surrounds Michigan.

We should address the injection wells that threaten aquifers and wells by injecting chemical and radioactive waste under great pressure into old fracking well sites.

The earth is not static. I'm the daughter of a geologist.

Also another concern is concentrated animal feeding operations called Kfoas. And they pose a harm from livestock waste and fertilizer runoff. And this contributes to harmful algae blooms, which grow all along the shore of Michigan, which shut out the sun and disrupt the aquatic life of our waterways. All tributaries eventually feed into the Great Lakes. And the Muskegon River and western Mecosta County, Nestle extract water faster than the aquifer can recharge itself, and Nestle makes billions bottling water while paying nearly nothing.

The case in point, foot residents were switched to obtain water via World War II with leaded pipes and paid the highest water bills in the country for water they could not drink. While Nestle sold water back to Flint, sacrificing local watersheds for private profit and plastic pollution.

I'm here to advocate for wildlife, all wildlife, but today especially today turtles. I have got one on my back. And even salamanders. I just don't want my District to be shaped like one. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Betsy Ann, for highlighting natural resources as a community of interest.

I think your comment exemplifies that just the diversity of things that are important. So, again, that's an example that we are considered everything through this process.

Seven.

>> Hello. My name is frank Lynn and live in Grand Rapids Township. And I want to thank you all for the hard work you're doing and I'm sure you'll come up with great maps.

I live in Grand Rapids Township.

Grand Rapids Township is an urban Township.

Actually as I've been -- I lived in the Township for 40 years.

And little by little the cities of Grand Rapids has been eating up our Township.

It is an urban place.

We use East Grand Rapids roads.

We shop in Kentwood.

And we should be represented by those areas.

We should look like those areas.

Currently my Senate District goes all the way up to Oakfield Township which is up by Greenville.

That is an hour away from where I live, and it's very rural.

We need better representation.

We need maps that have straight lines.

We don't need, as the woman before me pointed out, salamanders that draw districts that fit the desires of the elected officials.

We need districts that provide representation for the people that live in them.

We use the roads of Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids.

We use the transit systems.

We use their services.

Currently I shop in Grand Rapids, East Grand Rapids and Kentwood.

Those are the places that I need my representatives to come from.

I don't need -- I rarely see the elected officials that I have now.

I need representatives that I can talk to on a regular basis.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Frank, thank you for taking the time to speak to the Commission.

Eight.

>> Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts on your task.

My name is Charles Hampton and I live in the Raybrook Senior Living Community in Southeast Grand Rapids.

I'm a retired professor of mathematics from the College of Wister in Ohio. I grew up in Plymouth, a western suburb of Detroit. I graduated from the University of Michigan and I moved back from Ohio to Grand Rapids after I retired.

I've had an interest in redistricting and anti-gerrymandering efforts for more than 40 years.

I'm one of the few persons, perhaps the only one to speak to this Commission, who has had experience doing the task with which this Commission has been charged.

In 1991 I was hired as a consultant by California's independent panel for redistricting guided by the nonpartisan family input and working alone, I drew the Congressional districts and the legislative districts for both houses of the California legislature.

I want to make three quick points to this Commission.

First, the common news reports that the late release of the census data will delay the redistricting process is patently false.

Working alone I accomplished the district of California in less than three months.

California was an exceedingly complicated situation.

They added three Congressional districts and had three different ethnic groups to worry about satisfying their needs.

African/Americans.

Hispanics.

And Asians.

Point two. The goal of drawing districts with a populations that are one person or almost ideal number is patently absurd.

No one, not even the Census Bureau believes their numbers are that accurate. And the districts drawn come into use two years after the census and they last for a decade. I understand the goal is to satisfy Supreme Court demands.

And, lastly, I would suggest that the writing of this proposal, I wish it excluded any political information.

When I did it in California, I had no access to political information. And I would suggest that would be a better process here and after the lines are done you evaluate the political consequences. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission. Nine, 10, 11 and 12, please.

>> My name is James.

I spent 41 years in the field of education, high school teacher, coach, principal and 27 years as a school superintendent.

I also served as an adjunct professor at Grand Valley State University. And I also during that tenure was a rotary president for a local rotary and I was elected the assistant Governor for the International Rotary For Southwestern Michigan.

During my tenure I noticed how school districts struggled financially because District lines are drawn on a monetary reason.

I want to thank you for finally drawing up new and fair voting districts based upon the criteria you have listed rather than boundaries drawn for political aspirations.

Given your criteria concerning population equality, geographical contiguous, City boundaries and community of interest, I have a recommendation.

My first house I bought was in the City of Wyoming, Michigan.

And I now live in Grandville, Michigan.

The house I bought in Grandville, Michigan was closer to my administration offices in Wyoming, Michigan than my house in Wyoming.

The congregation of my church is made up from individuals from both cities.

Children living in Wyoming attend Grandville Schools.

Children living in Grandville attend the Wyoming Schools.

Members in the local service clubs and organizations come from both cities. Rivertown mall, a large shopping mall, is located near the City boundaries. And both communities work together on many services.

My recommendation is this: Seeing that both are so close to the criteria you listed and the fact that their population together meets the criteria you set for a voting District, these two cities should become one voting District.

Another concern was Kent County.

It has the population for seven districts.

There should be no need to cross county lines for voting districts.

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The County already shares many services, the library, sheriff, Kent Intermediate School District, et cetera, and seems logical to keep them contiguous on County borders.
Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission.
Ten.

>> Hi.
I want to start first by recognizing the Commission for all the time and effort that you have put in to coming up, with fair districts for us.

I really appreciate this.

It has to be a difficult task.

I also want to acknowledge those people who have been involved with Voters Not Politicians who have actually brought this redistricting effort to fruition.

My name is Kim Gates. I have worked and lived in Caledonia Township of Kent County all of my adult life for over four decades. It's a wonderful rural, semi-rural community that should be aligned with other semi-rural communities as well. Residents here have chosen to live away from the bustle of the City and the busy suburbs.

My State House District 86 currently crosses over the County line into Ionia County. Certainly, when you're looking at communities of interest, the services of Kent County, including but not being limited to sheriff, Road Commission, Intermediate School District, the courts, The Department of Public Works, the correctional facilities, health departments and the parks should be represented in a State House within the boundaries of Kent County who share those interests.

Please respect the boundary lines of the county when determining State House districts, starting with new maps instead of trying to tweak the old ones, which are unfairly partisan.

Our County is also split up among Congressional districts because of gerrymandering. Since Kent County is the fourth most populous County in Michigan, and Grand Rapids is the largest City in West Michigan and anchors the west side of the state, we need to have Kent County's boundaries within a single Congressional District as well.

Thanks again for your efforts to help Michigan get fair representation for all of their citizens.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: We appreciate your support and you taking the time to address public comment or to address the Commission.

11.

>> My name is Nick.
And I live in beautiful Alto, Michigan, southeast of the airport.
First of all, I'd like to thank you all for the work you're doing.
And the wonderful atmosphere that you've created among yourselves.
I sat through that presentation of the computer folks that went on and on and nobody's eyes glazed over.

Everybody has been cordial and cooperative with one another.

If there are misunderstandings, you have asked questions, very civil.

Congratulations on that.

I'm going to get in trouble because the previous speaker would -- spoke to commonalities. And I'd like to say that I think the two most important criteria are keeping the boundaries as short as possible for each District no matter which of the three maps you're drawing.

And, second, equal votes.

Obviously, if you have more in one District than another, the District with more numbers in it loses voting power.

Also, I think there is an advantage if a District has people of different makeups and kinds and interests in it.

And I know it makes it easier for the representatives if everybody in their District looks exactly like everybody else.

But I think it's healthy for them to do the work, to find out that people in northern part of Grand Rapids and how they are different from the farmers down south of Grand Rapids.

Once again, thank you very much for the work you're doing. And I just wish I was one of you.

I tried to be, but they didn't take me.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Nick, thank you so much for acknowledging our best attempts to be an integratus group, a passionate group and transparent and we appreciate that. 12, please.

>> Good evening. My name is Diana Nelson and I'm a resident of Holland. Back in 1981 I was a member of the Illinois general assembly. And we were all called into the speaker's office one by one and we were shown the map.

And on the map was exactly where our house was located.

So I know a little bit about redistricting.

And how districts can be gerrymandered.

And my message to you this evening is really quite simple and much like those of the two previous speakers.

The perfect is the enemy of the good.

You cannot include all communities of interest.

And having computers today, it is quite easy to start up in the UP and draw districts probably following County lines because that makes the most sense.

And coming down, so that you get substantially equal, contiguous and compact districts.

When you get the computer to do all that, if you're coming to the bottom of the state, you can then go back and jigger to find some particular communities of interest.

Maybe Muslims in Dearborn or people who live in Kent County.

But what I'm here to tell you is communities of interest change.

They won't be there in ten years.

I'm old enough to remember Dixie-crats in the south in this country who were all segregationists.

I remember liberal republicans who supported the equal rights amendment and were prochoice.

I mean, communities of interest change. And it is not a bad idea to have a representative getting to know everyone in his or her District.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for sharing your perspective with the Commission.
13.

>> Good evening. My name is Chris. I'm a nonpartisan City Commissioner in East Grand Rapids. And I'm speaking to you tonight with my City Commissioner hat on, with an eye towards governance and feasibility of districts.

I really appreciate the opportunity to be here tonight and thank you for your hard work in this important democratic process.

East Grand Rapids is a metropolitan city here in Kent County. We share a border with Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township. We have a population density of just 11,000 and 3.5 square miles. We are the smallest of the six cities collectively known in the region as the Metro six.

Our citizenry is active, highly engaged in local issues and closely connected personally and professionally to our partner cities of Kentwood, Wyoming, Grandville, Walker and Grand Rapids. The Metro six collectively advises the Rapid Transit System, whose board of directors includes elected and appointed representatives solely from these six cities. We collectively support the waste stream management required to run the county waste-to-energy facility.

Our mayors, city managers and deputy city managers collectively make up the urban Metro and mayors and managers consortium. We all have similar municipal concerns with zoning, transit and construction. We all offer similar services to our residents and believe in the importance of municipal Government.

We are more similar than we are different.

I'm here tonight to urge you to consider the following overarching suggestions for districts drawn that include East Grand Rapids.

First is that East Grand Rapids and all communities as much as possible remain whole in districts drawn by the Commission.

Second is that this Commission considers the communities of interest for East Grand Rapids to include the Metro six cities rather than those more rural Townships such as Cannon and Oakfield Township. Or the ex-urban rural townships such as Cascade and Ada. These townships are an important part of Kent County but their needs and issues that they face do not align with those of East Grand Rapids. These townships offer

fewer services and depend on our county for roads and law enforcement unlike cities that have the services internally.

And different is not bad, combining such dissimilar communities requires elected officials to split policy focus which makes meaningful district representatives difficult.

Thank you so much for this opportunity and have a great evening.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for the perspective to the Commission. We appreciate that.

14, 15, 16 and 17.

>> Good afternoon.

My name is Kurt Kimble. I've been a resident of Grand Rapids area for over 65 years. I work for the City of Grand Rapids for 35 years.

The last 22 as City manager, in that capacity I was scrupulously apolitical. Because of my longevity in the area and from my experience I'm familiar with the Grand Rapids Metropolitan area and West Michigan in general.

I was an enthusiastic supporter of prop two, so much so that I applied for one of your seats on the Redistricting Commission as an independent.

And I've been a student of electoral politics and public policy for most of my life.

I know the commitment each of you has made to serve on this Commission. Your work is of utmost importance. For too long political districts have been drawn by politicians with ulterior motives in mind. It doesn't matter which party is doing the drawing, the results are the same, odd-shaped maps that defy simple logic and fairness.

Here are my thoughts what the end product should look like generally. You should start with a blank chalkboard.

Do not try to work from the existing maps or strive to protect incumbents. Try really hard to set your partisan leanings aside and paying particular attention to community boundaries and avoid splitting them as they are natural communities of interest.

The districts you divide should be as compact as possible. Specifically in the Grand Rapids area, there are a great variety of populations.

The City of Grand Rapids is fundamentally different, political, culturally, and economically from Kent County at large with some exceptions.

I understand the smallest districts people draw include 90,000 people.

In that exercise southwest and southeast Grand Rapids should be one District.

Northwest and northeast should be another.

On a larger level, your urban core communities like Grand Rapids, Kentwood, East Grand Rapids, Walker, Wyoming and Grandville should be kept together in one District as the previous speaker said. These are a couple of pointers. And your work is incredibly important and I will you success in arriving at a balance plan you can all wholeheartedly support.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Commissioner appreciates you taking the time to address us this evening. And we will move to 15.

>> Good evening and thank you for the esteemed Council for the opportunity to speak tonight. I'm Jonathan Fitzgerald, council member at large in the City of Wyoming, a nonpartisan body.

Largely forgotten, Wyoming is the 18th largest City in the state and the second largest in West Michigan, behind only Grand Rapids.

I ask you to consider the implementation of a State House District, which includes only two cities, Wyoming and Grandville in whole.

As Grand Rapids largest suburb, I ask that Wyoming be included with Grandville, not rural Townships when considering State House districts unlike in the past.

Wyoming and Grandville are communities with vast, shared interests.

First, the two cities share important physical resources including Wyoming's water supply, clean water supply to the City of Grandville.

The fire departments of the cities also have direct response plans with each other alerting both departments of incidents in bordering areas of each City.

Additionally, the two largest elementary schools of Grandville Public Schools are located in Wyoming, each with a student body population exceeding 575 students. Eventually these students advance to Grandville High School, which is an adjacent property to the City of Wyoming.

If polled, you would find that most Wyoming residents in west and southwest regions of the City would already more closely identify with Grandville primarily due to the Grandville public will schools tax liabilities and common geographic areas of socialization, worship, and commerce.

From an economic perspective, Grandville and Wyoming have mutual interests in important corridors, along Chicago Drive, 28th Street and 44th Street, which contain industrial, commercial and retail establishments, utilized by residents and stakeholders of both communities.

Therefore, I ask you to adopt a State House District which includes Grandville and Wyoming. Population and demographics will be ideal and the common issues facing this community of interest will be fairly, accurately and best served when represented by a common State House District. Thank you for your time and consideration.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: John, we appreciate you taking the time to express your thoughts to the Commission.

16, please

>> Hello. Thank you for your time today and all the good work you guys are doing. And I appreciate everything you guys are taking your time for this.

I recently moved to Grand Rapids about a year ago, Metro area. And I've come from a rural area where some of our districts are made up of three counties, both state reps and State Senate seats. And I ask for communities of interest that simply that, you know, they do change.

I've seen people echoing that statement quite a lot. And what will be one District in one year will probably be a different group of people or different interests in ten years.

But also, I guess the main thing I'm just going to say is that when looking at new boundaries or drawing new districts I would encourage you to take in counties, cities and Townships and keeping those together as they already share a lot of common goals and interests.

So thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to address the Commission.

17.

>> I'm Eric Peel from Kent County here and Ada Township over that way. And thank you for your service so much.

I'm expecting great maps out of you guys and great benefits for the people of Michigan in the years to come.

I'd like to suggest that as you are drawing your maps, if you need a tie breaker, another criteria is I'd like to offer a suggestion of drawing the boundaries along watershed boundaries.

That's where the water flows from, somewhere down a river or something.

We've had a couple situations here.

One is the PFAS that is spread all over the Rogue River Watershed north of here. Rogue River comes in the Grand a couple miles that way. And the other is Grand Rapids Airport which is mostly in the Plaster Creek Watershed and comes into the Grand over here. But they decided to put their deicing fluid overflow that way into the Thornapple and enters the Grand way over there.

And I have this funny feeling that if somebody knew that their job included this watershed, that when they hear, oh, PFAS in the Rogue River, that's mine, I got to be all over this, that would be better than having that split among two or three Senators or House members.

I think it's worth a try.

And it has been done for land and water use issues out west.

Thank you so much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Eric, we appreciate the considerations that you share with the Commission.

18, 19, 20 and 21.

>> Good evening, everyone. My name is Scott. And I'm a writer, digital media guru, poll worker, election administration geek, and so much more.

I bring you greetings from the diverse, hardworking and all American City of Kentwood, Michigan.

Fun fact, East Kentwood high school is the most diverse high school in all of Michigan with students who come from dozens of countries, more than 60 countries, in fact.

Not so fun fact, none of Kentwood's State or Federal lawmakers even lived in Kent County, much less Kentwood, that is because of gerrymandering. I share a Congressional District with the town of Irons, Michigan, about a hundred miles north of where I live. But not Grand Rapids, which is less than a mile from where I live. I hope that all of Kent County is in the same Congressional District for the first time in 20 years.

In terms of the State Senate, as has been mentioned previously, southern Grand Rapids has a lot in common with a lot of the southern suburbs like Kentwood, also Grandville, Wyoming. And Northern Grand Rapids has a lot in common with some of the northern suburbs like East Grand Rapids and Walker and some of the Townships up there.

In terms of the State House, Kentwood has more than half of the ideal State House District population. And not since 1996 has a Kentwood resident served in the State House.

Our state reps have come from more affluent Townships.

If you must put Kentwood in a House District with a Township, please don't put us in with Northeast Allegan County, which is the case now.

And, in closing, thank you for all you do and want to see districts that make sense. Enjoy your visit to Grand Rapids, enjoy some Yesterdog while you are here and have a great 4th of July.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Scott, so much for sharing your comments with the Commission.

And for giving us that suggestion of Yesterdog. Is that what it is? Yesterdog, that seems to be a crowd favorite. And move to 19.

>> I'm Josh. I'm a business agent for Local 26, where the stage ends, behind the scenes here.

West Michigan, so I represent a whole bunch of people all the way up and down West Michigan. And a few of the things that we'd like to see and consider is Grandville and Wyoming being so much alike, we would like to see them kept as one House District. And Grand Rapids area, it's more than just one City. It's the cities around it.

So we think it would be very important for you to consider that, having that as a group. And if you need to split that up do it north and south, but keep it similarly with short lines drawn.

I'd like to thank you all for all the hard work you are doing and have a wonderful day and enjoy West Michigan.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much. And we wish you have a wonderful day as well.

20, please.

>> Good evening, everybody. My name is Wesley Watson. I'm from Ada, Michigan. I have been a member of the greater Grand Rapids community for six years. On behalf of the Michigan State conference and NAACP and the Greater Grand Rapids branch NAACP, the members of the Greater Grand Rapids Community I would like to emphasize the importance of the Commission to state the principles as we suggest to expand the Commission guidelines.

For example, prison gerrymandering referenced to the process of counting incarcerated persons at their usual residency, which is prison facilities, thereby inflating the number of voters in such districts by increasing funding and representation for individuals who will not benefit from either funding or voting powers and would likely return to their original place of residency once their original place of residency once the prison centers ends.

Prison gerrymandering removes needed funding and additional representation to those foster programs and policies that could reduce recidivism-ship and allow these individuals a next step or second chance.

The Commission should incorporate guidelines that account for District statistics that include populations of individuals that cannot vote.

Such measures will account for actual voting strength of these districts in areas at least until they return after incarceration.

Six states have passed legislation to end prison-based gerrymandering while six other states have pending legislation to end the practice.

We should practice to end prison gerrymandering.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for sharing your perspective with the Commission.

21, 22, 23, 24.

21, when you are at the mic and ready to speak, you can begin.

>> Good Michigan, afternoon.

My name is Sharee Gilbert Watts. I'm a high school English teacher. I live in the City of Wyoming. And I teach in Grandville Public Schools.

I have the best of both worlds.

I teach in a great community and live in an amazing community.

It's kind of...it kind of sounds beautiful.

Or splendid, better yet well forming.

What is well forming? Is that Wyoming and Grandville share water sewer agreement, Grandville residents use Wyoming parks, calls made to the fire and police departments dispatched to Wyoming and Grandville.

We share a transit system with Grand Rapids.

But my special area of interest is the schools and our children.

Well forming.

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And Grandville Public Schools, it extends to the City of Wyoming and the City of Grandville.

In fact, the two largely populated Grandville elementary schools are located in the City of Wyoming.

Those schools are Century Park, Learning Center and Grand View Elementary.

This partnership is beautiful. We work well together.

And it's the result of well forming.

My request is for when redistricting the six cities surrounding Grand Rapids, please connect Grandville and Wyoming.

We partner together for the sake of our children.

Ultimately our well-formed communities would greatly benefit from a State

Representative who is going to fight for the best interests of our children.

And having someone that recognizes that partnership and has experienced it would be great for these communities.

Again, we want a well-formed community. And those communities together would be Wyoming and Grandville to have a State Representative that recognizes the partnership that is already in place and still champion for our children.

I hold respect for your time and your task ahead.

I'm nuts about speaking out for children and what's best for them.

Years from now when you have put the districts together and I see the benefits of better legislature for the opportunities of our children, I will look back and thank you and remember this lady with this bright green shirt.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for that charge as someone who is also passionate about children and working with them, I appreciate your comment to the Commission this evening.

22, please.

>> Hi. My name is Dale and I'm from your Grand Haven Michigan.

The major premise I'm suggesting is the use of Townships to determine boundaries.

Most of the Townships are six square miles.

There are over 1200 Townships in Michigan.

Thus, many Townships may be needed to be combined in order to build a District.

Fewer Townships will be needed to build a District in such populated Counties as Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Kent, et cetera.

In fact, many of those Townships in those counties may require more than one house member.

My thought of determining the required districts is as follows: I propose to start at the northwest part of the Upper Peninsula and work downward.

When at the bottom of the Upper Peninsula, move east and proceed northward.

Repeat this process until the Upper Peninsula has been covered.

In this manner each District will have a similar geometrical shape as the other districts. Treating the Lower Peninsula will continue where the Upper Peninsula left off. And start at the northern tip of the Lower Peninsula and again work west to east at the eastern part of the state I would drop down and move back west.

In order to keep the populations consistent across districts, it may be necessary to split a Township into two or more quadrants.

Quadrants within a Township would be important for Townships with larger populations. However, using the same directional approach of west to east, and then dropping down south to the next quadrant would keep the districts as uniformly contiguous as possible.

This method would provide a symmetrical layout of districts that removes politics from the process.

Communities of interest have been mentioned.

For this process, while they provide benefits for communities, they should not be permitted to alter the District maps for house and Senate elections.

If used to alter District maps, that would be given to erode the maps and once again introduce gerrymandering.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to share your perspective with the Commission.

23.

>> Hi.

Hello.

I am Nanette.

I'm a wife, mother and teacher living in northern Kent County.

I'm also a Plainfield Township precinct captain in District six.

I have served families in the public school system for 17 years and some of our more diverse areas in Michigan.

And 12 years ago made a home for my family in Rockford, Michigan.

And I'm hearing a lot of great ideas about specific mapping tonight.

Mine is more a general comment regarding diversity and the need for representation across our communities.

During my work I have witnessed a lack of equity and diversity across our school districts with many districts struggling financially because District lines were drawn for monetary or political reasons.

I want to thank you for drawing up these new and fair voting districts based on the seven criteria that you listed for boundaries drawn for your goals tonight.

During the task of redistricting, it's imperative that you keep in mind that the District must reflect the state's diverse population and our communities of interest.

Populations that share cultural and historical characteristics must have an opportunity to be a represented fairly across West Michigan.

It's been clear to me as a mother and educator in our county, that there is a lack of diversity and representation across the districts. We need to give all of our voters a voice.

For years our Country has been known worldwide as a melting pot of culture and heritage, and this is something that many of us have been proud of. The term melting pot comes from the idea that all of the culture differences can meld together as if they were metals being melted down to become a stronger alloy. We must build these strong communities and show that we value our culture and communities by allowing all an opportunity for fair representation. Thank you so much for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Nanette. We appreciate you sharing your comment with the Commission.

24.

>> I'm Gary Stark, a resident of East Grand Rapids.

Thank you for your work to ensure that we can choose our own politicians, not the other way around.

The best way you can do this is by throwing out the old, gerrymandered maps and making a fresh start with new, more competitive districts.

I have three quick and simple points.

First, Kent is by far the most diverse County in West Michigan.

To dilute our urban and suburban vote gerrymandering split our six City Metro area between two U.S. Congressional districts.

All Kent County should be in one Congressional District.

Second, because of cracking, my current State House District, 73, lumps suburban, East Grand Rapids with distant rural Townships like Nelson and Spencer, which we have very little in common.

East Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids Township and Kentwood, three contiguous inner suburbs should form a House District of their own.

They have similar populations and interests.

They share a public transportation system.

Common road corridors like Beltline Highway and Breton Road and recreational gem, Reeds Lake.

These three inner suburbs are a logical community of interest and a natural State House District.

Third, Kent County should have three State Senate districts, two of these should be entirely within the County and drawn so they are both competitive by dividing the county's six City Metro area between them.

A third Senate District should include northern and eastern Kent County and other neighboring rural areas to serve rural voters.

Please keep Kent County together in one Congressional District with State House districts all within the County and two competitive State Senate Districts with our whole Metro area thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to provide commentary. We apologize for that little sound effect as you were talking.

25.

>> My name is Robert Baker from Kalamazoo.

And some of the things I'm going to be saying others have already said.

The first thing is I believe that counties should be the primary building block.

The second thing, and another gentleman just said is that, and I created a redistricting formula based on the same idea, is the secondary building block should be Townships.

And I found that if you try to look, try to combine communities of interest or ethnic groups or economic interests. And when I read the law there is a lot of different things you're supposed to do, you're going to end up with, first of all, you're going to end up with districts that polarize people. And there are going to be communities that are going to be missed.

It's much better to stick with something based on geographic proximity because it's totally objective and you do end up representing people quite well.

There is no clear definition in the law that I read about all these different things diversity, concentrating, demographics, the Secretary of State having the right to veto things.

I think what will happen is there is that old joke, what is a Camel? And the answer it's a horse drawn by a committee.

That is a joke because it's very true.

And I think if you try to put together all these community of interests and don't stick with building blocks, you're going to end up with a Camel.

And that's it, thank you.

Good luck with your work.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Robert, for your well wishes. And I know, I can't just speak for myself, but the Commission is up for the challenge.

So 26, please.

>> Distinguished Commissioners and guests, my name is [indiscernible] and I'm a resident of Holland. A truly fair redistricting process will keep Ottawa County together at both the state and Federal levels.

Our community is a thriving lakeshore community. Up and down the shores of Lake Michigan tourists go to the beach and communities such as Grand Haven or Holland.

And generations of residents have made their livelihoods of support their families based on the opportunities created by the lakeshore. Enjoying, utilizing and protecting the Great Lakes are not ideals but a way of life for Ottawa County residents both on-and-off the lakeshore.

Another point that unites Ottawa County is agricultural. They are a clear and strong agriculture communities that run from Jamestown to Holland. Blueberries are plentiful as you travel to Grand Haven along U.S. 31. And from Hudsonville to Conklin along the eastern boarders of Ottawa County, you will find a variety of vegetables, flora and agriculture products.

And I understand larger counties such as Kent County, where we are tonight, need to be broken up because of their sheer size, Ottawa County should be kept together. Ottawa County is a County whose values Dutch and Hispanic heritage are prevalent across the county and expand well beyond its borders.

According to 2019 census data, roughly 10.2% of Ottawa County residents had Hispanic or Latino origins. In comparison to the rest of the state, that number is quite substantial.

As a member of that 10.2%, I fear that by breaking up Ottawa County and my voice and therefore, my community's voice will be less represented at the State and Federal levels.

The interconnectedness of the community is something that I'm just really proud of. Diversity of the economic industries and vibrant ethnic communities is something that should be kept intact. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for providing public comment to the Commission.

27, 28, 29 and 30.

27, do we have 27 present? 28? It's okay, we will take 28.

>> We will jump out of order.

Good evening. My name is Kent Vanderwood.

I'm a lifelong resident of Kent County and a 25-year resident in the City of Wyoming. I'm here tonight to ask you to keep the City of Wyoming intact like many have been saying.

The City of Wyoming is home to 75,000 residents. It's located 24 miles east of Lake Michigan, covering 24.5 square miles within Kent County. The City's bordered by five municipalities, Byron Township and the cities of Grand Rapids, Grandville, Walker and Kentwood. Wyoming was incorporated from a township to a city in 1959 and is now the second largest community in the Grand Rapids, Wyoming Metropolitan statistical area or MSA.

By the way, that MSA was labeled the most rapidly growing economy in 2017 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. We are also part of the Metro six. You heard that word referred to earlier. The Metro six does many, many things together, that is Wyoming, Grandville, Walker, Kentwood, Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids.

One of the things that we do is our waste to energy recycling program run by those six cities. And I serve on that advisory board for that.

Wyoming is well connected to surrounding municipalities.

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The region and the rest of the state through a robust network of highways and Interstates and yet we have our own very distinct features.

Wyoming is a community characterized by unique assets including five school districts and diverse range of cultural backgrounds and a mixture of new and old residential neighborhoods.

I'm here tonight to say that I do not believe Wyoming should be broken up. It should remain together in its house, Senate and Congressional District as it has historically been.

The idea of about Wyoming and Grandville representing one House District is not new. That was the case I think about 20 years ago.

So we don't need to change that.

Let's keep it that way.

And let's get the job done.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to address the Commission.

29.

>> Good evening.

My name is Shawna. I currently reside in Ionia County.

I have lived in Ottawa County and I have worked for many years in Kent County and the Grand Rapids and surrounding areas.

I've heard many opportunities for the Commission to choose how they take their task. Whether it be water ducts, County lines, divided neighborhoods, whatever it may be. I think a majority of the citizens in Michigan chose to say that whatever is currently in place is not fair.

So if the council chooses to continue functioning with integrity and purpose of truth, I feel that everyone should have an opportunity to be represented by their schools, by whatever public services they get as equal as possible.

The opportunities, the previous person who brought up the dumbbell. Those are things how a majority of our things look like.

It cannot be something that is determined out of fairness.

It was out of either political parties or whatever the interest was at the time.

But I do believe that if the council continues to function with that purpose of truth and integrity, that the right things will be done.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Shawna, for taking the time to share your insight with the Commission.

30.

>> Good evening. My name is Jake. I'm currently a candidate for City Council in Lowell Michigan and here to speak on behalf of my community.

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The community is in Eastern Kent County and it is a community where you can go anywhere in town and run into a friend or a neighbor.

You see, we are small close-knit community.

We always power together in good times and bad.

Because the nature of our community, I ask that you question Lowell City and Township and Virginia Township as one community in a community of interest.

Our two Townships in our City share many resources including fire, electricity, our school District, and water and sewer.

I also ask that we are districted with similar communities such as ours and we are not grouped with more urban communities such as Kentwood, Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids.

The issue is a semi-rural community such as Lowell cannot be adequately addressed if we are coupled with more urban communities.

The Lowell community has also shared economic interest via the Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce.

I want our community to stay as one Congressional District, one Senate District and one House District.

I thank you for your time, your consideration and your willingness to listen to your constituents and the important and difficult issues that are in front of you.

Thank you, God bless.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Jake, thank you so much for taking the time to address the Commission.

31, 32, 33.

31 you can proceed.

>> Hello. My name is Thomas and I'm a proud to call Ottawa County a home for all my life.

There is a reason why Ottawa County is the fastest growing county in the state. The shared values and emphasis on solving problems to hard work and the beautiful lakeshore.

This Commission should keep Ottawa County together for state, House Districts, State Senate districts and for Congressional Directors.

Ottawa County is united by agricultural ties but not only spread to each corner of the County but across into Allegan, Kent, Muskegon Counties.

Communities like Byron Center, Sparta, Walker have more in common with Ottawa County than Grand Rapids. Grandville shares the same values. And residents shop at the same stores as people like me who live in Jamestown or Hudsonville or in Jenison. Since the beginning Ottawa County has never faltered on efficacy toward agriculture. Ottawa County is the second and most diverse agriculture county in the nation. And the financial impact Ottawa has on Michigan and the nation's economy is crucial.

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It is vital that we preserve the value of Ottawa County and the future generations who are to come from this preposterous phase. In recent years Michigan has declined in population, yet Ottawa County's population continues to rise because people want a part of it.

It's a special place and it needs to remain the same.

Michiganders from all over the state, Americans from all over the country and people from all over the world visit beaches in Saugatuck, Holland, Grand Haven, Muskegon, Pentwater and Ludington. Lake Michigan powers the communities across communities up and down the shoreline with Ottawa County representing the heart of the lakeshore. A fair and honest redistricting process will, one, not split up the lakeshore.

Two, keep Ottawa County together at all levels of redistricting.

And, three, recognizing neighboring communities that influence by Ottawa County economy and crucial with the Federal level.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to share your comments with the Commission.

32.

>> Good evening. My name is Gary. I live in East Grand Rapids.

I moved here from Chicago about five years ago.

I'm here today on my own behalf, on behalf of our Jewish temple that's located in Grand Rapids.

I love my new Michigan home.

I love my contiguous community of Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids and Grandville and Wyoming and Kentwood and Grand Rapids Township.

It's where I live.

It's where I shop.

It's where my conjugates live and shop, and they should have common representation.

It's only at election time because of gerrymandering that I tend to get in my car. I set my navigation system and I drive off to other communities like Battle Creek and Greenville and Calhoun and Ionia and Barry.

I love visiting those places. It's kind of like a vacation when I go there.

But they're not my community.

My community are the six contiguous areas that I said.

And I also want you to know that regardless of what you do, I'm going to continue going to the Battle Creek cereal festival each year.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission.

33.

>> Hello.

My name is Gail Harvey.

I'm from Grand Rapids, Michigan.

I've been a member of the Grand Rapids community for years.

On behalf of Michigan State conference NAACP, Greater Grand Rapids Branch NAACP and members of the Greater Grand Rapids Community, I would like to emphasize the adherence to the Commission stated redistricting principles as well as suggestions to expanding the MICRC guidelines.

For example, prison gerrymandering refers to the process of counting incarcerated persons at their usual residence, prison facilities.

Thereby inflating the number of voters in such districts by increasing funding and representation for individuals who are not benefit...who will not benefit from either funding or voting power.

And will likely return to their original places of residence in their hometowns.

Prison gerrymandering removes needed funding and additional representation that could foster programs and policies aimed at reducing recidivism and allowing these individuals a next step or a second chance.

The MICRC should incorporate guidelines that account for districts' statistics that exclude this population of individuals that cannot vote.

Such measures will account for the actual voting strength of the districts in the areas.

At least until measures are taken to permanently include these individuals in the areas where they are likely to return after incarceration.

Size of states pass...six states passed regulation so end prison-based gerrymandering while six other states have pending legislation to end the practice with some local communities working around prison gerrymandering and ignoring the prison population.

Additional redistricting.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Gail, I'm sorry, your allotted two minutes has ended. I wasn't sure if you heard the timer.

>> I did not.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: However, I encourage you to submit the rest of our public comment to our public comment portal www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

I never want anyone to feel they are cutoff. So please continue the conversation there.

As well as if you have something you're willing to part with, you can always approach us to submit what you have currently in writing or if you have a map or something you want to submit, you can approach and submit that real time right now.

So.

>> Okay.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Your two minutes has ended, but I just wanted to share that.

>> I'm going to submit it.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

>> Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: 34, please.

>> Hello.

My name is Josh.

Thank you all for being here today.

I was born in Holland, Michigan.

And raised in Zeeland. And I'm currently a senior at Grand Valley State University, so I live in Allendale most of the year. It is safe to say that I am West Michigan grown, and I hope to not change that.

The biggest point I want to make today when it comes to redistricting, Ottawa County should not be split up.

Across the whole County are shared the same values, economic ties and heritage.

There is a reason why Ottawa County is the fastest growing County in Michigan.

Kent County, on the other hand as has been mentioned, is too big to be fairly represented as one District.

Much of the culture and values we see in Ottawa County are also shared in Kent County cities nearby.

For example, Byron Center is in Kent County but it's much more closely related to the Hudsonville and Zeeland area than it is to Grand Rapids.

Grandville is much more related to Jenison and Jamestown than Grand Rapids as well.

Areas south of Ottawa County in Allegan especially share ties to Ottawa.

Southern Ottawa's agricultural shared with areas like Hamilton, Fillmore and southern Holland. The people that live in these areas live a similar lifestyle to those in Ottawa.

Allegan County and Ottawa are also connected through tourism. People go back and forth between Saugatuck and Holland to experience the great beaches and lakes.

These are I mentioned are examples of places that should be tied into a District with Ottawa County as I feel people in those areas will not be fairly represented if they were connected with Grand Rapids and the surrounding area.

I think everyone here wants a new District lines to be fair. And to be fair they should be drawn based on areas of shared cultures, values and economic ties and not to have anything to do with partisan issues.

At a Congressional level, to fairly draw the lines in West Michigan, it would only make sense to keep Ottawa County together and paired with surrounding areas that maintain the same culture and economy. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Josh, for taking the time to provide your comment to the Commission.

35.

>> I live in Walker.

My name is Paul.

And I have a very short comment to make and I think much of it has already been said.

And I think the important things is that we don't try to divide up our counties, don't try to divide up the areas in the rural parts of Michigan especially those areas that are considered Townships.

And try to maintain the boundaries within municipalities.

So rather than make it complicated by drawing in other counties and other areas and splitting them up, I think it would be much more advantageous and more simple and understandable if we follow municipal and not towns or boundaries and the rest with what was said. And the gentleman proceeding me makes sense. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking time to address the Commission.
36, 37, 38, 39 and why not 40.

So 36, if you are at the mic and you are ready to speak you can begin.

>> Hello. My name is Paul Franklin. I was born and raised in Grand Rapids and I live and work in Wyoming.

I would like to keep Wyoming and Grandville together.

It seems to work really good.

But I really like to see Grand Rapids be split north and south to serve its people better.

And I would like to thank you people for coming and listening to us. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Paul, for expressing your thoughts to the Commission.
37.

>> Hi, Brittini. Thanks so much for coming out here, the whole team. We appreciate everything you're doing.

I just wanted to share that I recently relocated from the great state of Texas to Michigan. And it's been very interesting to see how our communities work and to see how beautiful the state is.

I'd never really been here, so I was so happy to relocate to Michigan.

We absolutely love it.

And I would say that the community of interest of Ottawa County, to keep it together.

They do have shared values just like the gentleman that proceeded me.

I think it makes sense to look at the geographical areas when creating your boundaries and lines.

And I know that you all have a really big job in front of you.

I know that you're going to have to dig deep and look inside. And I just want to thank each and every one of you for taking that time to do that and for coming here and listening to what West Michigan has to say.

We love this state.

We love all the people in Michigan.

And it's been, like I said, very fun to work, to live and work here so thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to express your thoughts about your community of interest.

38.

>> Good evening. My name is Jason Finch, lifetime resident of Michigan. I'm a 25-year member of the plumbers, fitters and trade union 174. I'm currently employed as a business agent for them. I represent over a thousand members and 12 counties in West Michigan. As a representative, I hear problems, everything from family matters to political issues. One thing that comes up constantly is them not feeling that their voice matters in the area they live in when the maps are drawn blatantly obvious for one party.

We told them about prop two and they were energized to hear that their voice could matter, again, if and when prop two passed.

I can see them wanting to be more involved and care about elections more when they feel their vote can make a difference.

They are excited about redistricting. They are paying close attention to how it's being done and how the new maps will look.

I'd like to thank the Commission on behalf of 174 membership for taking the time to work on such an important and historic process.

What you are doing matters, not just to the people of the great State of Michigan but all Americans. As Dr. Reverend Martin Luther King Junior once said our lives begin to end the day, we become silent on the things that matter.

Thank you.

And on a side note, two speakers from me, speaker number 40, today is his birthday. So can we wish him a happy birthday when he comes up? Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to provide your commentary to the Commission this evening.

39.

>> Good evening, Commission. I promise this is the last time you will hear from me. This is the third time talking to you guys and it's a pleasant. I appreciate the work you are doing.

My name is Mika Perkins. And I represent 14 skilled trades in West and Southwest Michigan including Jason who just spoke.

I'm here on two be halves.

One is on the behalf of labor that I represent and the other is that I live here in the Grand Rapids Area.

When I took this job representing skilled trades, people heard that I was from West Michigan and were like shrug.

What can you do? Because the districts are drawn the way they are.

Like really what political influence can you have because of how the districts are drawn?

So, among other things, one of my purposes here tonight is to ask the Commission to draw districts that are competitive.

This is not a democratic problem.

This is not a republican problem.

This is a competitive problem.

I want representatives that regardless of the party that they wear to be competitive and to have to listen to what my members want to tell them.

Historically this has not been the case in this area.

We should divide the City north to south.

We should respect the six cities that are here.

We should have districts that respect the fact that a large percentage of this area's residents reside in the Greater Grand Rapids Area, share the values that Grand Rapids has, and also have the Metropolitan sensibilities that go along with that.

This has not been the case.

This needs to change.

I respect that you have many different competing priorities that you have to deal with.

I'm glad I'm not in your shoes.

But I appreciate the fact that you listen to us.

I've submitted a map for your review.

And thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Mika, for providing your comment to the Commission. And walking up is number 40, the birthday boy.

Happy birthday to you!

Okay, that's all you get.

Your two minutes starts as soon as you start talking.

>> Thank you very much.

Good evening, Commissioners.

I first want to say welcome to Grand Rapids.

Truly I hope you do enjoy some of your stay here.

What Scott offered up as far as Yesterdog, great choice; but there are dozens of good venues here in the City that most of us in this room probably call home.

My name is Ryan.

I live on the northwest side of Grand Rapids.

I grew up in Rockford.

Basically I've lived my whole life here in Kent County.

And as pointed out, that has been for 46 years today.

Today I'm number 40.

It's hard to being number 40.

There has been 39 great individuals that came before me.

And I will tell you many of them, not to name them out but one, two, 13, 15, 18, 21, 24, 28, 30, 32, 34 and 39 have all said the same thing that I was going to say.

So where does that leave me? In a rock and a hard spot is basically where that leaves me. Then you had 3, 4 and 26 that did the same thing. For Ottawa County there is a sixth city group here in Kent County.

There is community of interest.

Everyone before me has outlined that today.

I wanted to be on the Commission.

Didn't throw my name in the hat.

That's kind of laziness on my point.

You know, when I started looking at all of you, when I started following you, I realized how much of an endeavor that was.

I applaud you for what you do.

I've submitted the comments that everyone else has said here online.

I've given you a map and I appreciate all you do in the time that you put into this.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Ryan.

I hope you have a wonderful birthday and thank you for utilizing all the ways that you can communicate with the MICRC.

We encourage everyone to utilize our public comment portal because we really do review those things. We look at the maps. The things that we collect don't just go in some cute folder.

We actually pay attention and listen to you all.

41.

>> Thank you for the important work you're doing and thank you for the opportunity to address the Commission.

My name is Elizabeth White MacDonald. I live in downtown Grand Rapids in the south hill neighborhood and have been a proud resident of Grand Rapids for nearly 20 years.

I've also worked as a municipal attorney for the last 20 years serving as an assistant and deputy City attorney in the City of Grand Rapids for 15 of those years.

I've also served as election worker and I've handled election law issues throughout my career.

I'm here today because I believe there is nothing more important than in our electoral process than fixing the gerrymandered election maps in Michigan and particularly in Kent County.

According to recent election results, it appears that Kent County voters are evenly divided among partisan lines.

When you look at the 2020 general election, among straight ticket voters in Kent County, 50.01% were republican and 48.48% were democrat.

Likewise, those overall election results in races around the country reflected a fairly even partisan split.

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It would, therefore, be a logical assumption to expect the representation of Kent County in Washington D.C. and in Lansing would generally reflect that reality.

Kent County's representatives in Congress and Lansing, however, do not reflect the electorate.

Kent County is represented in the U.S. House of Representatives in the second and third districts, both of which held by republicans.

And, likewise, of the seven Michigan House Districts representing Kent County and Lansing, five of those or 71% are held by republicans.

Now, whether you're a republican or a democrat, this incongruent result cannot be denied and needs to be repaired with the introduction of fair maps.

Compact urban and suburban communities such as Kentwood, Wyoming and East Grand Rapids are combined with rural Townships in their Congressional and State House districts.

I appreciate the work that you're doing and thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking the time to speak to the Commission this evening.

42, 43, 44 and 45, please, starting with 42.

>> Thank you.

Good evening.

My name is Nathan Phillips. And I'm also going to kind of abbreviate what I was planning on saying here to you know to keep from repeating what everybody else has already said.

I too represent a thousand members here in the West Michigan area, also the plumbers, pipefitters. But also work with all the construction trades here in the West Michigan area.

You know, in our efforts, reaching out to our members, talking with construction workers, you know, people in our industries, one of the biggest, you know, one of the biggest issues that we have in our outreach to them is they continually feel that their votes don't really matter, right? That, you know, they are based off how the current maps are drawn, you know, they aren't equally represented.

They don't feel like they have the equal representation.

You know, I would ask that the Commission looks at taking the Kent County maps and throwing those away and starting over.

You know, I'm sure you've all had plenty of time to look at those. And I hope you feel the same way I do and a lot of us here do tonight.

We need to start over there.

You know, I guess in my feeling and a lot of the people I represent, our feelings are that I guess just to simplify it, you know, rural should vote with rural and, you know, or farmers with farmers and City with City.

You know, I truly think that that is how we are going to get the best representation for our membership and for our communities.

I do also want to thank the Commission.

I too did apply for it, but got looked out in the second round, not the first time. But anyhow I really do appreciate everything you guys do. And truly hope that you are receiving the overtime and possibly double time for these late nights that you all have been putting in.

So thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much 42. We like everything that you just said about that.

43.

>> My name is John. And I'm from Bedford Township, just outside of Battle Creek in Calhoun County.

My community of interest starts with Calhoun County.

Of course, our county is not big enough to have its own representative. But since 1993 we have been put in districts with other people who have much in common with us. My partisan town has sometimes, we are in the 7th District and sometimes in the 3rd, along with parts of Grand Rapids. And both have been good. The only bad part is when we were split into two districts.

It's easier to be neighbors when our local political units are not divided up that way. So I hope you can keep these units intact at least for us.

Our community of interest is quite diverse, containing people who work in light industry, people who make things, people who provide services you never know existed until they tell you about their work.

But we live together as neighbors.

You asked in your instructions about nearby areas that weaken our community of interest.

The City to the west of us has a large University community that can dominate political life.

I hate to say anything bad about it.

Because the University world was my world for 40 years of my life.

It's the world of my friends and old colleagues.

I've been privileged to work with people who are tops in their fields of research.

I like the cultural atmosphere of University towns.

It's good to have those people.

However, it's not good to be governed by them.

There is a phrase that may describe the problem.

Cosmopolitan provincialism.

It's hard for people in those communities to know how the rest of us live and how we should be represented.

Being grouped with them would weaken our community of interest.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and good luck with your task.

The work you are doing is very much appreciated.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking to talk to us about Calhoun County and for showing your appreciation.

44.

>> First off, I'd like to thank the Commission for all their hard work and time, sweat.

And my name is Matt.

I have lived in Kent County almost all of my life.

I was born in Grand Rapids.

I've worked in Kent County over 40 years.

A couple things in the Metro City makes more sense to keep like the rural together and some of the -- like Kentwood and East Grand Rapids.

They have the same...use the same utilities and such.

They just make sense, more competitive District.

I've worked in Kentwood over 20 some years, too.

So I've seen the areas.

But I would like to when you come to drawing your lines probably best to start all over and go with a fair process and making competitive districts.

I appreciate all your time. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission.

45.

>> First, I would like to thank the Commission for their willingness to take the time and endure the frustration that it must take to do the job of making democracy carried out in a more fair manner in our state.

In my opinion, the current District maps are examples of obvious partisan gerrymandering with little imagination. One can see bow ties, pollywogs and worm-shaped districts, panhandles and corridors are not uncommon.

In some cases voters have been chosen individually and moved from District to District to achieve the desired partisan results.

Modern technology has brought the gerrymander to new levels of sophistication, seemingly all done to circumvent the will of the voters.

Therefore, I am saying that the current District lines should be completely disregarded.

In the City of Rockford where I live, our City Council Districts are relatively compactly drawn and our elections are reasonably competitive.

The County Commission and State Legislative Districts are another matter.

Long, thin legislative districts, wandering the length of the County and twisting erratically through the city of Grand Rapids, gobbling precincts like a predator snakes looking for prey are for me evidence of both cracking and packing.

The seven criteria submitted by the Michigan Independent Redistricting Committee are consistent with the principles put forth by those expert in advocating for just democratic Government.

I urge the Redistricting Commission to follow those guidelines when they draw more democratic districts.

Remember, we, Americans and Michiganders claim the Presidentials of a democratic. In a democracy or a republic, the majority does rule but the ruling group must not oppress the majority and it must not interfere with the right of a minority to become a majority.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission. 46, 47, 48 and 49 and why not 50.

So 46 you can begin.

>> Hello and welcome to Grand Rapids.

My name is Mr. Peewee, a member of the Greater Grand Rapids community all my life. On behalf of the Michigan State Conference, NAACP, Grand Rapids NAACP branch, and a member of the Grand Rapids community, I would like to emphasize the adherence to the Commission's stated redistricting principles as well as suggestions to expanding the MICRC guidelines.

For example, prison gerrymandering refers to the process of counting incarcerated persons at their usual residence such as prison facilities, thereby inflating the numbers of voters in such districts by increasing funding and representation for individuals who will not benefit from either funding or voting power and will likely return to their original places of hometown. Prison gerrymanders removes needed funding and additional representation that has sponsored programs and policy aimed at reducing recidivism and allowing individuals a second chance.

The guidelines should account for districts, statistics that exclude this population of individuals that cannot vote. Such measures will account for the actual voting strength of these districts and areas at least until to return after incarceration.

Six states passed legislation to end prison-based gerrymandering while six other states have pending legislation to end the practice with some local communities working around prison gerrymandering by ignoring the prison population.

Additional redistricting principles should include a clear definition of favoring/disfavoring incumbents and candidates and how partisan advantage will be specifically eliminated. Additionally, will data analysis utilized by the Commission be publicly available? Such as racially polarized voting analysis, population projections and election studies?

We appreciate this opportunity to provide public comment. And thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Mr. Peewee, thank you for speaking on behalf of the NAACP and sharing your comment with the Commission.

Just to follow-up a little bit about what you said, we are going to post everything, even this is live, so there is not going to be any aspect of the reimagining the mapping process that the public is not -- will be excluded from.

So you will get all the justification, the analysis and you will hear all the live conversation to the decision making, maybe even the disagreeing. So thank you for highlighting that. And I was glad that I could provide that follow-up.

47, please.

>> Hello. My name is James. I'm a resident from Ottawa County.

I'd like to start reminding the Commission that there is a lack of representation of those in West Michigan on the Commission.

That being said, it should not be something to deter you but rather inspire you to hear our voices and listen to our issues that much more.

I'd like to start off by saying when looking at Ottawa County and Kent County. It's important to realize we are some of the fastest growing parts of Michigan.

That being said, I think it's really imperative that you try to keep Ottawa County together. Ottawa County, first off, is a community that shares borders, cultures, values and economic makeup as well.

We are a lakeshore community from the streets up in Grand Haven all the way down to the beaches in Holland, the bustling lakeshore community with every intention of protecting the lakeshore.

However, we also have a very large agricultural makeup.

Additionally, we have a lot of manufacturing.

In fact, we are about 2.5 time the average occupational manufacturing rate as the national average. Therefore, it is imperative that you keep Ottawa County together with the other places surrounding Ottawa County that have similar culture, values and economic makeup to try to keep their voices heard as well, so they are not swallowed by other areas.

That being said, last thing, I know you are recommended to go to Yesterdog. If you want to take a nice drive down to the beach and enjoy some ice cream, I recommend Captain Sundae. So thank you and have a wonderful day.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: I know you said we're not from West Michigan. However, I can say and speak on behalf of the Commission that we definitely we appreciate the food suggestions.

And you all are historical group because this is why I'm pushing to get to 50. We are already at 113 public comments.

So we are completely inspired by Grand Rapids right now.

48, please.

>> Hi. We are glad you are here.

My name is Cindy Creeg. Since I moved to this town 40 plus years ago, I lived in three of the four quadrants of Grand Rapids.

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I love coming downtown for festivals, concerts and get-togethers.

In 2017 I pretty much lived down here, collecting signatures for the ballot proposal that created this Commission.

My community of interest is the City.

I currently live in Northeast Grand Rapids whose Congressional District includes Battle Creek.

Prior to being in a room with Cynthia Orton, I had never had anything in common with Battle Creek.

I have many connections with people in other parts of town who are in a different Congressional District.

As the second largest City in Michigan, my community would be better served if Grand Rapids was in one Congressional District.

I'm not sure if you can see this.

But it's a configuration of Michigan's 76th House District, which I'm also a part of.

This is a copy of a map I use to explain gerrymandering to the petition signers.

The rest of Grand Rapids voters are in a combined District next door.

A more logical configuration would be to have one north and one south District as several people have stated.

Finally, I hope you are listening intently to the disenfranchised people around the state.

Voters who have expressed satisfaction with the current maps have been represented, maybe overly so.

People who are in underrepresented districts deserve representation.

You have been granted the authority to create new, unbiased maps.

I'm not talking about square boundaries.

I'm talking about fairness and equity for my community.

Thank you for listening and your willingness to be on this Commission.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission. At this time we will move for 49.

>> Hi. My name is Bill and I'm from Battle Creek.

I appreciate the opportunity to present a view to you about our WK Kellogg Executive Airport in Battle Creek.

It's an airport that's a civil and military-type airport.

It's the real gem for our City of Battle Creek.

But our airport has been overshadowed by the air traffic business in Kalamazoo.

For decades Kalamazoo has been this charge of Battle Creek area.

The runways in Battle Creek are the best airport runways between Detroit and Chicago.

A beautiful gem for the City.

We have five different companies that are home to our airport, at our airport.

One is Dunkin Aviation.

It's a big company that is worldwide, and one of the top companies in the world for maintenance of aircraft.

We get lots of planes coming in from around the world.

We also have Western Michigan University.

They have an Aviation department at our airport, which is outstanding. One of the better ones that is number three in the country in Aviation.

We also have one of the better companies that are building aircrafts from 1920-1930s. They are original looking aircraft, but they are brand new and they are made in Battle Creek.

But most important we have the Michigan National Guard Airport on our same runway basis.

It's Air Force is very creative.

They are flying drones from Battle Creek, which most of you probably don't even know about.

What we are doing, they are delivering intelligence.

I'm sorry, thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: You better not apologize.

>> I will get the information to you, a lot of good information.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: And please submit your comment on the public comment portal. 50, please.

>> Hi. My name is Nancy Reese and I'm from Calhoun County.

If you didn't figure it out, he is my husband.

But any how thank you for allowing me to be here and to give you some of the reasons for consideration about redistricting.

I believe Calhoun County and many of the local counties like Barry, Branch, Hillsdale, Ionia and Eastern Kalamazoo counties within our jurisdiction here have a commonality. They are mostly all hometown, rural areas where people get educated. They live and work. They raise families. They vote. They stay in the area. And they support local candidates forming a continuity of stable, multi-generational patterns of thriving locally.

Some of the small colleges that are located in these counties are very important to us such as Kellogg Community College, which I did attend for a while.

As well as one son, a grand...some grandchildren and also had one granddaughter graduated from Albion College, which is also in these small counties of Calhoun, our cities in Calhoun.

The reason for attending small hometown colleges is because of the convenience of the location as well as most of the cost effectiveness, which allows for more students to attend locally.

We also have Kellogg Community College who has a satellite in Albion, which is Calhoun County; and Hastings, which is Barry County; Coldwater, Branch County. And

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Fort Custer Industrial Park in Battle Creek is also here, which provides a curriculum that includes vocational, industrial trades programs, and adding to local specialized workforce for the area.

We also have Hillsdale College, which most of you already know about in that contiguous area.

We live and work this a blended ethnic locality with open opportunity for all of us, of families.

We just don't want to be kind of attached to Kalamazoo because we are very happy with our own little area.

And just take into mind the locality, Calhoun, Barry, Branch, Hillsdale, Ionia, Eastern Kalamazoo Counties, we fit together well.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking the time to provide public commentary.

At this time we have been going since 5:00, so, without objection, we will now recess for 15 minutes.

Hearing no objections, we will stand in recess until 7:20.

We have other speakers, so please stick around and continue to hear your fellow community members share.

Thank you.

7:20.

[Recess]

>> CHAIR KELLOM: All right. We are about ready to get started.

I call this meeting of the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission back to order at 7:26 p.m.

Will the Michigan Department of State staff for the purposes of the public record and everyone watching please call the roll.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Absolutely, Madam Chair.

Commissioners, please say present when I call your name. If you are attending the meeting remotely, please announce during roll call that you are attending the meeting remotely. And unless your absence is due to military duty, please announce your physical location by stating the county, city, township or village and the state from which you are attending the meeting remotely.

I'll start with Doug Clark.

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Juanita Curry.

>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Present

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Anthony Eid?

>> COMMISSIONER EID: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Brittini Kellom?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rhonda Lange?

>> COMMISSIONER LANGE: Present, attending remotely from Reed City, Michigan.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Steve Lett?

>> COMMISSIONER LETT: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Cynthia Orton?

>> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: MC Rothhorn?

>> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rebecca Szetela?

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Janice Vallette.

>> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Erin Wagner?

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Richard Weiss?

>> COMMISSIONER WEISS: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Dustin Witjes?

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: 12 Commissioners are present and there is a quorum.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Michigan Department of State.

At this time we will return to our in-person public commentary, without objection. Hearing no objections, we will now resume to our in-person public commentary and will begin with 51.

>> May I give you a Battle Creek welcome to Western Michigan?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Absolutely.

>> Okay, my name is Master Sergeant Thomas Sharon, retired of the Michigan International Guard. My career began at Selfridge outside of Detroit and finished at WK Kellogg with the one tenth.

And there is one thing I must say about Battle Creek, the military.

I'm here to speak for the military.

The military has a deep, deep roots in Battle Creek.

We have five facilities there.

We've got the Department of Defense Logistics Federal Center there.

We got WK Kellogg Airport, the location of the one tenth fighter wing.

We got Fort Custer National Guard Training Center.

We have the Veterans Affairs, VA Hospital.

And we have the Fort Custard cemetery.

These facilities are split between two Congressional districts.

And the roots of this, it has been Calhoun County, Battle Creek.

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It is my request that these facilities will be included in one District based in Calhoun County.

And, again, I really want to say thank you for listening to me.

Thank you for being here.

And as a representative of the Michigan International Guard, good work.

I wish you good work and God speed.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much. One of my favorite people in the world, my grandfather, served for this country, so I understand the importance of your service.

And I thank you for your service, especially highlighting your community. So thank you for taking the time to share with the Commission this evening.

52.

We scared everyone away.

52.

53.

>> Building suspense.

>> Hello.

My name is Bob Smith. I'm a team leader at North America Fuel Systems in Kentwood. And I serve on the board of the UAW's Community Action Program for Kent County.

Many tonight have spoke of keeping the Metro six together, keeping cities with cities and apart from the rural communities.

As a resident of Byron Township, I would concur.

Currently our State House District is combined with the City of Wyoming.

I used to live in Wyoming.

The two communities do not share very many common interests.

It would make far more sense for Byron Township to be combined with Gaines Township as I believe they had been previously.

The two communities already share a utility authority and a good many school children in Gaines Township attend Byron Center Public Schools.

We are the same demographic.

Currently my State House representative is a Wyoming businessman.

And I do not particularly feel represented in Lansing.

So please let the rural communities stick together.

We know what's best for us.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for taking the time to share your comment with the Commission.

54, 55, 56 and 57.

Are you 54?

>> Yes.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: You can begin.

>> It's a gorgeous day to be participating in democracy.

Hello, Commission. I'm Katie and I'm so excited to be talking to you tonight.

When I started to think about over the last ten years what kind of representation hasn't shown up, it really has come to our community being divided.

Grand Rapids is the second largest city in the state.

Our community of interest really is Grand Rapids.

More specifically, we have a shared heritage with Grand Rapids and the surrounding suburbs as well as infrastructure such as roads like 131, 96 and 196.

In times of crisis, whether huge snowstorms, 100-year flood, when we needed representatives paying attention to our City, they had multiple, large cities such as Grand Rapids and Battle Creek they were trying to pay attention to.

My strongest advocacy is that we can actually keep these communities together.

Aquinas College is also where I attended college. Right now for House Districts is divided in two different districts and is not connected with the City of Grand Rapids or East Grand Rapids where the students actually volunteer and live.

I would strongly advocate that East Grand Rapids stays with Grand Rapids in both the Congressional, State House and State Senate districts.

I've also lived in Gaines Township.

And I think that our school District was with Kentwood School District.

And that's another important community of interest when it comes to heritage, but also what our Michigan legislatures are voting on right now.

They have education policy over the next ten years that will greatly impact students and parents being able to have someone who actually represents their entire District is really important so their voices can be at the table as these decisions are made at the state level.

Lastly, I'll just say that I think especially in times of emergency like over the past two years, being able to know that your community actually has a voice in Lansing and in Washington D.C. is really important.

Thank you once again. And I'd also like to submit this Beer City USA map to show we have a shared heritage of loving beer. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for sharing your perspective and your comments with the Commission.

55.

>> Hi. My name is Carla Wagner.

I was born and raised in Ottawa County.

I currently live in Kent County, but I consider all of Michigan home.

I want to speak specifically to the redistricting criteria.

I think we can make it really easy on you folks even though I know your job is very difficult, to take away I think the equal population in Voting Rights Act, which is number one, talks about the population.

You have to equalize that.

We also have to think about things being geographically contiguous.

We have also talked about that.

I think number six and seven on the redistricting criteria, number six is to reflect the consideration of county, city and township boundaries, that seems to be important to everybody. I agree.

Number seven is to keep them reasonably compact as much as possible.

I agree with that.

The communities of interest I don't agree with quite so much because I hear a lot of people talking about diversity.

But then communities of interest. And I think that's kind of a conundrum. It's difficult to have diversification, but also want to keep tight-knit communities of interest intact.

I feel if we want to represent and do good for the State of Michigan, we do have to be diverse and you have to include everything across the board.

When you start creating little pockets of communities of interest, I think in a way that's being prejudicial and maybe even racial.

I don't know, but it's whose opinion, is it? I mean, you might have, somebody has an opinion of a community of interest and mine might be, as a real estate agent, I might say the whole west coast of the Lake Michigan of, you know, the Lake Michigan coast on the west side of the state has \$5 million homes all along it, so I want that to be a community of interest.

That is an economic community.

And I don't...I would not agree with that.

I can make that, but I wouldn't agree with it.

But thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for providing your commentary to the Commission.

I would just like to highlight that our use of communities of interest is not to discriminate or to segregate.

It is a way for us to have accumulative approach. And we are just 13 individuals and don't live everywhere. It would be a disservice to assume that one side lives this way and so it gives us a picture of how to begin remapping.

I hope that gives some thought to your comment.

And 56.

>> Thank you all.

My name is Dan Tunopen. And I would like to thank you for being here today.

My main concern is really, like many others are saying, is keeping the six core cities together in a real community of interest.

What we do not want to see is what happened to Kentwood in the last redistricting process.

They were bundled into Kentwood. For those of you that do not live here, it's a very diverse community refugees, Latinos people of color.

They flood the whole City of Kentwood.

It's the most diverse City in our County. And for them to stick them with mostly four Townships of all rural category was diluting that vote, which was really sad to see.

They have not only got the house seat, but they also did it to them in the Senate seat.

And the Senate seat went all the way down to Van Buren County, nearly to Indiana.

This is what we don't want to see.

So I agree with many of the others that said let's just throw it all away and start new.

And find out what people in each community are really figuring what they want.

And I appreciate your chance to speak to you.

For one, I'd like to see a Congressional District of both Muskegon County and Kent County, both with vibrant African/American communities.

And they have a lot of things in common.

As for the house seats, Grand Rapids will most likely get two house seats, but there will probably be some extra population.

I used to live in Grand Rapids, in mostly Hispanic community.

And it really attaches itself in the Grand Rapids of what they call the Roosevelt Park Neighborhood into the vicinity of Wyoming. The northern part of the City of Wyoming

has a high Hispanic base along with the southwest corridor of the City of Grand Rapids.

Connecting them two would make a House District that would actually be over 25% Hispanic, which would actually give them a real shot at having the house seat for their community.

I thank you for your time and enjoy Grand Rapids.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much. And we look forward to you submitting a map regarding that area that you're speaking about.

Again, that website is www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

57, please.

>> Good evening.

My name is Tom Burke.

I am also with the Stagehands Union Local 26.

I'd like to thank our president, Jessica Westra, who is backstage working tonight.

I'm also a delegate to the Kent, Ionia, Central Labor Council here.

I live on the southeast side of town.

And one thing you can say about Grand Rapids and the surrounding communities is it's definitely rising.

The City is coming up.

It's vibrant.

The medical and science industries are here, continue to grow and develop. And they are bringing new people, not just from other parts of the country but other parts of the world.

And it's adding a really positive and exciting dynamic to what's discussed and debated about the future of the City.

One of the things that I would like to see is the north, south divide in the City because I think it will actually contribute to more political power for the people who live here, and especially gives us an opportunity to elect Black representatives in our Government offices in a way that the current gerrymandered system that favors the republican party does not do.

So we are going to continue to see the democratic party candidates gaining votes in this part of the state.

And I think we need to recognize going forward what will the districts actually look like. I think you have an easy job because gerrymandering makes it easy to redraw the lines. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for providing your comment to the Commission.

We appreciate that.

58, 59 and 60.

58 you can begin.

>> Good evening. My name is Garland and I live in Eaton Township, part of Calhoun County. I raised in Climax Township which is part of Kalamazoo County. I've lived the majority of my life in rural Newton Township but have also spent time attending college at Western Michigan University and working in Metropolitan Detroit.

Newton Township is a rural, conservative, predominately farming community.

The farming community is a more simple way of living where most individuals know their neighbors and protect their neighbors and their property.

Newton Township has minimal crime compared to the larger surrounding Metropolitan areas. My family and I attend a church in Calhoun County. The church is large enough to support the many challenges facing the surrounding communities, but intimate enough to meet the spiritual needs of the individual. Our church believes in community outreach and draws members from the surrounding townships and villages.

Our church brings together people of all walks of life together for believers. And the core beliefs are community focused.

Agricultural is the primary industry in Newton Township, in Calhoun County. Food manufacture and light automotive manufacturing comprise the other significant industries within our current district. These industries tie the Townships of our present districts together into a homogenous community where the Calhoun County resources can be used together to support the constituents' common goals and objectives. The

District boundaries allow our smaller communities to have a greater impact locally without the negative influence of larger surrounding municipalities.

I spent the past 27 years working for various automotive suppliers in Calhoun, Jackson and Wayne Counties. And there is a difference between agricultural Calhoun County and industrial Wayne County. Wayne County has some of the largest populations and largest companies within the state and country. The constituents needs of these larger industrial counties are significant different than the rural and agricultural counties such as Calhoun.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for sharing Newton with us. And we appreciate you coming to talk to the Commission.

59.

>> My name is James.

I live in Caledonia Village.

I endorse what Kim Gates from Caledonia Township said about Caledonia and about Kent County, so I'll just leave that at that.

I would also like to endorse what several speakers said regarding prison gerrymandering.

But I want to move on to saying something else to you.

The most important divide in our society right now has not been left and right.

It's between honest and dishonest, between constructive and destructive.

On the one hand a mindset that uses words signifying core democratic values like freedom, justice and equality as empty slogans to hide behind.

Whereas bludgeons to swing while using gerrymandering and various vote suppression tactics and tricky manipulations to hold onto power, to divide and to Conquer. And, on the other hand, a mindset that is sufficiently committed to honesty, fairness, integrity, equality empathy, unity, compromise to democracy. To uphold truth and rigorously fair process even when it means setting up your own side to lose.

I look at your faces as you sit at this table and I believe that you are of this latter mindset.

I believe that you will throw out the old, gerrymandered maps and create fair districts and complete indifference as to which party might win or lose elections in Michigan for the next ten years.

So my first word to you is: Thank you.

Thank you for your service on behalf of democracy and the common good.

My nightmare is that some of you may have got on to this Commission in order to stick up for your party.

My nightmare is that you might conduct many hearings all over the state and that sit down and hear the voices and hide inside your head, telling you to do what's best for your party.

So my second word to you is: Keep the faith, encourage each other to remember the trust that you have undertaken to serve.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, James, for believing in us and empowering us at the same time.

We are going to continue to be an integratus group even if it means we don't always agree.

60 please.

>> Hello. My name is Richard.

I live in Walker, Michigan, which is in Kent County, just northwest of Grand Rapids.

I've lived in Michigan for over 25 years.

My wife and I raised three boys in the Kenowa Hills School District. They were involved with many school activities and we enjoyed attending events and meeting other parents and members of the community.

My community of interest is a mix of rural and suburban municipalities and townships. Within our community we have shopping, parks, sporting areas and churches.

As the community blends with the rural agricultural areas, there are many affluent Peach orchards and berries and other crops essential to the community and the Michigan economy.

It is crucial to have districts that can have representation at the State and Federal level which understands rural and suburban communities of interest.

Please keep the districts compact and try to keep municipalities and townships intact.

I would like to thank the Commission for your time and wish you the best with your complex task.

Have safe travels home.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for addressing the Commission. 61, 62, 63 and 64.

61, you can begin when you are ready.

>> Thank you so much for being here.

My name is Kristina.

I'm a professional musician and a union rep.

As a downtown Grand Rapids resident and a second generation Asian American, I'm concerned about minority populations being underrepresented in all levels of Government. Particularly concerning to me is the Congressional District.

It is unacceptable that large suburbs like Kentwood, Wyoming, Grandville do not vote in the same Congressional District as Grand Rapids.

Yet farming communities outside of Portage do. Dividing Metropolitan areas disenfranchises and diffuses representation of minorities and immigrants and Asian Americans as often we fly under the radar.

This is institutional racism. And I hope this Commission will address this inequity and I have every faith that you will.

I'm glad somebody gave you the Grand Rapids beer map.

I'm going to put a plug in for my favorite, Arvon. And also another lovely place is new jazz club called GRNoir. It's minority owned and they feature many wines from Black wineries,

Black owned wineries, and it's a Class A place.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for sharing your comments with the Commission.

Not only are you all talking about your thoughts about mapping but you're sharing with your community about your specific interests, so we are doing it you all.

62.

>> Hi there. I'm Sarah.

I'm an area educator and business owner and artist.

So I wear many hats in this community.

I also grew up in the Upper Peninsula. So I have a different kind of perspective having grown up in another place and being able to observe the culture here in West Michigan.

So I grew up in a rural community and now I live about five minutes driving just from this location.

And I'm here to also represent Asian Americans.

One of the things that I want to encourage is to look at the populations and really deaggregate the data, especially with the Asian American population.

There's a lot of different populations.

So it's not just Chinese, but we have a lot of refugee populations here.

We have a large number of Vietnamese population.

We have the Asians and even Holland has a decent Asian population.

And as I'm going to echo Kristina who was before me. A lot of times Asian Americans are flown under the radar.

And as Americans we have a lot of overlapping issues that we share with other minority groups. And the way things are districted right now is it really divides up those populations even if they are a street away from each other. And that really takes away resources that are much needed for those populations.

And as the City is growing, the Asian population is the fastest minority population along with the Hispanic population.

So if we can redraw those lines, it's going to be able to benefit those voices. And they are not just new people.

They are people who are staying and having children. So we have large citizen minority populations here.

So thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with the Commission.

63.

>> Hi. I'm Tom Hooker. And I thank you for the chance to share and I want to thank you for the interpreter. The deaf interpreter does a fantastic job.

I grew up in Wyoming.

I served as...I taught school for 37 years at Byron Center High School.

And live there now.

I served as a State Representative for Byron, Wyoming.

And I served as Township supervisor for Byron Township and still serve on the board.

It's important that communities are served by representatives that represent them.

I was one who posted every vote that I had.

I was as transparent as I could possibly be and I listened to my community.

It's very important I think, too, to make sure that you have the lines drawn so that people of similar interests are represented similarly.

Byron Township is a rural, semi-rural community that's growing very rapidly.

And its growth has been such that Townships next to us, Gaines Township and Jamestown to the west and Gaines to the east, would be very similar type of communities.

And I think it's important because we share many fire department, water and sewer and a number of other areas with those communities.

We are tied together.

And I hope that as you draw your lines, you draw the lines in a way that's fair to everyone.

But I have a question for you,

And the question is: I heard that you had chosen Election Data Services and paid them \$1.1 million from Manassas, Virginia to draw your lines for you.

And that is a question that I would have.

And also that you have two districts that you have to have that are majority-minority districts.

Those are questions that I want answered.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Tom, for providing your comment to the Commission.

We look forward to you watching us live and giving you the answers to those questions.

64.

>> Good evening, Commissioners and thank you so much.

I'm so impressed as I sit and watch your attentiveness and your smiling faces and you must be absolutely exhausted, so I want to say thank you. And thank you to our friend from Battle Creek who I never met before. But if you are in Battle Creek, you're my friend. So thank you so much for your willingness to serve as well.

I want to talk about the community of interest as the small hometown communities. Certainly, Battle Creek is a City. And yet if you are from Battle Creek you know that urban is not what we are.

We are a small hometown community where people have worked and lived in the same neighborhoods, worked for the same companies as their grandparents, as their grandchildren for many generations.

We do things differently in Calhoun County because we develop relationships that break labels.

I'm so proud that I have very liberal friends and a Black church in Battle Creek who have invited my very conservative tea party friends to speak at their church.

That doesn't happen anywhere but Battle Creek.

It happens because we get rid of our labels by building relationships first.

And I'm so very proud of that.

We have school districts that have friendly rivalries within the District.

We have multiple companies that have, again, as I said before, employed grandparents and kids and then grand kids. And our small community colleges that are dotted around Calhoun County and down into Hillsdale and Branch County, over into Olivet, those just have a very different feel and a very different community mindedness with their deep roots than the more transient college population at Western Michigan University.

You asked what community of interest would hurt ours.

I believe being districted in with Kalamazoo proper would hurt us.

There is a very different approach to race relations.

We are building relationships and we want to keep that up and that is protected by the hometown feel.

So thank you so much for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for sharing your comments with the Commission.
65.

>> Good evening.

My name is Deanna. I live in Newton Township, which is part of Calhoun County. I was raised in Newton Township and lived in community throughout the majority of my life except when I attended Western Michigan University.

Newton Township is a small farming community. The farming way of life is knowing your neighbors and looking out for each other.

The very typical small community has schools and churches. For example, the church my family attends is moderate size, has diverse programs in the church to meet the needs over all the families but feels small and homey.

The industry in Calhoun County, as I stated before, is agricultural, food related and light manufacturing.

This industry ties the Calhoun County communities.

The working conditions of the County allows our County resources to be used among similar families.

As a small community the services can be distributed to be a positive energy among businesses with similar sizes and workforces.

I currently work at Pfizer in Kalamazoo County.

The industry is different in Kalamazoo County, which is focused more on healthcare related and more industrial.

A larger community versus our small community.

The Calhoun Area to me is congested with people and is a large college presence.

The ideals and values are different from what I grew up and know.

My experience living with Calhoun County and working in Kalamazoo County, the community ideologies and resources are drastically different.

Again, Calhoun County is based off of small town values with businesses that complement each other.

Kalamazoo County has different business structure and has a strong impact from the University and the transient population, which do not reflect the beliefs and values of our small community.

Therefore, I would like to recommend that we keep Calhoun County separate from Kalamazoo County as the needs and values of the communities are different.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the redistricting project.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission. 66, 67, 68 and 69 and we will start with 66.

When you approach the mic.

>> That is not my age though.

I'm old enough to have lived what you read in history books.

My name is Hal. I'm from Calhoun County and the issue is really urban population, rural populations.

We are going to have a District Kent County, kind of small.

And if you look at a rural County, our rural District, you're going to look at something like from Ionia County in the north, clear down to Branch County across to Lenawee up through Calhoun.

That is a very large area.

So we got to make sure we don't restrict ourselves and try to get all things geographically the same because there's a lot of difference.

It must be 8:00 because my med thing is going off.

All right.

Urban populations need a whole different set of services from Government, thus they need their own unique reputation.

They need more effort in security, police, zoning laws, noise regulation.

You don't need that out in the rural areas.

The rural areas need more liberty so that they can use their land to the best of their ability. So to grow their product, which is an essential product, for the people in the urban areas they are making, the convenience things, you know.

The cell phone that just went off and my car and whatever else.

We can't live without food.

Well, and we live for many thousands of years without the other stuff.

Anyway I would give my eye teeth to be on the Commission with you.

You have one whale of a job.

I've never seen so many different opinions as to what our districts should be than I've heard tonight.

Good luck to you and I'm praying for you.

And Battle Creek, thumbs up.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. A big hug to Battle Creek. Thank you for loving on our Commissioner Cynthia Orton. She appreciates that.

67, please.

>> I am a registered voter and feel compelled to testify about the redistricting that will happen here in Michigan.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand before you to address this important decision of mapping Michigan districts.

My name is Bonnie.

I live in Marengo Township in Calhoun County.

I have lived in this area all my life, mainly because I love the rural community life.

As a person who is part of a small, rural community, I feel that it is important to be sure that rural families are kept in districts where their voices are collectively strong and represented, not diluted by drawing them into districts with higher population densities and different needs and perspectives.

If District lines are drawn that attach rural areas to densely populated areas, the rural area communities voices needs and concerns, may not be heard and represented well.

Thank you for listening as I voice my concern.

Thank you for your contemplating the many concerns of the citizens of this great state.

Many Michigan rural families are putting their hope and faith in this Commission to map out fair and unbiased districts with the interest of each community in mind.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for addressing the Commission and taking the time to share your comments.

68, please.

>> Good evening.

Thank you for hearing my concerns as you manage through this daunting task of redistricting.

I'm Chuck.

I live in Marshall, Michigan, specifically Marengo Township, which is located in Calhoun County where I-94 and I-69 intersect.

I've lived in the area for the last 43 years.

Communities of interest around me include Burlington, Albion, Tekonsha, Homer to name a few in Calhoun County. And further out Parma, Olivet, and Bellevue. Probably not a destination point for people here. But in total there is about ten traffic lights in all these communities combined.

My point is that larger towns like Grand Rapids are great towns but they are not for everyone.

Our requirements for representative are different than cities like Kalamazoo, Lansing, Grand Rapids. So I ask you to keep in mind that many smaller, rural areas when you redraw the new districts, it's not beneficial for my particular area to be put in a district with areas with much larger centralized population as the district we are currently in. Thank you again.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission.
69.

>> First, I want to say that I appreciate the Commission for taking the time and interest to assemble the input and perceptions from the people your Commission will impact.

So thank you.

My name is Dana. And I live in the heart of Grand Rapids.

Both political parties have made a mockery of the District lines over the years.

The goofy jigsaw districts drawn by the political parties need to end with your Commission.

This is the reason for the existence of your Commission.

I would encourage the Commission to create clean districts that respect City and Township boundaries.

Creating compact, clean District lines that don't wander off are critical to real representation.

I live, worship, work in healthcare, teach, and volunteer in my District.

And I have done so for 20 years by choice.

My community works together for the benefit of everyone, even though we are very diverse.

With all the work that needs to be done, I do not want to see my community split into different districts.

Keeping communities of interest together should be the priority, not political parties.

Madam Chairwoman, you mentioned earlier that the proposal creating your Commission passed overwhelmingly by 61%.

That is because we wanted the districts cleaned up and made representative of our communities that we live in.

We expect you to do just that.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Dana, thank you for highlighting my words and remembering the support that was shown for our Commission. And we appreciate you coming out to provide your comment.

70.

>> Good evening.

My name is Edwin.

And I live in Grand Rapids here in Kent County.

I want to thank the Commission for your time and interest in gathering insight from the people your Commission will be impacting in the citizen-led transparent process.

We see community as having a positive influence in our lives and seek it at every opportunity.

Community as defined by Merriam Webster is people with common interests, living in a particular area.

Therefore, I would encourage the Commission to recognize City and Township boundaries and when appropriate the County boundaries.

I would encourage the Commission to draw clean, compact lines with common sense.

It has been suggested to draw districts in order to make all the districts competitive.

I would caution against this primarily for two reasons.

First, as you know, current parties are 180 degrees from where they were in the past.

And where they will be in the future is very difficult to determine.

Your Commission is going for ten years. It's going to be hard to determine that.

And I don't know how wise that would be trying to follow the parties.

Secondly, the parties...the priorities, excuse me, of one area may be completely different than another.

To combine them into one district for the purpose of competition means somebody's priorities are going to be ignored.

We might not like that, but that's probably the reality of it.

We have a diverse population and communities of interest in our state.

Attempting to sprinkle each District with a little bit of everything means that everyone loses and it separates the communities.

Thank you for your time and your interest in trying to make a very difficult decision in this partisan time.

I thank you for being...coming to Grand Rapids and hearing what we have to say here. And enjoy your time in Grand Rapids. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission, Edwin. We appreciate you.

71.

>> My name is Bill Woody and I reside in the City of Wyoming. Kent County is the fourth largest County in the state and home to Grand Rapids, Michigan, second largest City.

It seems clear to me that Kent County, like my home Oakland and Wayne, has a variety of communities that need to be taken into account and for fair representation to happen at the Federal level.

We should have two members of Congress representing Kent County. While Kent County is unique in the western part of the state because of its size, this committee should not break up cities into separate districts. Cities are a clear community of interest.

This should also be applied to the State House and State Senate redistricting process whenever possible as well.

We should not have one part of Wyoming represented by one official and another part of Wyoming represented by another.

When I go out to eat, I don't go to Grand Rapids.

I head west in the Grandville, Jenison, Hudsonville. And my values align with those communities than the City of Grand Rapids.

It's been refreshing to know that the concerns of my community have a voice in Congress.

If we get lumped in with Grand Rapids, some will no doubt encourage, I worry our voices will be drowned out. And Grand Rapids is not my community, will get their concerns addressed at the Federal level.

This Commission should strive to make this process fair to all residents of Kent County. And that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for taking the time to address the Commission.

We appreciate you.

72.

>> Hello. My name is Ginger. I live in the City of Battle Creek and Calhoun County. I retired from Kellogg Company after 25 years after my last duties being with compensation and diversity and inclusion departments.

I work as election inspector for the City and I'm also a member of the League of Women Voters for Calhoun County. I would like to thank the Commission to invite the public comment on this very important issue of redistricting through the hearing.

My community of interest is business industry within Calhoun County. Battle Creek may be called a City, but it definitely feels like a small town. I retired from the same company my mother-in-law retired from. Most Kellogg employees have or had family members who also worked there. We have many small businesses that keep our community thriving. We can't go to a local restaurant without running into at least two people we know or worked with. Our community college, KCC, works with many of the businesses in town and within Fort Custer to train employees and students in skilled trades such as electrical, welding and plumbing as well as industrial trades at a facility called the RMTC or Regional Manufacturing Technology Center. Calhoun County is a rural county for the most part with lots of family farms, factory workers, trade unions and small businesses. We have small towns like Athens, East Leroy and Marshall. We are definitely a blue collar county and that works for us. Kalamazoo, on the other hand, is a cultural university center with a transient population; and, for instance, Western Michigan University students and corporate executives like Pfizer and striker. In fact, most of the Kellogg executives live in Kalamazoo or Portage or another state altogether and they commute. The differences between the two counties could not be more apparent. We love the fact that we are world renown as the cereal capital of the world. Battle Creek is the Cereal City. Marshall was once the state capitol, but prefers its status as our county seat. We want representation that understands and helps us preserve our small town way of life. I feel we would lose that should we be lumped into a larger Metropolitan County that doesn't understand the multi-generational relationships our citizens have built. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Ginger, for sharing and some insight into the business community.

We appreciate that.

73 and 74 for purposes of the public record have chosen not to speak so we will move to 75.

Oh, come on.

[Laughter]

No 75.

Okay, 76.

Just because we have some folks walking around, which is normal, you're allowed to walk around.

If you are 76, can you raise your hand so I know? Okay, 77.

Okay.

>> Ding, ding, ding.

Thank you, my name is James Gallant. I'm with the Marquette County Suicide Prevention Coalition. And these are my personal opinions and I signed up for a second public comment after this. Thank you.

I would like to say one thing about the gerrymandering is that please clarify to the community because these people do not seem to understand that only 34 districts were determined in Court to be gerrymandered. And it's not every district is gerrymandered, which some people seem to believe.

And now I believe that the flow chart that you approved yesterday, I believe, for the purpose of approving the maps is obscure and using this facilitated dialog, consensus building process is inconsistent with the Constitution of the State of Michigan, which requires that you do all decisions by majority vote at public meetings.

And now your attorney stated on the record it appears she accused me of misinformation concerning Robert's Rules of Order to this Commission. And I would ask you to investigate that and to issue a report as to what exactly were those things she was talking about.

Because she is kind of saying like everything I've told you is misinformation.

When your attorney agreed with me that you are not supposed to be having any discussion before there is a motion and seconded.

She agreed with me with that.

And then when you had two motions and three amendments rolling, she finally broke down and said wait, wait, wait, wait, now we got to just kind of do something about this because that's why she appeared to remind you that she recommended you have no discussion before a motion. And that is why, because it confuses everybody.

And it's in Roberts Rules of Order that says that is the biggest source of confusion when people don't know what they are going to vote on next. And you do that every single time. And it is denying the minority members of this group to vote.

And this doing...hearing no objections, you got to vote.

You're denying the people the right to vote, which is what this is supposed to be protecting and we are supposed to be, you know, you're gerrymandering the rules, so to speak, thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for providing your comment to the Commission. We appreciate that.

78.

>> Hello there.

My name is Matt.

I'm from Walker, which is in the northwest suburbs of Grand Rapids.

So to prepare for this I just printed out a map of the state, the Congressional districts. And I won't talk about the state legislative districts. Particularly where we live in the northwest side. You know, I grew up in Wyoming.

And always consider myself as a Grand Rapidian and live in Walker and consider myself a Grand Rapidian. And as I look at the map here, in District three is basically Grand Rapids and the surrounding suburbs, but some of them are omitted.

And I reiterate some of the folks that were saying about the Metro six and how they should be kept together.

There is a particular little jut that comes out from District two and builds right into where we live.

If I walk just a few steps, like a few hundred steps to the north, I'm in District three.

To the east I'm in District three.

To the south I'm in District three.

But if I go to the west, I have to walk all the way to the lakeshore and then I'm still in District two.

So I guess where I'm coming from is if we can keep the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area together because we share similar common values. And I think that my interests would be diluted to keep it the way that it is.

I do want to have a note of personal privilege.

I was a part of the organization that worked very hard to get this Commission on the ballot and to win.

And we couldn't be more proud to be here.

You guys have had 16 stops, which is incredible.

I know I'm one of the last ones, on the last stops, so I will try to keep this as brief as possible. But looking at y'all couldn't be more proud.

You guys are doing an amazing job and following you on Zoom and everything you're doing.

And keep up the great work.

I can't wait to see your maps.

Thank you so much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Can't think of a better way to spend your last ten seconds.

We appreciate that so much.

We are not perfect individuals, but we are a Commission that is committed to the oath we have taken and that means a lot. 79.

>> Hi. My name is Kristina Van. And I'm a resident of the City of Rockford.

I appreciate the committee taking the time to hear from the public because redistricting is such a complex process.

Municipal and lines should be considered in tangent with communities of interest because the programs and services available to residents are often connected to their Township or City.

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For example, in the City of Rockford, our budget for the summer celebration, the summerfest, and other community are distinct from other programming of other areas in Kent County such as the City of Grand Rapids.

And the City of Rockford is surrounded by rural populations that offer students to Rockford Schools and participate in the mentioned community events and the culture should remain intact as possible.

Where permitted cities and Townships should remain as whole as possible to organize into one population to adhere to the same ordinances and local Governments and participate in the same community engagement activities. Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for coming out and sharing your perspective with the Commission.

We appreciate that.

80.

>> Good evening.

Thank you to the Commission.

I do not envy your work.

But I do appreciate it.

My name is Adam. And I live in rural northern part of Ottawa County where I and many other neighbors of mine grow apples.

I'm a farmer as are many of Ottawa counties residents.

As several other speakers have mentioned prior, agricultural is a major factor in the economy of Ottawa County, Michigan and our nation.

For example, the nursery and perennial plant producers generate 291 million annually and distribute in 35 states, Mexico and Canada.

Ottawa County is the fifth largest production area of that agricultural industry alone, just Ottawa County.

We can also talk similarly about blueberries, veggies, poultry, and more.

The point is agricultural is important here.

It's also cool, but maybe I'm bias.

Unfortunately, agricultural is often forgotten as are our rural communities.

They are often left out of the conversation to be fair.

But not so here, so thank you again.

Appreciate it.

As a young farmer, I'm always surprising my peers with the challenges on our farm. And what it takes to keep our business sustainable in the future and to keep it around for future generation.

Many people are quite removed from agricultural and its challenges and the effort it takes to feed our nation and world.

Yet it matters greatly to have community and state leaders with an appreciation for the rural challenges and what it takes on the farm.

The rural communities and the small towns of Ottawa County have been fortunate and very successful in keeping a unified voice because of our current boundaries. And I hope for your help in keeping it so for the next generation.

Thank you, appreciate all your efforts.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for coming to share about the agricultural community.

81.

>> Hello. My name is Ron.

I live in Kent County, in the City of Kentwood, which is a suburb of Grand Rapids. My home is actually only a few hundred yards from the boundary of the City of Grand Rapids.

Thank you for allowing me to address the Commission.

I'd like to give you two examples of problems with the current system.

First of all, as a resident of Kentwood, I'm currently in the Second Congressional District.

This District places the residents of Kentwood in the same Congressional District as people in Ludington, Michigan who live approximately 100 miles from Kentwood in a lakeshore community that is very different than those of us living in a suburb next to Grand Rapids.

Meanwhile, almost all the other residents of Kent County are in the third Congressional District.

Many of the concerns of the people of Kentwood are not always represented when we are lumped in with other communities that are far more rural and primarily centered around small cities.

The current system is not fair to the people of Kentwood.

The second reason why the current boundaries are unfair to the residents of Kentwood is because of the 77nd Michigan House of representative District. Currently residents of Kentwood which has over 50,000 citizens are in the same District as some people from Allegan County, which is primarily a rural County. Having a District that crosses County lines causes confusion because of the vast differences in services provided by Kent County as opposed to Allegan County.

Also, the 77nd District was constructed in such a way that democrats have very little, if any, chance of succeeding in elections.

I ran as a democrat in 2018 for the 72nd House District in 2020. And we had aggressive campaigns and did well in the City of Kentwood but because of the construction of this district, the republican candidate was easily elected because the predominance of republican voters in Allegan portion of the District.

The boundaries of 72nd District are example of elections in Michigan that are not competitive and have foregone conclusions before people ever start voting.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and for your work on the Commission.

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>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to come out and share your thoughts with the Commission.

82.

>> Hello.

Whoops. I just took this off.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: You can take it off.

>> Thank you, first of all, for trying to create as many fair and balanced and competitive districts as possible.

I think that would be amazing goal since it helps as many voters as possible.

I am Lilly.

And I'm a resident of Kentwood.

In full disclosure, I was also the elected democratic nominee in Michigan House District 72 just last year.

I hope first that I may draw your attention to the population size of Michigan House District 72.

It includes Kentwood and Gaines Township in Kent County, and that is almost close to, if not exceeding, 90,000 residents already.

In addition to that, there is the Allegan County portion, which puts the population closer to, I don't know, maybe 120,000 at this point.

So there has been a lot of population change in House District 72.

I would also like to draw your attention to that District 72, State House District 72, has two counties and three Congressional districts.

So I hope that you will take that into account and try to limit it to one County, one Congressional District, that would be nice. And certainly very doable. And probably reflect a lot of common sense. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Lilly, for taking the time to provide your comment to the Commission. We appreciate it.

83.

>> I'd like to thank the Commission for giving me someone who is only 19 years old out here an opportunity to speak on this.

And due to my youth, I did not really know exactly what this meeting was going to be like.

Part of me feared it was going to turn into partisan squabble that was not going to really get a whole lot done, but I've been really encouraged. And I've seen incredible amount of agreement of all the people that have come out here to speak.

Particularly when it comes to, I think, that the reason why there is so much agreement is because people are kind of acknowledging something that is generally true, which is that a lot of the devise that come in our culture, a lot of the different ways of living we have is because of there is three major distinction, that being rural, suburban and urban. Whether it's keeping metro six together or keeping counties such as Ottawa whole, I

think the reason why we have such widespread agreement is we have held on to those core factors.

I'm from Caledonia, Michigan.

And right down the road from me lives a guy named Farmer Butch. And Farmer Butch, he farms cattle and he sends them out to restaurants, many of which are in Grand Rapids.

But despite the fact that they are in the same supply chain, they need a lot of different representation when it comes to state legislative matters, which is why I think it's critical to make sure that we keep County District lines the same, that we keep cities as together as possible, suburbs as together as possible. And farming communities like Caledonia, like Lowell, like a lot of the other places, as together as possible, because, by doing that, we will be able to ensure that we have good, strong leadership both in Lansing and in Washington that will be able to fight for the people and really give them the representation that they deserve.

Thank you and good luck drawing these new District lines.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Let me tell you something, you are not just 19. You are an astute young person. And you're the reason why we are remapping this process. And it's going to extend way beyond the 13 of us being here in some ways. And so it's about your generation.

So you're the expert.

You know what you know when you got up and spoke for two minutes and spoke eloquently. So never say you are just 19.

84.

>> Thank you.

Congratulations, Commission. You're on your last of the 16 public appearances and it's appreciated.

I want to thank you for your service.

I appreciate you taking the time to listen to the public's insights and concerns as you said about making decisions regarding redistricting lines.

Between the evaluation criteria of balancing populations of geographic contiguity and compactness, keeping community of interests together, boundary preservation are the tradeoffs you face in making your decisions appear overwhelming.

My name is Tom and I moved to West Michigan in 1992.

I moved to my current home approximately 26 years ago and selected my community of interest in Cascade Township based on the same data and criteria that most people use to figure out where they would like to settle down, namely safe streets and low crime rate, excellent school districts, affordable home prices, and price appreciation, a robust and diverse business community with access to highways and airports. Proximity to vibrant entertainment, dining venues and use of conservation of the abundant natural resources in this area.

You may have heard the expression West Michigan nice. And this truly reflects on my community of interest, which is a welcoming community for all people regardless of race, color or creed who share traditional family and community values of respect and appreciation for the beautiful natural resources in our communities.

Having spent more hours online than I care to admit using the District R online software tool to draw and evaluate districts, the challenges you face are indeed daunting. And I will say that using the ten-year-old census data decision is somewhat a stab in the dark, not knowing what the current data looks like. So I hope you will have updated data to help make your decisions. And may logic, wisdom, and common sense guide with making fair decisions in the effort.

As I mentioned, I live in southeast Kent County in Cascade Township, State House District 86, which is currently an awkward U-shaped area in red shown on this map. And includes zip codes 49546 and 49341. And stretches from Cascade Township on the west all the way to the City of Ionia on the east. I submitted all of these and two proposals for both my State House and State Senate in the portal. And thank you for your time and safe travels.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. And we look forward to reviewing your submissions.

85.

>> Hi. Thank you for the opportunity and thank you for the work you guys are doing. If I had to come up with the hardest job ever, congratulations, you have it.

My name is Patricia.

And I'd like to share some thoughts about redistricting.

I've heard a lot tonight from Calhoun County.

And I'm familiar with Calhoun County.

I lived for three years in Calhoun.

I worked in Battle Creek.

I now work and live in Jackson.

And they are right next to each other.

We are just a little bit further east.

We play each other in sports.

Every single thing that has been said about Calhoun is true of Jackson.

They could be twin counties.

They could be twin cities.

Battle Creek is a little bit bigger.

We share history, both were stops on the underground railroad.

Both were anti-slavery.

In fact, both have monuments to things like the underground railroad and anti-slavery, historical documents and newspapers and things like that.

So we also share similar demographics, similar ethnicity, average income, poverty levels are similar.

Also blue collar, also community minded, and that kind of a thing.

The fact that these two counties have so much in common, if the lines need to be drawn, we would be a good coupling, certainly better, perhaps, than Kalamazoo County and Calhoun. Kalamazoo and Jackson, and I'm not quite sure why we were ever separated out.

So thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much, Patricia, for taking the time to address the Commission.

86.

>> Good evening.

My name is Marty Schumacher. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you this evening and thoughts on updating our Congressional maps.

I live in Pavilion Township which is in Kalamazoo County, about halfway between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek.

In that area there seems to be a lot of discussion about things that those two cities have in common and that that is a reason for them to be in the same District.

While those communities may seem to have some commonality, there are ways in which those cities are very different and should be recognized for those differences and not necessarily placed in the same District.

I'm a Registered Nurse, licensed and practicing in Michigan since 1980.

When I compare the two healthcare markets, I see a big facility in one City and a smaller hometown hospital in the other.

People in Battle Creek like the fact that in many cases they and their multi-generational family members have been able to see doctors whom they have known for years and with whom they have developed trusting relationships.

There are elderly people there now who had established relationships with the old time general practitioner in years past, and now they are having their knee and their hip replacements, performed by that general practitioner's son or daughter who has taken over the family practice.

Consistency, familiarity, and trust are important in a smaller City like Battle Creek.

In these days of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been so much talk about preexisting conditions, how minorities have been particularly hard hit, and the reluctance of some of the minorities to be vaccinated.

Our president even spoke about that just a week or so ago.

I believe that the Battle Creek healthcare community is a perfect position...in a perfect position to reach out to people who may not feel comfortable with or trust a big intimidating system.

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So, in conclusion, if there is an opportunity or a need to combine districts, I would suggest that Battle Creek is a much better or that Calhoun County and the eastern side of Kalamazoo County are a much better fit than moving in a different direction.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Marty, for sharing your prospective with the Commission.

87.

88. For purposes of the public record, 87 and 88 don't seem to be present.

89, 90.

I feel like I'm playing bingo y'all.

91, yeah 91.

>> Good evening.

Let me begin by saying thank you for giving me the opportunity to bring forth my aspirations for redistricting.

I apologize for my grubby appearance, but with as important this is to me, I feel it necessary to come here straight from work.

My name is Justin.

And I'm a third generation and lifelong resident of the small town...of the small town of Marshall in Calhoun County.

I understand that some may feel that we should be paired with Kalamazoo County.

However, those whom I converse with on a daily basis and I believe otherwise.

Other than being neighbors, we have almost nothing in common with Kalamazoo.

Calhoun County is made mostly of small towns consisting of deep rooted small business that have been kept in their respective families for generations.

Kalamazoo County consists of multi-national and hard to plant roots for half a generation. It would be impossible to get one congressman to accommodate both of the vastly and industrial situations.

Counties like Barry County, Hillsdale County and Jackson County, to name a few, understand where we are coming from on this issue.

But Kalamazoo just simply cannot relate.

Thank you very much for your time.

And thank you very much for taking on this monumental task that has never been done by regular citizens before.

I hope in the end we can make everybody happy.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to come out especially right after work.

That is not an easy task.

So thank you.

92.

>> Good evening.

I'd like to thank you all for your service and for taking time to come here.

My name is Tom Apol, A-P-O-L.

I've been a resident of Kent County all my life.

I've been a resident of Caledonia Township, which is on the very southern edge of Kent County for 36 years.

I'm also a second cousin to Bernard Apol, that may ring a bell with some of you, may not, but Bernard Apol was the director of elections for the State of Michigan through the terms of three Governors plus part of Governor Milliken's term.

And he retired shortly after Governor Milliken took office.

And there was chaos regarding redistricting.

And there was much upheaval in Lansing, so Governor Milliken called Bernard out of retirement and said can you fix this?

Bernard accepted that position. And he laid out three different things that he did, so you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Number one, it had to be done nonpartisan.

Number two, it had to follow existing geographic lines along the boundaries of counties, cities and townships whenever possible.

Number three, it had to be kept as simple as possible, which meant no gerrymandering. So what I basically am saying is that on behalf of Bernie Apol who passed away a few years ago, he used to say redistricting is very tough. So I applaud every one of you for what you're doing here.

But I would very much encourage you to do these three things that Bernie did because in the end he was very successful and did it in less than a year. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Tom, for your public comment.

93, 94, 95 and 96.

>> 93, 94, 95 and 96, that's all that matters. Come on, 96.

>> Hi. My name is Michael Booker. And I'm a lifelong resident of Grand Rapids, Michigan for 60 some years.

My concern is, I'll make it brief, no gerrymandering.

Period.

May it rest in peace.

I think what the previous comments were made about the prison system and how the prison system benefits from that by not taking in consideration of the inmates' time in prison and his release status. And he goes back to his community and he is already disenfranchised. He is already stripped the right of having his voice heard.

My views on gerrymandering is let it rest.

And I want to thank this Commission because without this our voices will not be heard.

I'm currently vice president of the Kent County Black Caucus. And one of the main things we fight against is voter suppression. And I think gerrymandering is voter suppression.

And we ought to get rid of it.

So I appreciate you guys coming aboard and being a part of this new way of thinking and new way of doing things and getting things done.

Thank you. And by the way, I want to mention Candy Yams on 44th Street and Kalamazoo has the best soul food restaurant in Grand Rapids.

One of my Asian friends is wishing that you come out and patronize the business and the pizza the best in the west.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Michael, thank you for those wonderful recommendations and for coming and representing the Black Caucus.

And also thank you to everyone in the room, especially with this latter half of the numbers, for staying and for listening to one another and for being passionate about your comment.

Okay 97.

98. You hopped up. Come on, 98.

>> Like all of you, I have been eagerly waiting for the last three hours for this moment. My name is Sarah.

I'm a resident of Grand Rapids, second largest City in our state.

Most of what I was going to say I've revised probably about 20 times over the last three hours because a lot of people have said it.

I really support starting fresh, starting with new maps, that really are fair, they are equitable and they represent our community.

The six cities that we have in the Grand Rapids Metro are truly a Metropolitan Area. I live in the City of Grand Rapids.

But I shop in Kentwood and Wyoming.

I go bike riding and walking in Grandville.

I go for runs in East Grand Rapids.

We truly are a community where our residents use the services that we share.

We share a sewage system, a water system with many of the communities, our transit system is shared. And the six cities in Kent County really do deserve to serve as the anchor of a Congressional District.

Right now several of our cities are pulled into a District along the lakeshore, which you've heard much about from residents of Kentwood and Wyoming and really, we deserve to have representation that serves all of us. And representation in the Metro area, that is representative of who we are.

I also wanted to speak briefly. I submitted a map for a State Senate District that splits the City of Grand Rapids from north and south.

And puts south Grand Rapids with Kentwood.

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The southern part of our City has a lot of minority populations. We have a strong Black population. A strong Hispanic population. And you have heard a lot about the diversity of Kentwood. And I think making sure those communities have representation is really key.

Thank you so much for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Sarah, thank you for sharing your comments.

99, 100, 101, 102. This is the first city with I'm even saying these numbers.

99, 100, 101, 102.

99 you can begin.

>> Thank you.

Hi, everyone, my name is Chris.

I wanted to start off by saying thank you to you all for being here for sitting through this substantially long public hearing.

I'm happy to have Wayne Gretzky's number here.

I'm a lifelong resident of the City of Wyoming, just to the southwest of the City. I was a year in Americore and registered there my entire life. And growing up in Wyoming we have been kind of lumped together in the State House with Byron Township for most of my lifetime.

And, as many people have said before me, we don't have a lot in common.

However, Grandville is a place that I have went to, shopped, driven through my entire life. We share a lot of services. As I think it was John Fitzgerald that mentioned earlier that a lot of emergency services are shared. And we have a very significant community of interest and our population and demographics are pretty close to perfect in terms of like what you're looking for a State House seat.

At the Congressional level, living in Wyoming, we have been separated from a lot of the rest of the Grand Rapids Metro for the last decade. And while I go to Grandville a lot, I go to Grand Rapids even more.

And just this whole Metro Area I feel needs to continue to be combined like the six, Metro six.

I have a lot more of a community here than I do shared with out like places that are arguably up north like Baldwin and White Cloud.

And to close out, Yesterdog, I actually came here from there. I work there. It is a great place to go.

I will warn you though it is cash only.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for taking the time to address the Commission.

100.

>> Hi. I'm Sue Merrill. And I want to thank the Commissioners for taking on this important project.

And I hope that these testimonies will help you out.

I agree with those who suggest following County lines when possible. Grandville, where I live, is on the western border of Kent County. I don't even think there is a sign to tell you when you drive out of Kentwood and into Ottawa County, but that invisible line makes a difference.

A couple years ago I injured my hand on a Sunday. I asked my phone for the closest urgent care and I was directed to a facility in Jenison. They said I needed to see a hand surgeon. But because Jenison is in Ottawa County, they sent me to a doctor in Holland, 25 miles away instead of much closer specialists in Kent County.

Gerrymandered districts that zig-zag across county lines cause similar problems.

Take the current second Congressional District. It follows the lakeshore.

Except for a skinny, crooked finger that jabs into Kent County and snags voters like me from Grandville, Wyoming, and Kentwood.

This muffles our voices by burying us under a blanket of lakeshore voices and prevents us from impacting Kent County's third Congressional District where we really belong.

Several speakers have recommended not combining Grandville and Wyoming as a State House District, and I concur.

I live on a little neighborhood lake in Grandville.

But the people on the other side of the lake live in Wyoming.

That's how intertwined the towns are.

Our main drags, 28th Street and 44th Street, run parallel, across both towns.

The combined population is roughly the number you're looking for in a House District.

So there you have it.

A perfect House District.

One down, 109 to go.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission. 101, please.

>> Hello.

My name is Kim.

My husband and I have raised two generations of kids in St. Joseph in Berrien County. I've been a restaurateur, a Realtor. I ran communications for Showplace Pichford, a very compelling 21 Black man who ran for the 79th State House District in 2020. I'm also an assistant appointee to the sustainability community for the City of St. Joe.

I too want to thank the Commission and say to you Obi-Wan Kenobi, you are our only hope. It's no accident that current maps lump Berrien County with two ultra-White rural counties, which we have little in common. And it hurts them too as we have heard today. And it hurts the sustainability of our region especially our lakeshore communities impacted by extreme climate events, resulting erosion and a seasonal economy related

to the ups and down of tourism but lacking many Federal supports available to agricultural communities.

We face routine frustration that much of our District is so heavily influenced socially and politically by northwest Indiana media.

I want my representatives to understand and support my and my community's Michigan interests and concerns.

But mostly I'm troubled that current maps make my District overwhelmingly white and heteronormative. We have worked for years to make sure LGBTQ Michiganders are included in Michigan Elliot Larson civil rights protections. It makes good sense for racially and socially diverse communities like Niles and St. Joe, Benton Harbor and Berrien County, and South Haven and Paw Paw in Van Buren County to be in the same District to allow voters of color and LGBTQ communities to have a fair shot at representation. Because listening to them, considering their experience and ideas too will make our whole state work better for hardworking families and individuals. By design we can't ever hope to achieve or retain our most basic rights for all with our current gerrymandered districts. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to share your thoughts with the Commission.

102.

>> Little too tall for this there we go.

Good evening and thank you all for your service to fair and inequitable democracy. As you've learned by now, this is no simple task.

My name is Jeff Winston. I'm a resident of Grand Rapids. And I have the honor to serve as the Chairperson of the third Congressional democratic committee.

Kent County deserves to have openly competitive Congressional districts, allowing the voters to choose their own representation. By simply following the seven guiding criteria, the importance of keeping Kent County whole within a single Congressional District is clear.

Michigan has endured over 30 years of unfair partisan advantage by a political party that seems very afraid of competition.

So afraid, in fact, that Kent County even had a GOP straw candidate scheme in 2012 in an attempt to avoid competition.

Public disclosures and recent lawsuits uncovered the depth of 2010 republican redistricting scheme that we are living under now. These are the maps that we are currently with. During the lawsuit discovery process, internal e-mails from a GOP legislative staffer discussing drawing districts to, quote, cram all the dem garbage, end quote, into poor Southeast Michigan districts in order to meet the, quote, obvious objective of putting a dem in a dem district and republicans in a GOP District.

Another GOP staffer joking about the oddly shape 9th Congressional District in the corner of Macomb County that jutted up, said, quote, it's perfect giving the finger to democrat incumbent Senator Levin.

As you are aware, this Commission was approved by the voters, by over 61% of the vote specifically to end this type of partisan gerrymandering and the partisan thumbs of scales on democracy like we saw from the GOP in 2010.

Keeping this in mind, I wish to stress the absolute importance of starting your mapping process from scratch.

There are no good lines to keep. There are no bad lines that can be fixed.

Our democracy has been entrusted to your fairness and impartiality. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for taking the time to come and address the Commission.

103.

>> Hi. My name is Sonia and I currently reside in Calhoun County and an Army combat veteran. In 2003 I was deployed to Iraq as part of Iraqi freedom. 14 months into my deployment I was hit with a mortar round that left me confined to a wheelchair for six years. When my time in the Army had come to an end, I was sent back to America without any way of taking care of myself or any means to live on.

For the past 17 years I have been struggling with the Department of Veterans Affairs to navigate the red tape to get me to where I am today. And, because of this, I was able to gain some insight on how various programs work across VA system. And I realized I was not alone. There are men and women who have honorably served this country who are struggling far worse than anything I have ever had to deal with.

A few years ago I joined a few veteran services organizations in hopes of being able to help Veterans in need.

And so far, there have been a couple hundred in Calhoun County that I have successfully been able to connect with the resources they need.

There are the Battle Creek VA, the Fort Custer and Fort Custer National Cemetery.

There are several military establishments out there.

And some are in Calhoun County and some are in parts of Kalamazoo County.

It's imperative to keep these together.

We need one representative who knows and understands the military and veteran way of life out there.

Thank you for your service and thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Sonya, thank you for sharing your thoughts and perspective with the Commission. And my prayer for you is that you continue to find justice in all the freedom you need to be well. Okay, 104.

105.

>> Madam Chair and committee, I want to thank you for your time and your efforts of serving the people of Michigan in looking into our redistricting maps.

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Welcome to West Michigan.

If you want to find the true west coast, you need to go 30 miles west.

My name is James Finch.

I'm a lifelong resident of Salem Township in Allegan County.

I served our Township as a firefighter and assistant chief for 30 years, prior to becoming the Salem Township supervisor in 2004.

Through that I've worked with many municipalities in Southwest Michigan.

Many of those who have spoken before me tonight have asked to have boundaries changed.

I am asking...I'm here asking that Allegan and Van Buren counties be left part of our Senate...Michigan Senate District 26.

Both of these counties are very similar.

As some people have said, they are like twins.

Our biggest commodity is agricultural, being the largest with small cities and villages woven into the fabric with their own smaller businesses.

I -- and also these two counties are part of the true west coast of Michigan.

Other than tourism and agricultural, these counties share 911 emergency management and court systems.

There are at least two fire districts that share the border of these two counties.

I ask that the Michigan Senate District 26 be kept keep, Allegan and Van Buren counties together.

If you put us in with an urban County, we are going to lose our identity.

I pray that you all are getting a good night's sleep. Thank you and God bless.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to address the Commission.

106, 107, 108, and 109.

Are you 106?

>> Hi, my name is Jordan.

I'm from Ottawa County, specifically Holland.

And I wanted to talk today a little bit about the Grand Rapids area.

I live in Grand Rapids now, but I spent pretty much my entire life on the west side of Michigan.

And what I will tell you is that the Metropolitan six that a lot of speakers tonight have mentioned, is not a term. It's not a community that really exists. What you have are six individual communities that have all incorporated into cities to express and acknowledge the differences that they share.

If they were all one big community, they would be all one big City called Grand Rapids. However, that's not the case.

What you actually do by incorporating all of them into one Congressional District is you disenfranchise the smaller ones, specifically Grandville, Walker, even Wyoming,

too. By including all of them together, what you're going to get is the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area, pretty much all the money is going to be sent right to the City of Grand Rapids.

That's what you see in these urban districts, including Walker and Grandville and Wyoming into the coastal District makes a lot more sense.

Those communities are incorporated together, not with the City.

Because they share different community interests.

If I could redraw one line, actually, the line I would choose to redraw would be the eastern boundary line of Ottawa County between Ottawa and Kent.

So that we could include our brothers and sisters in Grandville, Wyoming and Walker.

Because those areas look much more similar to the east side of Ottawa County.

I really think that Ottawa County should remain whole. And I really think that those communities should stay together with Ottawa County at the Congressional level.

Thank you. I appreciate you guys' time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Jordan, for taking the time to address the Commission.

107.

>> Hi. My name is Lisa. And I am -- I have a bachelor's in social work.

I'm a precinct delegate.

I'm very interested in politics.

But the reason I do all of this is because I'm a mom.

I look out for my kids. And because I have a bachelor's in social work, I have that because I care about all of the community.

It needs to be fair.

I have lived in Kent County all my life.

I have lived in both the City of Grand Rapids and outside of the City.

And they are very different, that line of four mile separating Grand Rapids, the City and the Plainfield Township is very important.

There is a difference. I can't explain it, but we moved on the other side of that line on purpose.

So my...please keep the counties together.

Recognize that line of the Grand Rapids, the City of Grand Rapids, look at the school districts.

Keep the City with the City.

The rural with the rural.

Wyoming and Kentwood are very demographically similar.

So if you're going to look at the Voting Rights Act, you can look at that.

But please don't do any racial gerrymandering, that's not right.

The Election Data Services in Virginia, I understand that you're working with them.

I hope that Michigan has the voice, not some company in Virginia.

And I hope it stays nonpartisan.

Again, no gerrymandering.

Respect the City and Township boundaries and they need to make sense, so thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Lisa, for taking the time to address the Commission.

108.

>> Greetings, redistricting committee.

Thank you for your time today and all the work you have done allowing our voices to be heard today.

I'd like to talk to you today about bicycles, actually more accurately about transportation, equity and shared services between Grand Rapids and the five cities that surround it.

My name is Rhonda.

I live in Grand Rapids proper, about ten minutes from here.

And for the last several years I've worked with the Greater Grand Rapids Bicycle Coalition, the City of Grand Rapids and the five cities surrounding it, its Commissioners, the Michigan League of Bicyclists, the Rapids Bus System, and disability advocates in several area throughout the state.

My work includes contributions to the City plan known as Gera forward, Federal Advocacy for Tiger funding, new infrastructure, and policy recommendations.

The most important thing from this work that I have learned is that we are acutely aware that mobile translates to equity, also known as transportation equity.

And like many shared services in Grand Rapids and the surrounding five cities, addressing urban versus rural constituents will look very different. And, more importantly, will require a municipal solution that addresses those specific needs thoughtfully and integrates that equity.

The same could be said for other shared services such as public safety, recycling, technology and internet services.

Grand Rapids and the surrounding five cities require representation specific to their needs that facilitate a scaled solution for the communities that they affect.

Without appropriate representation we will not only have solutions that don't work, we will also simultaneously sacrifice equity as each are inextricable from the other and mutually dependent.

I ask maps be redrawn starting with a clean slate. And maps that represent people equitably throughout the City.

Thank you so much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for highlighting the bicycle community and for sharing your perspective with the Commission.

109.

>> Good evening.

Thank you for listening to all of us.

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My name is Keith.

I live and work in Battle Creek.

I came to West Michigan in 1998.

I was transplanted here as part of a business agreement between Kellogg and Jacobs Engineering.

I expected that after the end of a four-year contract I would be off to somewhere else.

And who knows what would come with that.

23 years later I'm still here.

When I came here, I didn't know about the extent of the food business community built around Kellogg and Post.

And so here I am, middle-aged engineer, going into my first project in the area and start running into the contractors.

I can think of at least four contractors immediately in Battle Creek, good, solid contractors, all within ten miles of the plants there.

And two additional electrical contractors.

Good guys that do good, solid work.

And then I start running into the other people that are supplying all the supplies and components, the equipment and instrumentation.

They all have places right there in Battle Creek.

And then the machine shops, the machine shops that are part of developing the new ideas and equipment and supporting the existing ones all right in Battle Creek.

Here I end up on a project in Mexico.

And I look at the tank. And it was built 30 miles up the road from Battle Creek in Hastings.

Again, beautiful equipment from that area.

And when the tide of business moves and Kellogg decides they have to spin off their packaging printing business, no, it doesn't go to some far flung land. It stays right in Battle Creek and becomes Graphic Packaging located between the river and downtown Battle Creek.

The whole community is built around the grain and the grain milling business there.

And I'm honored to have been part of it and to know all the people and generations of people that have built that place.

It's a community of interest.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for addressing the Commission.

I encourage you to submit the rest of your thoughts via our online portal.

110, 110.

111.

>> Hello. My name is Matthew.

And I'm a resident of Grand Rapids.

I've been here 14 years.

I have two boys that have gone to the Grand Rapids Public School System.

My wife teaches at Grand Valley University. And I myself work as a project manager for a software services company.

Thank you for your work.

It's very important.

It's yeoman's work, but it will benefit us all when you are done.

At this point with 110 slots behind me, I'm going to be reiterating some things that people have said. But I do agree with the premise of a clean slate at least to start because you may land in some nuisanced similarity to what is there now, but starting with a clean slate and using your best sense of principles and imagination and input from all of us and consensus, you may land on something that is better than what we have now.

Because, certainly, as a member of the 76th State House District, anything is better than what we have now.

I have one of the most gerrymandered districts in the state.

A few blocks in either direction I'm in a different District.

Although the same goes for the carve out that creates part of District 73 and puts us in East Grand Rapids. And the carve out that makes part of District 72 and puts us in Kentwood. And go up to the house level, I also support the premise that parts of the Grand Rapids Metro Area, that are in District two, really should be part of District three. So those are all really good ideas.

I think now that the thing, in looking at the clock I'm out of time. Three things to think about shared services, building from the MSAs, thinking about County, City, Township demarcations and creating your final options for us.

And can you share the play list from the intermission as part of your documents? It was great.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Matthew, wasn't it good? Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with the Commission. And I'll make sure we tell Edward Woods, III, who is in charge of making sure that you all are comfortable the best that he can and that you enjoy the hearings.

112.

Now don't disappoint.

113.

>> I'm not clapping because it's the end. I'm clapping because you are here, so you can begin.

>> Hi.

My name is Josie.

And I live in the northeast area of Grand Rapids.

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When I first moved to Grand Rapids over 30 years ago, I lived in the southeast side of town near Breton and 28th Street.

The bulk of my actions, working shopping, visiting, were centered in the southeast, in Kentwood area.

When I moved to the northeast side of town, of course, I focused my activities in the northeast portion. And I worked at Grand Rapids Public Schools and we were centered downtown.

And for many, many years until we moved to the Franklin Giddeons area, which is near East Grand Rapids.

I'm very familiar with East Grand Rapids.

Of course, because we usually took our lunch breaks and visited the area and community.

I know Northeast Grand Rapids, Southeast Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids communities very well. I see the similarities with demographics.

Small businesses.

Schools.

Economic interests and such between the three.

These communities are closely aligned to each other.

I would like to encourage you to consider these common traits as you evaluate redistricting.

East Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, Kentwood are communities with shared, important similarities.

It would be good to keep these communities contiguous in your redistricting plans.

Thank you so much for your time. And thank you for the time that you spent on this important work.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to address the Commission.

And for sticking this out and being here all this time to be 113.

At this time you all we are going to switch to our remote public comment.

I encourage you to stay because one moment.

At this time I encourage you to stay because we only have three folks present for our remote public comment, so it's not going to be as in depth as our in-person but it's important, nonetheless. I'm sure we all agree.

So I will turn to the Michigan Department of State staff who will facilitate our remote public comment. But I want to give a few reminders much as the same for in person. Individuals who have signed up and indicated they would like to provide live, remote public commentary to the Commission will now be allowed to do so.

Michigan Department of State staff will introduce you and unmute you.

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If you are on a computer, you will be prompted by the Zoom app to unmute your microphone and speak.

If you are on the phone, a voice will say that the host would like you to speak and prompt you, to press star six to unmute.

If you experience technical or audio issues and it's hard for us to either hear you or see you, and if you just can't provide your comment, we will wait for at least 3-5 seconds. If not, we will move on to the next person in line and then return to you after they are done speaking.

If your audio still does not work, you can e-mail at redistricting@Michigan.gov and we will help you troubleshoot so you can participate during the next public comment period at a later hearing or date.

Again, you will have two minutes to address the Commission. You will hear a timer at the end of your two minutes. And please go to the public comment tool and share your comments in writing.

At this time Michigan Department of State staff, you have the floor for our remote public comment.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Thank you, Madam Chair. First up to promote remote public comment is Lisa Jevens.

Please allow us a moment to unmute you.

>> Hello this is Lisa Jevens.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Hi, Lisa. We can see and hear you. You can begin.

>> Excellent. Thank you. I'm proud to be a long time volunteer with Voters Not Politicians, which set this whole thing in motion four years ago. So I'm real excited to testify today.

I'm doing so because my husband and I have a home in Macatawa Park which is located on the west coast of Michigan near Holland. And Macatawa Park is a very special community with historic cottages south of the Holland, Michigan lighthouse. It's on a peninsula that lies between Lake Michigan and Lake Macatawa. Macatawa itself is not a town but it does have a Post Office, a large marina, Yacht club, et cetera.

The reason I'm giving this testimony is for decades the community and peninsula has been split in half horizontally along an imaginary line that is 32nd Street in Holland and runs east to west and everything to the south is in Allegan and Laketown Township. Unfortunately, the lines for all of our Congressional districts, State Senate, and State House District were also drawn to follow this imaginary line.

So we in our community have been split in half for every single branch of Government. Some of the issues that we are facing right now in Macatawa are high water on both lakes and severe beach erosion and dune erosion. We have spent a lot of money in 2020 and our beach access is still compromised.

It makes it more difficult for our community to address this if we have to consult two Congressmen, two state Senators, and two State Representatives to get anything done.

I believe that Macatawa should be represented together as one unit and also joined with the beach communities to the south on Lake Michigan and to the east on lake Macatawa, which are all facing similar issues.

30 Second Street should not be the dividing line any longer even if it is a County line. Thank you. And I submitted this online as well with a map.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much, Lisa, for taking the time to address the Commission.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Next in line for public comment is Kathi Harris. Kathi, please allow us a moment to unmute you.

>> Kathi.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Welcome, Kathi. You may now address the Commission.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: We can't hear you, but we can see you.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Kathi, unfortunately, we are not able to hear you. We will move on to our next public comment participant and come back to you in the hopes that your technical issues might be resolved at that time.

Our next public comment participant is Guadela.

Please allow one moment for us to unmute you.

Apologies. That participant has left the Zoom meeting. We will move on to our next participant. Please allow us one moment to unmute you.

>> Magdalena-Rivera.

>> Can you hear me?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Yes, we can hear and see you.

>> Wonderful.

Good evening MICRC and the Greater Grand Rapids Community.

My name is Magdalena. West Michigan is my home.

I'm a former Ottawa County elected official in my hometown of Holland, Michigan. And currently I live, work and play in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Thank you to the 61% of Michigan voters who supported the legislation that created Michigan citizens Redistricting Commission.

With that said and in the spirit of diverse racially equitable and inclusive democracy today, I will reference three communities of interest.

First, I'm a proud member of the West Michigan Grand Rapids Latina community, Latino, Latina Latin X. We are 477,000 strong throughout the State of Michigan. And in the Grand Rapids Area we are 16% of the general population.

We have all contributed to the local economies and cultural richness here in Michigan for about a hundred years, yet we lack representation on MICRC today as well as at all levels of public office in Michigan and throughout the country.

Here in Grand Rapids, the Latino, Latina, Latin X community knows that the overall Michigan population growth has decreased except within the Latino, Latina, Latin X community, as mentioned by those here today including Ottawa County as well. In fact, in Michigan the Latina, Latin X population growth rate is actually 86% per the American community survey data.

We have yet to peak. And this growth will continue well beyond 2050.

What this confirms for us and should also confirm for the MICRC is that there should be no fragmenting of communities within the Latina, Latino communities in Michigan. In fact, and we should see District lines being changed or altered where there is population decreases or low growth.

I'll stop there and submit the rest.

We are watching. We are growing. Thank you. Stay safe and healthy, Michigan.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for sharing your providing us awareness about the Latino and Latina community.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: We will now return to Kathi Harris.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Kathi, we can't hear you; but we can see you.

Maybe try taking out your headphones. I don't know.

I can read your lips, but we can't hear you.

No audio still.

>> Hello.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: There you are, hello.

>> Okay. You can hear me now. Thank you.

My name is Kathi Harris and I am a long time or lifelong resident of Grand Rapids. And on the southeast side. And I am today wearing three hats and representing the organizations because all of them have common thread and all for uplifting the community and also concerned about the safety and representation for our community. I'm the president of Randolph Institute of AFLCIO and founded director of proactive project. Proactive is an acronym for people reaching out, actively coming together, increasing voter empowerment and a Vice Chair for voting access for all, which is a statewide coalition for protecting the voting rights for those that are incarcerated and awaiting sentencing as well as those returning citizens.

All of which are nonpartisan nonprofit organizations.

Thank you for hearing the voices of all the communities around the state and thank you for your commitment to this Redistricting Commission.

All of my organizations I'm working with and for the underrepresented communities of color, the communities are primarily on the south side, both east and west of Grand Rapids.

We have identified our community of interest. It is the 26th precincts that have had low voter turnout, low graduation rates, low vaccination and high rate of lead and on the

south side of Metro Grand Rapids area. And want to enhance our community and education and churching and housing and all things that are important to everyone. Currently the Metro Grand Rapids now has two representatives, but their Districts are split in the inner City and the outer City, including some of the other areas. The Grand Rapids needs to have two representatives, splitting the north and the south. These areas are distinctly different populations and both need dedicated representation. This will allow us to have the power to provide voices for justice balanced equity and shared resources for those who have been gerrymandered and left behind. The voting access for all coalition urges support for House Bill 4276 and 151 to end prison gerrymandering in the State of Michigan. And you have heard some concerns of prison gerrymandering. I won't go into it, but it's important that you as a Commission look at that because it does affect our communities. And thank you very much for your commitment to this important issue. I'll stop there. Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Kathi, for taking time to submit your public comment to the Commission.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: That concludes remote public comment.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Michigan Department of State staff.

At this time we have finished all first-time public comments, both for in-person and virtual.

Now that the first opportunity for both in person and remote public comment has concluded, without objection, we will now hear from individuals seeking to provide a second two-minute public comment.

Hearing no objection, we will now proceed with individuals seeking to provide a second time public comment.

As a reminder, you will have the same two minutes to address the Commission.

You will conclude your remarks when your two minutes has ended and you will step to the nearest microphone when I call your number.

If you feel you have more to say, please visit our public comment tool, www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

We have one person who has signed up for a second time for public comment in person. At this time I will call number one.

>> Yes, James Gallant, Marquette County Suicide Prevention Coalition. And these are my personal opinions. And as you all know, because you were all there at the orientation for this Commission, on September 17th, 2020,

When the Secretary of State Office Attorney Mike Brady specifically said to you, you must follow Robert's Rules of Order.

And now your attorney is saying you are being provided misinformation about Robert's Rules of Order.

So I'd ask you to please clarify that. And we are not talking about opinions. And I'm not talking opinions about Robert's Rules of Order. I'm actually quoting the passages from the rule book. And it appears that your attorney is the one that's kind of making it up as opinion.

She is all opinion.

Because I don't even believe you own a rule book, do you? You don't have a rule book here and referenced like she said you reference rules and you look in the book right, no. You make it up.

It's opinion thing.

And the one thing is about this unanimous consent, this hearing no objections.

Apparently, your attorney believes that that is synonymous of voting majority vote at a public meeting and in Robert Rules it's not.

It's my understanding that the actual language in Roberts Rules says that the Chair is borrowing the vote of the member.

So you're not casting your vote.

It's not synonymous with voting. You are borrowing the vote and it's completely inappropriate in this context because you are just floating through it.

And then now it's just floating through it.

It's, you know, shenanigans.

Also, I would like to point out and I believe that some of you members have incomplete and defective applications.

I saw them online. I went online.

And I believe the Chair and Commissioner Lett and a couple others chose not to answer the required questions that says for conflict of interest, please investigate and report upon that and ask.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Your allotted two minutes is over.

>> Remove those members and randomly select new members that did not actually complete their applications, including the political party affiliation.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Your allotted two minutes has ended.

At this time both our in-person and remote public comment period has ended.

As a reminder to the public, our applications are public.

And we answered all questions that were required of us to answer.

We encourage you all to continue to watch our live meetings and live hearings to see things unfold for yourselves as they happen. And we are so, so, so, very happy to have spent the day with Grand Rapids.

This is momentous and there is so much energy.

We are very excited.

Without objection, we will now have Executive Director Hammersmith provide acknowledgments.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: Thank you, Commissioner Kellom.

I want to give a big thanks to DeVos Place, to the City of Grand Rapids, for the people who came out tonight, Blue Water Technology who did a great job with the sound. And the League of Women Voters and voters not politicians for volunteering to help people make help make people feel welcome and to get them into the right place and help them sign up for public comment.

We also have some volunteers that have been online with us for 16 public hearings. So our closed captioning has been done by Annette Blough, our ASL interpretation by Bethany James and Toi Bogan and Katie and the translators Jose-Castillo and Arabic translators.

I'm sorry if I'm not pronouncing your name exactly correct, but please understand we do appreciate you and our Bengali translators.

So thank you so much for being with us in these 16 public hearings.

Thank you to our guests tonight for being with us and remember go to www.Michigan.gov/MICRC to share your comments with us.

Thank you so much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much Executive Director, Sue Hammersmith. Again, thank you to all of you for sticking around and being here.

As the items on the agenda are completed and the Commission has no further business, a motion to adjourn is in order. May I have a motion?

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: So moved.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Motion made by Commissioner Witjes. Is there a second? Second made by Commissioner Rothhorn.

Is there a debate on the motion? Hearing none, all those in favor of adjournment raise your hand and say aye.

>> Aye.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: All those opposed raise your hand and say nay and help cleanup.

The ayes have it, the motion carries, meeting is adjourned at 9:34. Thank you so much, Grand Rapids.

Be well and be safe.

[Meeting concludes]