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## MICRC Public Hearing

05/13/21 6:00 pm

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>> CHAIR KELLOM: As Chair of the Commission, I call this meeting of the Michigan Independent Citizens

Redistricting Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

This Zoom webinar is also being live streamed on YouTube, [www.YouTube.com/Michigan](http://www.YouTube.com/Michigan) or [MICHSOSoffice/videos](http://MICHSOSoffice/videos).

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 Michigan to find the link for viewing on YouTube.

Our live stream today includes closed captioning. Closed captioning, ASL interpretation, Spanish and Arabic translation services will be provided for effective participation in this meeting. E-mail us at [redistricting@Michigan.gov](mailto:redistricting@Michigan.gov) for additional viewing options or details on accessing language translation services for this meeting.

People with disabilities needing other specific accommodations should also contact [redistricting@Michigan.gov](mailto:redistricting@Michigan.gov).

This meeting is being recorded and will be available at [www.Michigan.gov/mirc](http://www.Michigan.gov/mirc) for viewing at a later date.

This meeting is also being transcribed and those transcriptions will be made available and posted on [Michigan.gov/mirc](http://Michigan.gov/mirc) along with written public comment submissions.

There is also a public comment portal that may be accessed by visiting [Michigan.gov/mirc](http://Michigan.gov/mirc). This portal can be utilized to post maps and comments which can be viewed by the public.

Members of the media who may have questions before, during or after the meeting should direct those questions to Edward Woods, III, our Communications and Outreach Director for the Commission at [WoodsE3@Michigan.Gov](mailto:WoodsE3@Michigan.Gov).

For the purposes of the public watching and the public record, I will turn to Department of State staff to take note of the Commissioners present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Good evening, Commissioners. Please say present when I call your name. If 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 from.

Commissioner Clark.

COMMISSIONER CLARK: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Curry?

>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Eid?

>> COMMISSIONER EID: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Kellom?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Lange?

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

Commissioner Lett?

>> COMMISSIONER LETT: present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Orton?

>> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Rothhorn?

>> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Szetela?

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Vallette?

>> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Wagner?

>> COMMISSIONER WAGNER: Present; attending remotely from Eaton County, Michigan.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Weiss?

>> COMMISSIONER WEISS: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Witjes?

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: All Commissioners are present.

We will now have our welcome and introductions.

>> I'm Commissioner Orton and we want to welcome you to the MICRC public hearing in Kalamazoo. We are 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 want to hear your ideas about communities of interest. In 2018 more than 61% of Michigan voters passed proposal two a ballot initiative for voters and not legislators to take responsibility for map fairness and public feedback in the redistricting process and created the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission, the MICRC.

For the first time in Michigan's history, the MICRC will lead the redistricting process to draw fair and independent maps.

The MICRC is comprised of 13 randomly selected Michigan residents that include 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 Congressional mandates.

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 are here and we look forward to hearing from you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Commissioner Orton. I would like to introduce Sue Hammersmith, our Executive Director, who has something to share with you about the public hearings.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: Good evening. And we are really glad you are here this evening to share your thoughts with us about how you would like the maps to be drawn for Michigan. The Constitution says that we are supposed to inform you about the process.

So before these 13 Commissioners draw the first line, they have to hold at least 10 public hearings. I like to say our Commissioners are overachievers. They are going to hold 16 public hearings throughout the state.

The Constitution clearly defines the three purposes for the public hearings. They include informing the public about the redistricting process. Sharing the purposes and the responsibilities of the Commission. And then, most importantly, to listen to you and solicit information about potential redistricting.

[ Sue is off mic ]

Michigan districts that will need to be drawn include the 13 Michigan Congressional districts, 38 Michigan Senate districts, and 110 Michigan house districts.

The Commission's purposes and responsibilities include exercising the constitutional power that has been granted solely to the Commission to redistrict Michigan. Operating in an impartial and a transparent manner that reinforces public confidence in the redistricting process. And conducting statewide outreach and inviting meaningful participation in this process.

The Commission will adopt three maps, one for each type of District that I've mentioned, while complying with both U.S. and Michigan constitutional mandates.

Their goal is to ensure integrity, public availability and accountability for the data, for the public comments, and for Commission information.

And they will assure compliance with the redistricting criteria. The redistricting criteria are set forth in our Constitution. They start with the Federal law, which requires equal population and adherence to the Voting Rights Act.

Secondly, the districts must be geographically contiguous. They have to touch each other.

Third, we must take into account communities of interest. We hope some of you will share that with us this evening.

Fourth and fifth, involve political parties or candidates. There cannot be any disproportionate advantage for any political party.

And they cannot favor or disfavor an incumbent elected official or a candidate.

Six, the maps must reflect consideration of county, city, and township boundaries.

And, lastly, the districts should be reasonably compact. It's a pretty tall order. And these are in rank order, so they and have to be followed from number one to number seven.

So why are we here this evening?

To hear directly from you about your ideas to redistrict Michigan's Congressional, Senate and House seats. And to listen and to learn about your community of interest.

Why should you care?

Because this is a new, historic process. For the first time it empowers citizens to provide input for the District lines that will best represent their interest.

This is an open and transparent process with opportunity for statewide public participation. And it invites communities of interest to share their voices about how you can be best represented.

So, again, thank you very much for being here this evening. And I will turn this floor over to our General Counsel, Julianne Pastula.

>> MS. JULIANNE PASTULA: Thank you, Director Hammersmith. Good evening. My name is Julianne Pastula. I'm the General Counsel to the MICRC.

This evening I'll briefly describe our public comment guidelines.

Our public comments tonight will include both in-person and remote public comments. Public comments are up to two minutes for both in person and remote.

I will be keeping time, and I will start the timer the moment the speaker begins speaking. And when the time has ended, the noise, the alarm will ring this noise.

[ Alarm ringing ]

And I will...after the alarm has gone off, I will make a statement to remind the individual speaker that their time has concluded.

Our in-person public commenters or participants will go first. And then when the in-person speakers have concluded, we will move on to our virtual participants.

And we encourage all public comment providers this evening to visit our portal. The public comment portal is available at [www.Michigan.gov/MICRC](http://www.Michigan.gov/MICRC). Please provide your public comment in the portal. You can also submit maps in the portal.

And, again, if you provide verbal public comment tonight, we ask that you also log it into the portal so that it will be available to all Commissioners and also to members of the public. Anyone can view the comments in the portal. Thank you so much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much, Julianne.

We will now begin the public comment portion of our meeting.

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.

Please step to the nearest microphone when I call your number. You will have two minutes to address the Commission. And please conclude your remarks when you hear the timer.

I'll have numbers 1 and 2 step to the mic to the left of me. And numbers 3 and 4 step to the mic to my right.

Number one, when you reach the mic, you are allowed to begin. And please feel free, folks, to introduce yourself so I'm not just calling your number. I don't have your name, so don't take it personal. Thank you so much.

>> First of all, I would like to welcome the Commission here to Kalamazoo. And thank you for your time and service to the Michigan residents of our state.

My name is Michael Vandenberg. And I'm a resident of Gun Plain Charter Township, which is in the southeast corner of Allegan County. And I'm here to talk about my community of interest.

Allegan County is a rural county. We have a lot of natural resources. So in our county, Allegan is the largest agricultural producing county in the State of Michigan. And we have over 1800 miles of roads. Our residents are self-reliant. We did not wait for the state or the feds to come in and help us with our roads. We went and got a road millage for the county to take care of the roads.

23 of the 24 townships also have road millages to help out with our roads. We need good roads to be able to maintain and get our agricultural products to market. Also with our tourism.

We have the Allegan County state game area in Allegan County, over 50,000 acres of forest. We have the largest oak Savannah in the world here in Allegan County.

These natural resources that we have, including the Rabbit river, the Gun River, and the Kalamazoo River, which flows through the heart of Allegan County, is part of our community. And we need to stay as a rural community. And I would hope that you would take that into consideration when you're drawing the lines to keep Gun Plain Charter Township and Allegan County together in the same districts as much as possible. And I want to thank you for your time.

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

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Number two.

>> I'm Andy Humbolth. I live in Battle Creek, Michigan. I've been a resident of Battle Creek for 20 years, Michigan all my life. I -- I lived in the Grand Rapids area before that.

I'm here tonight representing a grass roots group of people in the Battle Creek community who put together a testimony document that we will submit to the web portal. We are in the process of gathering signatures from individuals and organizations to sign onto that testimony. So we will be sure to submit it. I will submit it tonight or today along with my comments here. But, again, at the end we want to gather as many signatures as we can.

That testimony is simple. And that is in Battle Creek we consider our community of interest as wrapped up with that of Kalamazoo. We are an I-94 community. We have much more in common with communities along I-94 than we do with communities like Grand Rapids to the north or communities to the south.

With Kalamazoo we share a watershed, a labor pool, a healthcare system, a four-year University, an airport, a Costco for over buying on canned tomatoes.

Kalamazoo is the community that we have by far the closest affinity with. But after 30 years of, you know, partisan advantage gerrymandering, we do not share a Congressional District with Kalamazoo.

So I stand here before you tonight to ask you to fix that. Thank you very much for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Andy. And three.

>> Hi. I'm Melanie Curney. Like Mike Vandenberg, I'm from Gun Plain Township. Thank you very much for being here in our community.

My request is to try to keep this as simple and straightforward as possible. Respect --  
[ Video stopped ]

In our community where we are very rural, we don't have a lot in common with the big cities, bigger cities of Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, for example.

So I think the rural and urban interests are very important.

I was a little surprised to hear that some people are encouraging you to think about school district lines. Because I was on a school board and school districts are really local control. They shouldn't have a lot of Federal input in terms of policy. I know they get money. But in terms of policy it's more a state issue and a local control issue. So I think schools as a community of interest is appropriate, but not in terms of the Congressional.

So we know that our elections, however confusing as it is, we've had a lot of issues, so my request is try to keep it as simple as possible so that people can understand what the changes are, understand where they are, and we minimize our disenfranchisement of voters through confusion. Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. Number four.

>> Hi. Good evening. My name is Jim Peterson. I'm from Cassopolis, Michigan in Cass County. And I start by thanking you for what you are doing.

I've been at politics in Michigan for about 40 years. And every ten years we seem to beat our brains in to try and gain advantage.

I'm glad that this is independent, nonpartisan Commission and you will be doing the work of drawing the districts.

I want to speak about my community of Cassopolis. It's a wonderful, diverse community in rural Michigan, part of a chain of communities, if you will, along M60. They have A street in the underground railroad.

And when you grow up in Michigan you think of the segregation of our past. And I just became aware recently, and becoming more and more recently, that there is communities of...there is diverse communities in rural Michigan.

As you go around Michigan, I'm encouraged that you are up north, Upper Peninsula and upper and lower Michigan and the Lower Peninsula. And I just want to encourage you to dig deep into the demographics from the census, find those diverse communities and help them get representation so they are not all divided up and things like that.

Cassopolis is a wonderful town with a majority of African/American population in the village, surrounded by corn fields, surrounded by rural Michigan. And there's a lot of communities like that along M60, Vandalia, Cassopolis, Dowagiac. So I want to encourage you to be bold. Use that software, use your experts to do the good work to bring those communities of interests together instead of having them separated like they have been in the past. Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Numbers five, six, seven and eight.

>> My name is Diane Barrett Curtis. I have lived and worked in Dowagiac in Cass for most of my life. Since I have retired, I have appreciated my location more and more. I'm within a short driving distance to cultural and entertainment venues in South Bend, Indiana; Kalamazoo; and most especially St. Joseph and Benton Harbor Michigan.

I am a short drive from Lake Michigan, wineries in Van Buren Counties and the Mendal Center. Almost exclusively my husband and I look to the west for our recreational activities of shopping, dining, short road trips. Most of my friends and acquaintances, especially those who are also retired, are similarly disposed. Our inclinations are much more directed towards Berrien and Van Buren Counties than St. Joseph County in the east.

Therefore, I believe that Cass County's interest will be best served by including Cass County in the legislative district with Berrien and Van Buren Counties.

I'm a democrat and I recognize that I am a minority in Cass County. I believe that over the past several census cycles my vote and the votes of citizens of Cass County have been increasingly marginalized.

However, I will continue to work to elect candidates I suppose...I support. I worked for passage of the ICRC. I want and expect this Commission to succeed in drawing legislative districts fairly so all citizens will feel they are adequately represented.

No, I don't think that I will suddenly become part of a democratic majority in Cass County if we are included in a Berrien and/or Van Buren legislative District. But I do

think that fair lines will allow all of us to have more faith in our political system. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number six.

>> Hello. My name is Kathleen McKee. I live in Dowagic, Michigan. As a point of reference I am currently retired, working with the democratic party in Cass County. My expertise is in the area of social work. I worked for the State of Michigan for 28 years. And for the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians for 15 years, so I'm a bureaucrat.

We in Cass County have experienced one of the most recent Districting, a very gerrymandered situation. Berrien County is a piece of it. To the one side is ours, and then to the other side is connected to Cass County, and then the rest of it we are in St. Joe County. And we have very little commonality with St. Joe County either when it comes to employment interests, it's not...it has not served us well.

And we are asking that you consider a traditional combination of Berrien, Cass, Van Buren. We were a tri-county for years and years, probably over 30 years. And we have many services that have served all three counties, including our ISD, tri-county head start, all of our employment and training projects. They all came out of Berrien and Van Buren and Cass together.

And so this past terms have not been a time that have been helpful for us at all. So I appreciate you inviting us and we are so glad to be here and thank you. Thank you so much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number seven.

>> Good evening. My name is Naomi Levin. I'm a long-time resident of Cass County. I want to say, first of all, that I am a strong supporter of this Commission and optimistic that the Commission will draw lines that are fair and based on communities of interest.

Today, at this moment, I am afraid for our democracy. And I fear that my vote in future elections might not count.

One way of protecting our democracy is that we are represented in a balanced way in our legislature. And that is more likely to happen when the lines are drawn in an open and transparent way by an independent group of citizens that does not favor one party over the other. So I want to thank you for your work.

I want to talk about the educational connections that make Cass, Van Buren and Berrien Counties a community of interest. These same connections do not exist in St. Joseph County to our east.

Consequently in Cass County we do not see ourselves fitting well with the 59th State House District.

Years ago I worked for tri-county head start, a group that is still a strong force in the lives of young children in Cass, Van Buren, and Berrien counties. I worked for 35 years at Southwest Michigan College in Dowagic. Our students are part predominantly from Cass, Berrien and Van Buren Counties. Cass students also attend Lake Michigan College in Berrien County.



In addition, SMC has a second campus in Niles as does LMC, reinforcing the connections between Berrien and Cass Counties.

The K-12 schools in Cass County are also connected to Southwestern Michigan College and Lake Michigan College in Berrien County through early college programs. And Cass and Van Buren Counties share the Van Buren Skill Center in Lawrence.

Likewise, the intermediate school districts of Cass and Berrien counties collaborate in a variety of ways.

[ Alarm rings ]

So thank you for your time. We are requesting that our tri-county area be considered a community of interest.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Naomi. Eight.

>> Good evening and thank you very much for serving your fellow Michiganders in this very challenging and important task. Thank you.

My name is Ben Jamison. And I also live in Gun Plain Township in Allegan County, which you've already heard a lot about. We are an agricultural and rural residential area. And I consider this my main community of interest.

We do have one small city next to our township, Plainwell, connected to a modest shopping and service area of a couple super stores.

[ Audio and video difficulties ]

Diverse agricultural. We have 182 odd, different products. Farm products.

My other community of interest is my church, which is in Kalamazoo. It's my congregation of birth. And I've continued to worship there and participate in the six ministries that provide services to an urban population, even though there are closer options within my denomination for me in Plainwell or Orangeville.

I also operated a light industrial business in the Richmond area and relied on Kalamazoo for industrial materials and services. However, I do not believe that I should be voting with the residents of Kalamazoo or any other major urban area especially when it comes to the more local state issues.

I do believe that my interests lie with other citizens residing in a more rural culture and we would want to be represented by someone with a strong focus on our needs. And as --

[ Alarm rings ]

As been presented to you, the idea of tri-county connections, and I believe that that would be necessary in some cases.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Mr. Jamison.

As a quick reminder, you can always finish your thought when you hear our alarm. You don't need to feel like you have to cut yourself off. We just can't go too long past hearing the alarm. We are a friendly bunch. So thank you for the first eight public comment.

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Please excuse us while we take a five-minute break. We want to reset the video to continue to provide you all with the high-level experience while you are sharing. So give us five minutes and we will return starting with number nine afterwards. Thank you so much.

[ Five-minute recess ]

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for being patient. So we will have nine, ten, 11 and 12. Nine and ten over here, 11 and 12 here. Feel free to take your mask off to speak as much as you are comfortable. You do not have to approach the mic right away or stand in line because I called your number. Again, just trying to, you know, allow you all as much choice as possible.

So, number nine, when you are ready you can start. You are welcome.

>> Charleston Township in Kalamazoo County. I'm a retired elected official. I served four years as a Kalamazoo County Commissioner and four years as Comstock Township supervisor. So I bring that here today, but I also served and worked for Michigan State University for ten years on the state and local Government entity, being able to help local politicians across the state understand what good political policy meant.

I'm here today to be able to say that communication and relationships are what makes good policy. And I'm concerned about how the Districting is done and how it impacts the communication and relationship cog.

If we think about all the cogs in a wheel and how they go together, that wheel needs to move smoothly, to be able to go forward. But if there is an issue, it needs to come back. And what I'm concerned about with the communities of interest is that you are going to create wedges. There are going to be places where it's going to stop and it's not going to work.

I come as a tree farmer. I have a 54-acre tree farm. I do not want to be included in with the City of Kalamazoo. I want to make sure that somebody understands what I need and where I'm at.

So I need to make sure that Charleston Township is with Wakeshma and East Leroy, and whatever it's going to be. But having served as elected official, I had two entities I represented. Their meetings were on the same nights. Their committee meetings always seemed to be able to conflict.

And so if you start taking and splitting up agricultural, development authorities, school districts.

[ Alarm rings ]

Orders, you will make it very difficult for the communication and the relationships to continue.

>> I live in Portage currently but lived in Kalamazoo County for over 50 years, residing in Kalamazoo. Each city has wonderful features that are unique to them. In Portage we

have a beautiful park system and we also have the title of Tree City USA for approximately 30 years.

Kalamazoo has the claim steady preserve and a whole bunch of parks. We love our trees, parks, boating, camping and hunting. We want to keep our park system the best in the region, and to do that we need to have the Redistricting Commission help us keep both our city boundaries strong and clear so that we can continue to support our park systems, not affected by a redistricting map and by another District that doesn't share in our interests or our hard efforts to continue to preserve our natural communities.

Also, I've been working as an election poll worker in the city and keeping the cities whole and redistricting will keep our system clear and make our elections easier to administer and more clear and effective to the voters who live in either city.

So please consider Kalamazoo County as a community of interest and keep all of Kalamazoo County intact. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. Number 11.

>> Hi, my name is Joey Andrews. I'm from St. Joseph Township in Berrien County. And I just want to talk about the lakeshore in Southwest Michigan as a community of interest.

I grew up in the St. Joe Area, went to high school there. My family has lived and worked there for years. And, you know, the communities in St. Joe, South Haven, and even New Buffalo are very unique from anything that is 15 or 20 miles in land from there.

Economically a lot of these communities are resorts, vacation, fishing and shipping, economically. A lot of second homeowners, that sort of thing from out of state.

And the needs of these communities differ dramatically from the rural areas that are just a little bit in county from any of the coastal regions. And so I just want to encourage that the Commission consider when drawing the State House lines that they create a District where the representative is not torn between representing both rural communities and more, you know, resort communities and like economically differenced people, just to make sure that the representation can be focused and not so split like it is now. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for addressing the Commission. 12.

>> Hi. I'd like to...my name is Charlie Coss. And I'm a resident of the city of Portage. And I'd like to welcome you to Southwest Michigan. I'm a lifelong Michigander and love and I love the great outdoors. We are Southwest Michigan. We are and in Kalamazoo County we consider ourselves part of the third coast.

We also love Lake Michigan, one of our big assets here. We consider it in our backyard. And most Kalamazoo residents love going to the lake, the beach goes, the boating and everything else, so we consider us to be part of that region, this region.

We are at the crossroads of Southwest Michigan, which is I-94 and 131. And this...we consider in the east end of the region. We have a school named Western

Michigan University. We also have a major railroad stop in Kalamazoo, which is the one that represents kind of the last big railroad stop coming west. We consider ourselves in West Michigan.

We are also...we also mainly identify as Southwest Michigan because of the region. And we also have an organization known as...economic development organization known as Southwest Michigan First. So you can see not only are we branded. We live, we love Southwest Michigan.

And so because we are currently part of the Congressional District of the Southwest Michigan, the District six, we would like the remain in that District. We think that that makes sense because that is our identity.

And I guess I want to thank you for your service and appreciate everything you do. And I hope you have a good time working on these maps.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for addressing the Commission.

As a reminder, you all are welcome to go to our public comment tool and share your comments in writing, including any specific area of the map in which you are speaking, just to help us get a little bit more acclimated about what you may specifically be speaking about and your beautiful communities and areas.

So now I will have numbers 13, 14, 15 and 16 approach the mic.

And, number 13, when you get to the microphone, you can begin when you are ready.

>> Hello. My name is Charles. I'm from Dowagic, Michigan. I currently reside in the City of St. Joseph, Michigan. I've lived most of my life in Cass, Van Buren and Berrien Counties. And, you know, there is a lot of like-minded folks that routinely move around the three counties for work, for fun, for family.

Honestly culturally and economically, Van Buren has far more in common with Cass and Berrien than it does with Allegan County.

St. Joseph County and Berrien County are also very different in the same respect. We could talk at the local diners, is vastly different usually. Because of this I think both regions deserve a separate representation.

Almost everyone I know in Van Buren, Cass or Berrien has strong ties to all three culturally or economically. A lot of the schools play each other in sports. I know church groups routinely visit each county.

I have a ton of friends in Van Buren and few in St. Joseph County. And this is true of most of my friends and family. And I think if you ask a random sampling of Berrien and Cass folks most of them will say the same is true for them.

So these three counties being represented by one senator I think would be more fair than the current gerrymandering that leaves a lot of people feeling a little underrepresented. Thanks a lot.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you. 14.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Tony Lorenze. And I reside in Portage, Michigan 49024, located in Kalamazoo County.

I have lived here all my life and enjoy the natural beauty and the trails. We are connected in many ways including our utilities such as water and sewer. The beautiful Kalamazoo River with as many accesses throughout the county.

The county also has many services such as a countywide public transportation, schools, library, historic sites. We have shared police and fire services that reach out to help everyone in the county.

Senior services with Meals on Wheels and our new senior center being built in Portage. Plus our great college and universities.

We also have two great hospitals that serve the county and surrounding small cities and townships. Plus our industrial base that promotes business locally and globally. It serves as a solid financial and employment center for the county and beyond.

It is for these reasons and more I ask that you not change or split our county. I would also like to thank each and every one of you for your time and integrity that you bring to the great State of Michigan. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: And thank you, Tony, for sharing with the Commission. 15.

>> Can you hear me okay?

There it goes. Good evening, Commission. Welcome to Kalamazoo. And thank you for your ongoing hard work.

My name is Mark Hill. I'm a high school principal, also serve as the president of the administrator's union for the KPS local 2150 UAW. But most of all I'm an advocate for children.

I'd like to come to you this evening to talk about the city and township of Kalamazoo where it's most convenient to draw a circle around Kalamazoo. I think we would be most...we can most benefit looking through a social economic lens for, through for a divide, so that there is a laser focus on the community with the greatest need.

And one may think how does this best serve the school or children in a school district? As I look at it, if there is a representative that understands the need of the community, that has the greatest need, then those students are socially, emotionally well-equipped or better equipped for the teaching and learning process that takes place under our school umbrella.

So I think it's a great opportunity for elected officials and the school community to work in congruent for the better need of children. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you. 16.

>> My name is Marcy Telfer and I currently live in Kalamazoo. But I'm in my mid-70s and I've lived my entire -- [ audio and video difficulties ]

And they were in the '50s and '60s and '70s. And I also remember that at that time it was a fairly competitive District. And it was not dominated by one party or the other.

I realize you cannot possibly end up with no safe Congressional districts when you're done because of the way people live in Michigan. There will be some very safe Republican Districts in the northern part of the state and very safe Democratic Districts

in the Detroit Area. But wherever possible I think we are best served if we have Congressional districts that are competitive and that are not dominated by one party or the other. And I think that that is much more likely to occur when you don't have gerrymandered districts.

Battle Creek particularly has suffered from that beginning in about the '80s. They were separated from Kalamazoo, then they were put in a District with southern suburbs of Lansing, then they were moved to a District where they were with Southern Hillsdale, Jackson and Lenawee. And now they are part of the third Congressional District, which is one of the most gerrymandered districts in the state with rural Kent County. And I think Battle Creek deserves to be in a Congressional District with a city that it shares a lot of common employment with so that their interests can best be preserved. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much Marcy. 17, 18, 19 and 20.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Greg Moore. I'm a lifelong resident of Calhoun County, currently reside in Athens Township, the southwest corner of Calhoun County.

And would like to reiterate a couple of comments that were made earlier about really to the greatest extent possible maintaining current with the city, township or county boundaries as a lot of what we do as citizens is oriented around those boundaries. So it's very important from that standpoint I think to keep those intact.

I will recall back in I believe it was the 2000 reapportionment when we were split in our township between two Congressional districts, the 6th and the 7th. And it created absolute havoc for our local clerk as well as the voters of Athens Township. So I would just implore you not to put us through that again.

With respect to our house districts, I'd would like to offer up that the 62nd and the 63rd are actually drawn pretty well and do take into consideration a lot of what we are now calling...when you take a look at whether school District, community college, the very rural nature, you know. With the exception of Battle Creek Metro, which includes the city of Springfield, most of Calhoun County is very rural which is why we identify with Barry County, with the first tier we are in with Kalamazoo County as was mentioned earlier and Charleston and Climax. A lot of our agricultural community goes to Branch County where the implement dealers are currently at, as well as the Farm Bureau, which is in the first tier.

So it really makes sense to the greatest extent possible to keep the current make up of our house districts.

Then with respect to Congressional District, there is some concern with us being in with Kent County. There does not seem to be a lot of commonality between Calhoun and Grand Rapids or Kent County.

And I will tell you again because the rural makeup of the majority of Calhoun County, certainly where we were with Barry, Branch, Jackson and Hillsdale Counties, Lenawee

county made a lot of sense. It was a good District and very much represented the people of Calhoun County, so I would encourage you to consider that. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Mr. Moore. 18.

>> Good evening. Hi. My name is Jeff Green. And live in Columbia Township, Van Buren County.

When the idea of this Redistricting Commission first came around, I was very happy to sign the petition. I was very happy to get my friends to sign. I was very happy to advocate for it. I was very happy to vote for it. And I'm thrilled that people of the State of Michigan approved it 61%.

I don't have a special interest for you here. All I have is words of hope for you that you stay resolute and stay true to what we asked you to do, keep politics out of redistricting, put an end to gerrymandering and we move forward as a better democracy than we were before. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. 19.

>> Good evening. I'm Rochelle Smith and I live in Martin Township in Allegan and I'm also a township clerk there.

I would like to express how important it is to draw compact contiguous lines, breaking as few county lines, city borders and township borders as possible, keeping the communities whole.

The municipal lines are what county and local clerks construct their ballots around. Keeping lines clear, provides a better understanding to the voters and a smooth election process, limiting the amount of ballot styles. I hope that this committee will consider the effectiveness following municipal lines taking precedent over anything else to protect our taxpayers and our voters. Thank you for your service.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for providing public comment. Number 20. Do we have number 20?

Okay, 21, 22, 23 and 24.

And, 21, when you approach the mic, you can begin whenever you are ready.

>> Good evening. My name is Jack Bly. And I'm from rural Almena Township in rural Van Buren County. I have three quick points.

First, thank you for your service. I volunteered to be on your committee and I didn't make the cut. And I can see I'm missing out on a lot of hard work and maybe even some aggravation, so thank you for that.

Second, I want to tell you that I'm a transplant. I grew up in Chicago, in the city. And I'm a retired Army officer. And I was stationed at Wurtsmith Airforce Base several years ago. And I fell in love with the State of Michigan, especially the rural areas, although I worked in Detroit also at that time.

I lived in the Washington D.C. inside the Beltway, and I had an opportunity to come and work in Kalamazoo and I took it. And as soon as I could I moved out of Kalamazoo

to where I live right now because I enjoyed the company there. They more closely associated with my values.

I think that if we were to chop up the District and include Kalamazoo in the rural areas for some kind of an equity purpose, that would be unfair. Especially when you consider that you have a lot of University and college students in Kalamazoo that don't necessarily share my values, but do have the opportunity to vote. And maybe unfairly skew the outcome of elections in Kalamazoo in a way that folks like me don't appreciate. And so I'd like you to consider that too. Again, thanks.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Jack, for providing public comment to the Commission. 22.

>> Hi. My name is Ken Newman. I come from Galien Township in Southwest Berrien County. I want to thank you all for being a part of this process.

I come to this as a forensic accountant, so it takes the numbers and analyses them. And I've looked at them. And your guys' job is formidable.

I want to make sure there are a couple sources you may want to consider that are not on the tables and the maps. The occupational wage statistics, BLS puts together, as well as the Metropolitan and non-Metropolitan standard groupings that they do in terms of grouping people of certain economic groups, as well as considering IRS codes, the codes of particular kinds of industries by county. Because those will give you other kind of perimeters to consider.

Unfortunate, I think the ultimate test in this is will voters feel like they are heard and do they feel it's safe. And, unfortunately, a lot of what you've heard, and we are talking about specific communities of interest, is segregating our interests, our communities into corridors.

And what happens is, in a county like let's say you are in Detroit, if you are a Republican, you don't feel heard because your vote doesn't count.

I think that what we need to do is an ultimate test is look to your steps four and five which talk about the partisan divide.

I think that right now in our State House, only 13 of 110 counties have a margin between the two parties of less than 5%. That means most of the counties are not competitive. I think your goal and ultimate test would be to see there is a significant more number of districts where that divide is narrowed. Because what happens then is everyone is heard. It makes people listen to the other across the aisle. It means that if I'm a democrat --

[ Audio and video difficulties ]

I encourage you --

[ Audio and video difficulties ]

In partisan divide, thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Ken. 23.



>> Hello. My name is Amy Skrima. I live in the City of St. Joseph, Berrien County. And I'm here today to ask for consideration of South Haven being part of the what is currently the 79th State House District because we share so many of the same economic and educational needs.

From an economic perspective, the lakeshore communities, as has been referenced in earlier comments are unique, because many of these places depend on tourist dollars, right, to support their economies. And, of course, that funding base is much higher in the summer months here in Michigan, right?

And but the rest of the year is a different story. And a lot of the constituents in those areas have needs that sometimes are overlooked because people think of these areas as tourist areas because these areas are tourist areas. But then during the school year, the winter months, we still have many communities with a very high poverty rate actually. Understanding this type of variable funding reality and the challenges it presents is really important for anyone who can accurately and fairly represent the people and business owners along the lakeshore.

From an educational perspective, I teach at Lake Michigan College. And while our main campus is in Benton Harbor, we have had a regional campus in South Haven since 2003. We started that campus because the student and working population, again, along the seaboard there, the lakeshore, have a lot of the same needs as our other service areas. And because no one else was addressing those needs.

Those needs are for high schoolers looking for early college opportunities. Of course, traditional college students starting their college careers. But also as a community college, those looking for job training, both starting out and moving up.

So these are just a couple of the connections between our communities that I would ask you to consider when identifying ways to create fair and representative districts for our House. Thank you so much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. 24, please.

>> Marty Shumaker. I live in Pavilion Township, Kalamazoo County. It's kind of on the far east side of the county.

I would like to thank you all for being here this evening with us. I don't know where you all came from, which part of the state you had to come from; but I hope that in your travels you were able to get off of the Interstate system and see our beautiful part of the state.

I have to comment on what this gentleman said back here when he talked about wanting to be represented in a group with people that share his values. I hadn't really thought about it in those terms until I heard him say that. And now that feels very important to me.

He talked about the colleges that we have here, Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University, not to mention community colleges. And those students are here, maybe they are just here for two or three or four years for their education. They vote in

our elections. They elect our officials. And then they are gone. And their values may be very different from mine.

I live in a small rural community. Those of us that live out in farm country live there because we like it there. We have a lot of agricultural here in Kalamazoo County besides Kalamazoo and Portage as big cities. Quite rural.

We have a lot of agricultural. We have farms. We have orchards. We have vineyards. We have small communities with small public libraries that know me when I come in. They know what my library card number is. I like that about a small community, and I would like to be represented by someone who is representing me and other communities similar to mine, that hold my values, that recognize the importance of the small communities.

So thank you very much. I appreciate your time being here. Be safe getting home.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Marty. 25, 26, 27, and 28, please. Do we have 25? All right. Come on 26.

>> Okay, I'm 26. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. My name is Rob Richardson, along with my wife, Regina, two sons, Roy and Randy, we farm 3500 acres in Southern Kalamazoo County, Northern St. Joe County. We grow seed corn, soybeans, wheat, green bean, oats and hay. We live in Section 31, Brady Township, that is the 36th District of the Michigan House of Representatives.

Our community of interest is agricultural. Agricultural is a vibrant, diverse industry in the State of Michigan. It also is a large economic engine to the overall success of the State of Michigan.

There are many issues important to agricultural that we need to make sure our elected officials understand. In Southwest Michigan the ability to irrigate our crops is very important. With that comes the water withdrawal assessment tool.

Other issues are the right to farm and Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices, also known as GAAMPS. The Michigan Alliance For Animal Agricultural. Michigan Agricultural Environmental Insurance Program, also known as MAEIP.

Other longstanding programs that we need to remain ever vigilant on is the farmland and open space preservation, PA116. And proposal A regarding property taxes on farmland.

With that being said, my suggestion to the MICRC would be this: Respect existing boundaries of townships, villages and cities. Have some districts, both House and Senate, with a rural feel to them and some with an urban feel to them. That way our community of interest, agricultural can still have our voice heard in Lansing. The 63rd District fits those criteria. Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. 27.

>> Hi, my name is John Hodley. I'm the former state representative for House District 60. Welcome to Kalamazoo and thank you for being here and the work you are doing.

A couple of quick thoughts. So as you move forward with your work, I really want to encourage you to be thinking about this area as a region. You know, folks in Oshtemo or Comstock, a lot of them still have Kalamazoo on their address. People live and work in different parts and move across here.

And so I appreciate that you are looking for communities of interest.

Now, I would encourage you also not to get stuck in the geography of a place. I live in Kalamazoo. And I served on the agricultural subcommittee of the...in the Michigan legislature.

In fact, people from both parties learn and adapt and move forward.

Right now when we are having comments about respecting political and municipal boundaries, I'll note that some of the areas in Kalamazoo County were already split. And Vicksburg is divided between a couple of places. We've got right now the students were split between the 61st and the 60th District.

So, as you move forward, I really want you to encourage to be listening for the stories of neighborhoods. You know, the fact that a lot of our folks who live on the north side and the east side of Kalamazoo might share more in common with folks in Parchment or Comstock because they live and work in the same areas.

Maybe we should be thinking about keeping students together, so we are not dividing them between house districts and that they can. And maybe folks in Southern Kalamazoo have more in common with places like Texas Township or Portage than anything else.

So I just want to encourage you to think uniquely and newly about these lines. Having represented a gerrymandering lawsuit, I feel much better that y'all are here doing great work.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you. 28.

>> Well, hi, everyone. Welcome to Kalamazoo. I'm Tom Graham. First off, I believe that your number one priority should be to protect every Michigan house seat representing minority/majority districts.

I honestly don't care what the districts look like. Without those districts minorities will have no voice in Congress.

Secondly, if you've...as you have heard several times, there is an urban, rural divide. These are -- they are Districts in the United States where people who live in urban areas outnumber people who live in rural areas by a factor of seven to one.

[ Audio and video difficulties ]

Is that outcome fair?

The answer is, yes, it is fair. It is the mathematical consequence of individual citizens rationally deciding to densely pack themselves and their wealth into a small geographic area in order to enjoy amenities like nearby hospitals and police stations, Metro transit, sanitary sewer, city water, homeless shelters, colleges and student housing, fast

broadband, 4 and 5G cell service, museums, theatres, restaurants, hairstyles and mani and pedis. Most are willing to pay higher taxes to support this life.

Many people who live in rural areas value hunting rights, gun rights, and property rights. Like the right to spread manure, raise pigs, cows, regardless of the smell and operate columbines late into the night if need be. We all count on them for food production as well as a huge portion of the workforce for our own businesses.

The absolute worst thing you can do is to disenfranchise rural voters by expanding the influence of urban residents into rural areas. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you. 29, 30, 31 and 32.

>> My name is Robert Hosak. I live in Cooper Township. A number of years ago I used to ride my bicycle from my home in Kalamazoo.

When I hit Kalamazoo, the atmosphere changed. It was warmer. There was no wind in my face. And I did not have to worry about dust and those sort of things. The same thing is kind of true with my state representative, for example, comes from the rural area.

My Senator comes basically from the city and each time that I vote I...he doesn't really represent me, don't know who he is. I don't think he cares one hoot about what is going on in my area.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you. And number 30.

>> I'm 30. My name is Kay Perry. And I live in Kalamazoo County, but my comments are a bit broader than that.

I am the director of a grass roots criminal justice reform organization, a membership organization. Many of our members are among the incarcerated in Michigan.

And I know the census counts them and the institutions where they are residing, but they don't have anything in common with those institutions. And I would urge you to count them in the communities from which they came. That would make more sense. And it would mean they were better represented. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for sharing your public comment. 31.

>> Hello. Good evening. And welcome to Kalamazoo. My name is Kim Harris and I reside in Portage, Michigan 49024. The city right next to Kalamazoo city. My family had the opportunity in 2000 to relocate from the Chicago suburbs. I grew up and was raised in Illinois all my life. And when this opportunity came to my husband, and we chose to move over here, we specifically were asked to look between the lakeshore and Ypsilanti. So we chose a bunch of communities in between.

At the time I was an educator. And the school systems were really important to me.

So I got searching and we looked at many cities in a 30-mile radius of this area. And we ultimately chose Portage because of what the community had to offer at that time in 2000.

We visited several schools and decided from where the boundaries of the schools were where we wanted our kids to attend. We like that there was some diversity in the

community. We liked the services Portage has to offer as a resident. And from those services we are able to visit many parks, bike trails and the public library.

I like that the city asks for input when updating one of the parks or building a new park or adding to a park. We chose the neighborhood that was close to our schools, shopping, had easy and fast access to the police and fire departments.

I like my tax base, although I don't like the taxes. But I like it compared to the surrounding communities to me.

I like that I have a major hospital within ten minutes of where I live.

I like that I have a larger city like Kalamazoo near where I can shop, dine and attend cultural events. However, I believe my values and beliefs of a larger city, since I came from that in Chicago, are different than a city the size of Portage.

I would really like my city of Portage to remain compact and the boundaries outlining Portage. Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for sharing your public comment. 32.

>> Hello. My name is David Harris. I live in the City of Portage in Kalamazoo County. After relocating from Chicago, I've lived in Kalamazoo here for the past 21 years. I raised my family in Portage and both my children continue to live in this county and raise their children.

Like all the previous presenters, I'm passionate about my community. Therefore, I urge the Redistricting Commission to keep Kalamazoo, Portage as whole and contiguous as possible; and not make radical new districts as new District lines are drawn.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, David, for your public comment. 33, 34, 35 and 36, please.

33, 34, 35 and 36.

We are missing who?

33 and 35.

That is okay. 34, hi, how are you?

>> Very good.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Good.

>> My name is Jerry Vanderoose. I'm a township supervisor in a rural township in Kalamazoo. I know how old I must be. 50 years ago I was the only citizen to submit a redistricting plan in Kalamazoo County. I remember the many nights going through maps and census tracks and what you are going through.

Things that I thought were important 50 years ago I think are still important today. And the reason I'm here to express those.

One thing for sure I don't think any governmental unit should be split up in any which way. It's so important that they...a unit gets to learn, work with its representatives or Senators and the rest of it, and establish a good working relationship.

Splitting up a District also causes problems on election stuff. We have just a single precinct. And we could end up having two precincts and extra expenses of two polling places. And ballots. We had to pass them out because we had three school districts. And it was so important to keep them together and let's work on our...each of our elected boards now.

Also, I think it's important that we keep local units together. We have two large cities in Kalamazoo County. If my township was put in with one of the things, I think it would lose its identity and some of the interests that it has.

My township has a village and part of a village in it. It has a small city and part of the boundary. And I share a common south boundary with another village and the rest of them.

We work together. We have a common interest. We have a joint fire department. We have joint library services. We do sewer and water and different things. We have a relationship. It's important to keep those local, small units together to share daily, trying to provide the services that the citizens of the state want.

Also, every one of us are different. There are those who like the activity and the excitement and the thing of a city. There are those who like to have...they live out in suburban and we are out on the plats or in their neighborhoods and the rest of it.

And then there are those who go out to the country who want less taxes, want less services, don't need as much of services. Wildlife. They want horses. They want chickens. And they want a lot of different uses. We are not the same. We have different interests than the rest of them. So it's so important to keep those separate from other larger ones, though we don't lose our identities in any way in it.

So I thank you for what you do and best of luck.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much. 35.

>> Good evening, everyone. My name is Emma Barada. And I'm a senior at Western Michigan University.

[ Audio and video difficulties ]

Which as former Representative Hadley stated, are currently divided between House District 60 and 61. This creates a lot of challenges for students who are already a group of people that historically has faced many barriers to voting.

By having us divided between these two districts we have different voting precincts and it makes it more difficult to give student voters information on how to vote.

As students it is our right to vote where we go to school. And, therefore, we have shared interests that would be better represented by consolidating us into one District and also not having us throwing off some of those Districts that don't really share values with our own.

So this gives you an opportunity to create better voter accessibility for a group of people who is the future of voters in America. And by doing that you are creating increased civic engagement across the State of Michigan.

In addition, we have some shared political interests considering state funding for our universities. We are continuing to watch the cost of our tuition go up every single year.

If we were able to have one representative representing us cohesively, we would be able to advance issues like that. As well as considering the fact that in other universities across the state the board of trustees are elected officials. And those people should be able to be elected by their students who they will then be serving in their positions.

So, essentially, I'm just asking that you will consider students across the State of Michigan in putting us into shared groups, specifically those in Kalamazoo, in the Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan University communities.

I want to thank you all for being here today and giving us the opportunity to voice our concerns and represent our community. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. And 36.

>> Hi. I'm Steve Frisbee. Live in Penfield Township in Calhoun County. I'm a County Commissioner in the House District 62 and 63 work very well for us. Marshall and Battle Creek are uniquely different.

Marshall is mostly light industrial, but mostly agricultural. And Battle Creek is much different. So keeping them separate I think is a good idea.

House districts, like I said, have worked well for us. There is separate healthcare systems and economic development in Marshall and Battle Creek. Industry, including the military in Battle Creek. So much different interest for us there.

One of the things I want to say is I've heard tonight my vote doesn't count. And I have no representation. Every vote counts already. That's why we count every vote after the race. And everybody does have representation.

And it's all about forming relationships. It doesn't matter if you have an R or a D when you're elected. It matters that you serve the people. And I don't know any elected officials that won't reach out to folks that need help and try to help them.

We don't ask people if they are a Republican or a Democrat when they come to me for help, so I would be careful about that and the misrepresentation.

Nothing will be perfect that you develop. And we all understand that. But I would like you to respect the lines as they exist now.

And Greg Moore spoke about moving south if we need to change our Congressional District. I prefer to leave it the way it is. But if we do need to change it, I think Kalamazoo and Battle Creek have very little in common as far as interests in industry and jobs and those kind of things.

Yes, we share services. We work together. But how we get there is a much different manner. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. I'm going to call four more and then we are going to take a ten-minute break if that is all right with everyone. 37, 38, 39 and 40.

>> Good evening. I'm Number 37. My name is Paul Shinkario. Thank you, Ms. Kellom, and the rest of the Commission.

I've got some simple comments. And I'm seconding what I believe number four and a couple others have said.

I would recommend that you follow existing political lines, be they county, city or township.

Significant meandering into other boundaries or significant splintering of the same municipality or boundary is confusing and viewed as suspect by the general public. And probably a big reason the general public voted to form this Commission in the first place.

I live in Antwerp Township, Van Buren County. We are a diverse agriculture, food processing, tourism, and the unique needs of the Lake Michigan coastline.

We are multi-generational families of farmers and small business owners, as well as many new families of current and former migrant workers and transplants from Chicago, et cetera. We've heard a couple of those folks tonight.

They chose to live in Van Buren county for a reason.

We are very similar in many ways to other municipality or other counties in the Southwest Michigan, including Allegan County, where we share a Veteran's Court and a Public Defenders Office with Allegan County. So where there are already existing political ties, to divide them with Congressional and House Districts, makes it pretty awkward to get things done. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much. Number 39.

>> I'm number 38. My name is Abigail Wheeler and I am a current elected official in the Village of Mattawan. And I'm a former State House candidate for the 66th District.

And I have heard and seen all of the people in these communities firsthand. And I think it's really important with the State House districts that we keep in mind the demographics.

Places like South Haven and St. Joe have a lot more in common than, say, where I live in Mattawan. And, with that being said, I also think places like Mattawan and Kalamazoo have a lot more in common including, you know, places where I work in Kalamazoo. I live in Mattawan. Yes, one is a main county and one is Kalamazoo County, but they have a lot more in common than, you know, South Haven does with them like with the lakeshore communities that thrive on that tourism.

So I think when you consider these State House districts, that's a really big factor in all of it. And when it comes to the Congressional District, I think it's really important to keep...to put Kalamazoo and Battle Creek together. And also keep Van Buren in there because, once again, they are similar workforces, industries, and they are important for keeping the communities together as well.

And thank you for all that you're doing. I appreciate it.



>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you. My apologies. I jumped ahead. So that was 38 so 39.

>> Hi. Thanks. That means I get twice the time, right? I'm kidding. Thank you all. My name is Beth Kelly. I'm from Battle Creek, Michigan.

And I'm here tonight to ask for fair Congressional districts to be drawn that include Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. Up until around 1992 we were in the same Congressional District. However, currently due to overtly partisan gerrymandering we are in now with the Grand Rapids area. And we don't share as much in common with that area.

I got married last year. I was really lucky and I got married in the Catholic church. And as an example Battle Creek is in the Kalamazoo Diocese. And that's not the only thing we share in common. We are connected by the Kalamazoo river. We actually share the watershed. We are connected by the local United Way here. We are connected by Amtrak and the railroad stations. We have a ton in common. In fact, I bet you would have a really hard time finding a child in Kalamazoo or Battle Creek who wasn't born at Bronson or Burgess. We are heavily connected through our health system.

So I just ask that we be put back in with this community that we share so much. It's not just about the railroad, the transportation. It's about the people who live there. We have a very interconnected working pool. I commute to Kalamazoo every day. On that I-94 corridor. And so I just ask that you keep that in mind while drawing the lines. And I really thank you all for your work and your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for addressing the Commission. Number 40.

>> Yes. My name is Corey King and I'm a resident here in Kalamazoo. I kind of want to Eco with what was just said about Calhoun and Kalamazoo Counties. We are certainly both similar and that as was just stated we share similar transportation, but we also share similarities in...when it comes to our education system.

A lot of Kellogg College students go to Western Michigan University. A lot of their credits transfer to Western Michigan University and able to get a four-year degree while being able to remain in Calhoun County.

We also, as we just stated, we share the same medical system with Borgess and Bronson. We also share similarities when it comes to a lot of our communities. A lot has been said tonight about rural and urban. A lot of the same urban communities in Calhoun and Kalamazoo Counties are similar as well as in Calhoun County. As was --  
[ Audio and video difficulties ]

Represented by the same U.S. member of Congress. And I just believe that it's time that we correct that wrong and put Calhoun counties in the same Congressional District. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Corey, we appreciate your sharing your comment with the Commission.

>> I appreciate all the work you are doing as well.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: At this time we are going to take a ten-minute break, if that suits everyone. And so we will be back at 7:48

[ Recess for ten minutes. ]

A little bit more time. Members of the Commission have to return to their seats as well. I know.

Okay, everyone to their seats. Let's get started. Hopefully you all got to use the restroom and stretch and do some talking. We are still excited to be here.

So the next folks we will hear from are 41, 42, 43, and 44. Again, please feel free to introduce yourself. And you are welcome to take your mask off to speak. Number 41.

>> Hello. My name is Allen Waller. And I live in Paw Paw, Michigan, Van Buren County. Discuss Allegan and Van Buren counties as community of interests. We have a lot in common. We share similar ag businesses, so forth.

But a lot of people talk about being transplanted from Chicago. I come from Detroit. I was originally transplanted here in '86, Kalamazoo Area, in the heating and cooling industry.

I'm a territory manager for the State of Michigan right now for a geothermal heat pump manufacturer. But I has always covered the Southwest Michigan corner and the counties. And I have done much business between Allegan and Van Buren Counties.

And close to 20 years I was a high school official. I officiated football and girls softball. And with the school districts that are in place, I would empire from Decatur to Martin, from Martin to Fennville, to Mattawan to South Haven. So those districts and those school districts all have a lot in common.

They share a lot of the same interests. They play against each other in sports. I feel the county lines or the lines should be where they are and stay in Districts as Allegan and Van Buren County. We have too much in common to separate or expand into, let's say, Kalamazoo, which is a larger city and a demographic area.

So, again, thank you for your time and your efforts on updating and making a change of our system. But we would like to keep Allegan and Van Buren in the same Community District. Appreciate your time, have a great evening.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you. You have a great evening as well. 42, please.

You all are running away from us. No. Okay, if 42 is not in the room, let's move to 43.

>> Good evening. Thank you, Commissioners and members of the public who are still here. Welcome to Kalamazoo. It's great to be here.

My name is Austin Marsman and I live in Martin. It's where I grew up. And it's just up the road 49070, about 20 minutes north of Kalamazoo, halfway between Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo.

I grew up in Martin. My family has a long history there as dairy farmers on my mom's side. Dairy farming is a common profession. While our communities are diverse, we all know someone or are dairy farmer families ourselves. And we also know farmers who

are not benefitting from the current voices in Lansing. So we could use strong representation in Lansing.

I have a deep love for the Martin community. Fortunately, I made the decision to keep my roots there, some don't have that decision unfortunately. It's that love of community that drove me to run for school board and win in '20. I'm the youngest official at 21 years old in Allegan County and most likely West Michigan. Notice I said West Michigan. There is a strong feeling of -- like I said, proud member of the Martin Board of Education. I felt it's important for me to be here today and speak because I want to speak up for my neighbors.

Martin school District touches the townships of Martin, Watson and also includes the township of Orangeville, which is in Barry County. And I really think we could benefit from the state legislative districts considering school District boundaries.

When you think about the state legislature, you think about funding for public school. And convenient it would be to go to one state representatives office instead of two and have the relationship just grow and be so beneficial.

We have approximately 600 students, K-12. Pretty small. I graduated with 45 kids, I believe. Our size allows for our communities to interconnect, whether it's outreach programs like the Lion's club, the Orangeville Community Outreach.

We are just so interconnected yet we are separated when it comes to state legislature. Our similarities bring us together.

Thank you so much. And I hope that y'all have a great evening.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for your public comment and 44.

>> Good evening. My name is Ronman. And thank you so much for being here. This is my home community. And I think it's really incredible to see how much people love this community. And thank you for all serving on this Commission.

I want to make a simple request. I think we should keep it simple and keep our communities of interest intact. With this Commission being the first time we will see lines, I know you're being asked for a million different competing interests, but what I would say is let's when we finish this and when we look at a map, let's have it make sense. Let's have the communities of interest be represented on that map.

I know there were a lot of impassioned pleas for putting students together. I think that is going to start chopping up municipalities. I think it's going to start chopping up precincts, school districts, townships and counties. So that would be my one plea.

I know you are hearing a lot of testimony and a lot of different meetings, so thank you for all of your hard work. But I would just ask for square districts, follow the lines, and keep communities of interest together. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for your public comment. 45, 46, 47 and 48. And we will start with 45 when you are ready.

>> Hello. And my name is James Asher. I live in Portage, Michigan. I'm a high schooler at Portage Northern. And I want to first thank all of you guys for serving on this

Commission. It's inspiring to see not only a love for public service but a love for democracy. And to the Kalamazoo community and the Southwest Michigan community -- [ audio and video difficulties ]

The 6th District and part of Battle Creek. The 6th District and Battle Creek are different. Please do not gerrymander our districts.

The 6th District is well mapped. And luckily two sides have already been taken care of for you with the natural border and the border between Indiana and the State of Michigan. .

Like I said, Battle Creek does not fit in with five of the other counties that the sixth District includes. People have talked about sharing things, but that does not mean we have to share the same Congressional District.

As Representative Hodley mentioned, the importance of recognizing neighborhoods, I have lived in both the rural ones and the urban ones. And I will say that these neighborhoods could not be more -- could not be more different.

To add the urban communities such as Battle Creek to an 80% plus rural District would not only disenfranchise the kids but the workers and citizens of these urban communities. That is why we need to keep them separated, so the elected officials that these communities produce can know how to best represent their very neighborhoods.

With that said, we need to keep the sixth district without Battle Creek. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for your public comment. 46, please.

>> Hi. My name is Bib Shank. I live in Antwerp Township in Van Buren County. And tonight I would just like to share with you that Allegan County and Van Buren County are like one together. We have worked for years together. We have similar backgrounds, similar size. We are very agricultural and dairy farms, farming of all kinds.

South Haven Public Schools, some of the children are in Allegan County but go to South Haven.

When it comes to Allegan County, I worked in Allegan for years. And then I brought...bought my appliances in Allegan County from Morgan Appliance, bought from there for years because I felt like I worked there. They made me feel like I was part of that community and that county.

I have farmland. And the farmland is farmed by farmers in Allegan County. So I'm stressing to you that Allegan County and Van Buren should be put together as one because we have so much in common. And we do so many things together. We have friends. We have relationships there.

So I would encourage you, when you are looking at your mapping and everything, you look at Allegan County and Van Buren county. We have been together for years. We feel we are one. We feel we belong to each other. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you. 47.

>> Hi. My name is Ryan Gilbert. I reside in the Village of Paw Paw. I'm going to start with the 6th Congressional District real quick because I don't think you are going to find a more concise, contiguous District, excluding the first District, Congressman Bergman.

But in the 6th District we have Kalamazoo, Allegan, Van Buren, Barry and Cass and St. Joe. They all touch each other. There is not one little piece that is Sectioned out to another county. It's all complete.

We share the Kalamazoo River in the 6th District. We have part of the wine trail in the 6th District, that goes all the way up to Traverse City.

We share actually Van Buren County's largest employer Charles River Labs, shares many of its employees, come from Kalamazoo County.

So I think keeping our districts together or the 6th District together is quite imperative.

And when it comes to the District I'm in, I think Allegan and Van Buren County need to stay together. I grew up, Allegan was my second backyard. I come from a large family. I have many cousins from the area.

And I also am from a Catholic church, from a very Catholic family. And our collaboratives share. They don't see a county border. We share between Van Buren and Allegan.

And another thing, the gentleman behind me touched on about the Public Defender's Office. Criminal justice reform is a huge part of my life. And I strive to make sure people are getting proper representation. And I think Allegan and Van Buren teaming up and creating one public defender's for the two counties was a great step forward in that.

We also...Van Buren County also will spend some of its Juvenile detainees to Allegan County. And our Veteran's Court is huge as well. I take a lot of pride in that for the sole fact I have come from a long line of military men and women.

But if you can just keep those thoughts in line when you are drawing districts. I would appreciate it. Thank you all very much for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for sharing your public comment. 48, 49, 50 and 51.

>> My name is Jerry Potratz. My wife, Louis, and I live in Texas Township, which is the western part of Kalamazoo County. It is U.S. Congressional District six. It is Michigan Senate District 20. And Michigan House District 61.

I'd like to advocate tonight that you consider Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo County, Calhoun County as a community of interest. A number of other folks have talked about that this evening.

From a diversity standpoint, very similar. With Kalamazoo at around let's see 88% white and 12% Black and 5% Hispanic and so is Kalamazoo County. Both of them also have urban cities, inner cities where there is a minority population of over 30% when you look at the cities.

Our employers, our major employers, if you look at Federal regulations, the FDA, we have Striker in Kalamazoo. We have Pfizer in Kalamazoo. We have the cereal companies in Battle Creek.

So, for major employers, it would be good to have a voice speaking to those regulators. And we also share the Kalamazoo River for the EPA.

We also have the I-94 corridor. And there was a study done by Neech.com ranking diversity. Kalamazoo County was ranked 11th most diverse in Michigan. Calhoun 13th. And they even looked at age when they looked at diversity.

So I think not only do we have industries in common, regulatory authorities in common. I've lived in the Kalamazoo area for over 40 years. And a lot of people drive back and forth. They live in Kalamazoo. They work in the Battle Creek Area. And vice versa.

So I'd just advocate that you put Kalamazoo and Calhoun counties back together. Thanks.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for your public comment. 49.

>> Hello. Thank you for being here. My name is Evan. I currently reside in the city of Kalamazoo. I grew up in Texas Township and worked extensively in Van Buren and Allegan Counties.

And my request is to simply keep our municipalities together. We are blessed in Michigan with counties and townships that largely resemble squares. And I think that at the Congressional level the sixth District, it needs about 45,000 extra people to make a District, that's the new population.

And instead of chopping up Calhoun County and disenfranchising their citizens from having a single representative adding Branch County to the east would be a more equitable solution.

For the State Senate level, I think West Michigan also has fairly concise districts currently, keeping townships and counties together. And I think that an attempt to divide Calhoun and divide Kalamazoo Counties would not be justified.

Kalamazoo County is now the only county in the state with a perfect population to match a State Senate District. So I am calling for Kalamazoo to stay together.

At the state legislative level, I think that Van Buren County and Allegan County do have incredible similarities. They collaborate with each other and work with each other. They are very similar demographically. So I think the legislative districts should keep Van Buren and Allegan together.

And I think a lot of the discussion on communities of interests would involve separating and dividing people into demographic groups and partisan groups to where kind of deprives --

[ Audio and video difficulties ]

Cities keeping them together. It is better for the local officials, election people, and our constituent directors and legislative offices.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for your public comment. 50, please share.

>> Good evening. My name is Paul DeYoung and I'm a resident of Waverly Township in Van Buren County. I'm currently serving my third term as the Van Buren County Register of Deeds, a county-wide elected position. I'm also the chairman of the Van Buren County Plat Board. And I'm the past president of the Chamber of Commerce in the County Seat of Van Buren County.

I'm here because I live in the 66th State House District and the 26th State Senate District, which those Senators and state reps represent all of Van Buren County. And they also have two townships that are either in Kent County or in Kalamazoo County.

Since the last redistricting, I've personally visited over 10,000 homes and businesses in these districts. And I have never seen anyone use these districts as example of gerrymandering.

From firsthand experience I believe the citizens of these districts as drawn share the same interests as communities. The majority of these districts are rural communities where agricultural is the predominant land use. They have similar demographics and population densities.

The middle to western areas of these districts are comprised of many inland lakes where tourists go on vacation. And during the summer months there is a large influx of second homeowners and seasonal farm workers, that is vital to the service industries and farms in our districts.

Most parts of the District face body access to broadband and cell phone coverage. Many of the year-around residents drive long distances to work and lack many of the amenities that people in urban areas take for granted.

I also have -- we have many more locally owned smaller businesses that serve our local economies. And I respectfully urge you to keep these rural districts together as they are currently drawn. I believe that including urban areas will result in competing community interests and make these districts more difficult for the citizens to be represented.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Paul, thank you for your public comment tonight. 51.

>> Hello. My name is Matt Nelson. And welcome to Southwest Michigan. Starting off, I'm from Hartford Township in Van Buren County. Van Buren County is a community of interest.

And what makes Van Buren County so interesting is that we are a bellwether county. We are a microcosm of the country. We are very diverse.

In South Haven we have a big lake, Lake Michigan. It's kind of like the Pacific, California for tourism. We have a nuclear power plant. We have a natural gas power plant. We have a casino in our county.

There is so much diversity in Van Buren County, that is what makes it special. That is what makes this country special.

So I ask you keep Van Buren County together because we are so diverse. It's what makes us unique.

Van Buren County is also the center of Southwest Michigan. And Southwest Michigan is defined by our center of gravity, and we have four of them. Kalamazoo where we get our news and the airport. South Bend, Indiana where we also have an airport and get our news. We have Grand Rapids. And we have Chicago and the lake.

That's what defines Southwest Michigan and who we are. You are just as likely to see someone say I'm a Cubs fan and a Bears fan as you are to Detroit.

We have six counties in Southwest Michigan: Berrien, Van Buren, Allegan, St. Joe, and Cass. We are defined by everything that is around us, that's what makes us special and who we are.

Thank you for hearing us tonight. There is a car full next door, and I hope you guys get to enjoy it.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for addressing the Commission. 52, 53, 54 and 55 please come up.

And 52. When you reach the mic, feel free to share with the Commission.

>> Do we have 52?

53. It's okay. Don't be shy. Come on. We will start with you.

>> Thank you. I'm David Mature and I live in Brady Township near Vicksburg in Kalamazoo County. I spent 30 years as an elected official in this greater community and the township and county and state level. I have heard a lot about communities of interest. And I think that is an important part of your duty here, your mandate.

But I would urge you, as much as possible, considering all the other factors you have to, to make sure that these districts are competitive from a partisan, political perspective. Otherwise you're going to end up with things like they are now. And I think there should be more competition on political ideas. So thank you very much and thank you for what you are doing.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. Just for the public record and for the purposes of us sitting here today, 52 elected not to speak, and that is totally fine. Again, we welcome you to share your thoughts in writing using our public comment tool.

So if you are sitting and you decide you don't want to come up to the mic to provide in-person comment today, don't feel bad or like you have done anything wrong. Just share any way in a different format.

So 54, please share. We are listening.

>> Good evening. My name is Deborah Baker. I'm from Battle Creek and I grew up in the Battle Creek in the Marshall Area.

First off, I'd really like to thank you for taking on this responsibility. I don't believe there is anybody in this room that envies you, the task that you have to do. This is going to be difficult and we appreciate that. And we appreciate the time and the effort that you are giving to this.



As I said, I grew up in the Marshall/Battle Creek Area. And I grew up in a rural area with rural people. As such, we don't necessarily feel that we are a part and parcel of Kalamazoo. We don't feel that they necessarily share the same interests.

Battle Creek has a much more small town feel to it. While we do have some large industries, we don't have as large of industries as Kalamazoo. So we would like you, if possible, to consider keeping us separate.

Another thing that I would really like to encourage you to do as much as possible is to keep it as simple as you can. And to try, when possible, to take into account the existing municipal and township lines just simply to make it easier for the public servants that are already working.

If you change them up, it changes the work for our county clerks, for our firemen, for our police officers and unduly creates confusion. I know that they have moved that priority further down the list for you this time, and I appreciate that.

But as simple as you can make it for the rest of us, I think it would just be a good thing. Again, I thank you for your time. Have a good evening.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you. Have a good evening. 55.

>> Hello and thank you for investing and sacrificing your time and energy and for the opportunity to share. My name is Jerry Solice. I'm from Three Rivers in St. Joseph County. I pastor a local church. And I'm also a former Three Rivers police officer.

I grew up in the San Francisco bay area and I moved to Three Rivers about 27 years ago. I like shoveling the snow in the winter and I like mowing the lawn in the spring and summer.

I along with many others share the views expressed in your opening comments, reinforcing public confidence. I ask you to please consider what I and many others have come to experience, that reinforcing public confidence would be best done by promoting and cultivating communities of interest.

An example would be the contrast between the City of Kalamazoo and Kalamazoo County with a population of about 76,000. And the City of Three Rivers in St. Joseph County with a population of about 8,000, we would share the similar values of securing the rights of the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. But we pursue them and express them differently.

Kalamazoo is a bigger city with tall buildings, bus stations and International schools. While Three Rivers is rural with small town interests, tractors, corn fields, farms, lakes, campfires, snowmobiling and hunting, and occasional transfer students.

An individual from the City of Kalamazoo would not be able to represent the interests of the people of a rural community. Likewise, a rural resident would not be able to appropriately represent the voice of those in the City of Kalamazoo. They would naturally disenfranchise the citizens they are supposed to represent, creating a loss of public confidence.

Thank you for listening to me. And I pray for the outcome of this.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. 56, 57, 58 and 59, please approach the mic and get ready.

>> [ Audio and video difficulties ]

Okay, we won't be hearing from 56, so we will start with 57 and 58, 59 and 60. And you can also, if you are not already at the mic, you can make your way down. 57, go ahead.

>> Hi. Good evening. And, again, like everyone else has said, thank you very much for spending all your time and efforts toward this very important task.

My name is Mika Perkins. And I'm the Michigan Building Trades Council representative for Southwest Michigan. It's also a very important job of mine to be the father out and embarrass as much as possible my kids who are back there.

So I'm glad that they are here so they can see what democracy in action, the rubber meeting the road looks like.

As I said I represent skilled trades in Southwest Michigan. There is 14 trades I represent. Some of them are in the back there. Skilled trades in general and union skilled trades in particular make up a significant percentage of the population in this area of the state.

What we need more than anything else, and has already been mentioned, is competitive representation. We do not benefit from uncompetitive races where a labor's voice is not heard because the race is decided before it's won already.

The status quo disenfranchises labor of either party or independence because their voices are not relevant to the discussion. The districts, especially the state District, should be drawn as close to county lines as possible.

The house...the U.S. house representative seat in particular that I'm thinking of in terms of competitiveness is the Third District. It's incredibly uncompetitive and we do not benefit from the way that it's drawn currently.

I wish you all the best of success and hope you achieve the goal of every politician that you can make everyone unhappy. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you. 58.

>> Hi. Thank you for coming here. My name is Allen. I'm a math teacher. I want to talk a little bit about the State House representative's districts. I think there are some things about the existing map that make sense and there are some things that don't make sense.

I certainly think that a county like Van Buren County should be kept whole. It's been whole for quite a while. And I think most people I know in Van Buren County like it that way. So, you know, I don't think that, you know, chopping South Haven off and putting it in a different District would really make sense.

As far as a District that doesn't make sense, I think the 62nd Districts in Calhoun County, if you just look at it, you can tell there is something wrong with it. Battle Creek and Albion don't need to be in the same District. And that District I think is

gerrymandered the way it's currently drawn. So I would encourage it to be drawn differently.

Talking about the Congressional districts, I've heard some people mention the 1980s Congressional District map as a model to follow. I'd encourage you to look at that map before you think about putting Kalamazoo and Battle Creek in the same District. Because that map was incredibly gerrymandered. It cut Portage in half and like had an arm up to it to take half of it out. And it chopped Lansing in half. So I don't think that that gerrymandered map makes sense as a model for our current Congressional districts.

I think Battle Creek would probably make the most sense. It's sort of a south central District with Jackson and Hillsdale and those other areas. Thank you for your work.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for addressing the Commission. 59 and 60, 61, 62.

>> Hello. My name is Jamie. I'm from Kalamazoo County, the Richland Area. First off, I would like to thank all of you, the Redistricting Committee for being here.

We as a community are here to let you know of our concerns. We expect transparency, integrity and honesty as these proceedings unfold. And what I have seen so far leads me to believe that you guys are doing just that. Your job is going to be monumental. But with the added meetings you have agreed to around Michigan, you are not only showing Michigan, all of us, that you are truly committed to a fair, transparent and honest redistricting process. You want the input of the people, which further cements my faith in not only this process but you, the committee.

This is all new for everyone. And I know many people are nervous about what has been going on with the country as of now. Some folks are discouraged about some of the events that have been going on last year. They have lost confidence in some of the decisions made by the Government.

But with the redistricting process I am glad that the people and you, the committee members, get to decide where the lines are drawn. It takes out the sides of each political spectrum and focuses on what the people of Michigan really want for their state.

Again, I would like to thank all of you guys for your dedication to this process and for the patience to listen and understand what we all want in this state and in our communities.

Thank you for all that you are doing. Keep up the good work. And we look forward to the results. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Jamie, thank you so much for those words of support for the Commission. We appreciate it.

60. Do we have 60?

Okay.

61?

62?

63 and 64. 61, when you approach the mic, feel free to start.

>> My name is Larry. I live in Portage, Michigan. I want to thank you people for accepting our...an impossible, in my opinion which is an impossible task. And my definition or I think a definition of gerrymandering is drawing up the districts to somebody's political advantage. And I don't think there is a perfect solution to that.

But something that former representative Dave Maturn mentioned here, I think the districts should be as competitive as possible. And I realize you're never going to make everybody happy. You are going to have to separate cities and counties sometimes or townships or school districts and that is unfortunate.

But I think you have an impossible task. But the best thing you can do is get as close as possible in each of the districts that you draw up, that they are competitive districts. I think that is the best way we can hope for, for anything.

And thanks again for taking time out of your busy lives to do what you are doing. And you got a tough job, that is all I have to say.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Larry. 62. 63.

>> Good evening. My name is Ken Wolcot. I reside in Vicksburg, which is by Kalamazoo County. I'd like to make two points. One, when we looked at Kalamazoo County, that is a prime example of gerrymandering.

Inside Kalamazoo County we should have three house seats, clear and simple.

When we look at the Sixth Congressional District, I also in my position as a business manager for plumbers and pipefitters and HVAC and Local 357, I represent 1700 belly buttons. When we look at how they transport themselves to and from work, it's through I-94.

We work for primarily from Battle Creek all the way to the lakeshore. Our communities are so connected. It's just in so many ways from education to medical to construction to industry.

Having said that, it's an unfortunate thing; but Allegan County does not align with the Sixth Congressional District. They are totally in line with Kent County and Ottawa.

So if you look at how they break down in the community and how they transpire with each other, from medical to education, they are lining with Kent County and Ottawa.

For one example, yesterday I spent most of my day with about 5,000, 8th graders from Calhoun County and Kalamazoo County exploring the building trades. That is the type of relationship we have with Calhoun County and Kalamazoo County and Van Buren and Cass and Berrien. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much. 64.

>> Good evening. My name is Brian Kincaid. And I'm here. I live here in Portage, in Kalamazoo County. Thank you all for coming.

My chief concerns is I would like to see Portage kept in one State House District, one State Senate District, and one U.S. house District.

I have lived here, well, all my life basically. Since July of 1961. So I have lived here at times when Kalamazoo County has been divided up into U.S. house districts. And --

[ Audio and video difficulties ]

Lake Michigan shoreline up to past Muskegon and as far east as almost the entire Michigan/Indiana border.

There was no community of interest in that District. So I like the fact that the Sixth Congressional District is as compact as it is. And I'd like to see it stay that way. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Mr. Kincaid, for addressing the Commission. 65.

>> Hi. My name is Nick. And I'm a student at the University of Michigan. And I'm a lifelong resident of Climax.

I know some communities will have to be divided. And I'm not going to pretend Climax is more important or cohesive than any other minor civil division in the county. Even as corn and soy fields surround my house, most people in Climax are not farmers. Almost 90% of Climax Township residents work elsewhere with the majority in Kalamazoo or Battle Creek.

Climax, Battle Creek, and Kalamazoo make a community of interest. A significant portion of Kalamazoo County residents work in Battle Creek or Springfield. Our labor markets are pooled and our districts should reflect that.

Now, I love maps and spreadsheets. I crunch numbers for fun and study Michigan's political geography as well. I draw maps on Dave's redistricting app. And I wrote a metric app to quantify partisan gerrymandering and are.

And I am concerned of lack of rigor in the definition of communities of interest because looking around I don't see a lot of people my age. In fact, some citizens explicitly stated they don't want to be in a District with college students like me.

If we just draw lines based on public input like that, we are not going to represent the whole state. State aide equalizes, giving a voice to people who couldn't make it here today like college students.

So I strongly encourage the Commission to incorporate objective data into the redistricting process. My personal preference is commuting data tabulated by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The census measures commuting flows at geographies as small as a tract level, as part of longitudinal employer household dynamic survey. It's a really cool tool. I love using it. It's online and free. And if I can do it as a college student, then you guys can, too. You guys are smart.

When deciding where to draw lines, I encourage the Commission to balance all groups, not just the constituencies that are overrepresented here. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much.

I'll now have number 66, 67, 68, and 69 approach the microphones. 66, when you approach you can start.

>> Hi. My name is Charles Benedict. I'm from South Haven. And I just think that we need to have more of a lakeshore community, just everything outside of the area does have a different economy. And it makes more sense in my opinion.

The other thing I think is Van Buren and Berrien Springs and Cass County make a little more sense too. Some of the numbers I have. In median income, Allegan County has about \$60,000. Van Buren is \$52,000. And Berrien is \$49,000.

Now it might not seem a lot. But it does make a difference in what the median is.

We have...that is pretty much the difference between buying generic brand or name brand and it just changes everything. I forgot the rest of it, so, okay.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: That's okay.

Just log on and share the rest of your thoughts on the public comment tool that we have. 67.

>> Name is Tom Birkhold. I live in Oshtemo Township and gave a mailing address of Kalamazoo.

I appreciate that you are here doing this. I was very concerned and very involved with getting signatures to get the redistricting on the ballot. And so I got that far, I better not quit.

I love the term communities of interest. Kalamazoo considers itself part of Battle Creek and Battle Creek considers itself part of Kalamazoo. They have the same United Way. They have the same airport. It's a 20-30 minute commute. Thousands of residents in Battle Creek work in Kalamazoo and vice versa.

Historically they have been together. If we look at where Calhoun County and Battle Creek is, the only way you get from Battle Creek to Grand Rapids is to go through Kalamazoo. Kalamazoo and Calhoun County need to be together in the same District.

If you look at Government statistics, the statistical, the MSA and the CSA both would study areas of markets, both include Kalamazoo and Battle Creek in the same District.

The reason that they are separate, and they put Battle Creek in with Grand Rapids, was so that the Battle Creek democratic vote would be powerless because they are swamped by Grand Rapids. Those districts need to be together. Because they -- we do everything together. And that is I think the exact definition of community of interest. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for sharing with the Commission. 68.

Is there a 68?

69. Good evening.

>> Thanks. David Pulski. I live in the City of Kalamazoo. First, I want to say I'm a proud union dues paying member of labor's 355 in Battle Creek, Michigan. Even though I live in the city of Kalamazoo, I tend my union meetings at my union hall in Battle Creek. Battle Creek and Kalamazoo is a community of interest.

Second thing I want to say is Battle Creek on the Congressional level does not belong in the same District as Grand Rapids. That is just a terribly drawn District. So I hope you consider that in your future deliberations.

Third thing is Kalamazoo County has its own State Senate District. And I think that should remain the same. That is a perfect size for a District. And I hope you consider that.

And the last thing I will talk about is Kalamazoo County State House maps. Kalamazoo County is like the 8th largest county in the state. And it's a growing county. And it should have, if not three, four State House districts in this county, that would best represent Southwest Michigan. I believe Kalamazoo is the center of Southwest Michigan.

And the last thing I want to say is thank you for your service. I hope that you can let, like my colleague and good friend Dave Maturin said, make sure that you are drawing these maps with competitiveness and with integrity. So thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for sharing with the Commission. 70, 71, and 72.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Jonathan Bird. And I live in Calhoun County and I'm pleased to visit with you again.

I would like to add to my previous statements about the State House in Calhoun. And I would like to again advocate for Battle Creek and Albion to be put into the same house District as it is right now.

And if you recall, the multiple arguments I made for that. But I also wanted to highlight the rest of the county is also very similar. Having grown up in Marshall all my life, Marshall, Michigan has far more in common with the similar small towns along the M60 corridor, that being Athens, Union City, Burlington, Takonsha, Homer. You know, dozens of people from Marshall go to Cascarelli's in Homer every day. And that southern part of rural Calhoun County ought to really stay together.

I also serve as president of the South Central Michigan AFLCIO. And we represent tens of thousands of union members within Southwest Michigan. The nine counties in Southwest Michigan.

And in the labor movement each local union --  
[ Audio and video difficulties ]

Van Buren and Cass, that little corner of the state. The other local unions are represented by either Kalamazoo or Battle Creek.

We also have several locals that identify or are aligned with like Barry and Allegan and kind of across the top of those nine counties.

So just kind of wanted to say that local unions have their own District lines just like what you guys are trying to draw, and it's good to align those.

In addition to that, I serve on the board of the Battle Creek/Kalamazoo United Way. And I know one of the previous speakers made that same argument that Battle Creek

and Kalamazoo are very similar. They ought to be in the same Congressional District. Are non-profits, are aligning there together. And I feel like it just makes sense for a Congressional District to include those two communities.

Thank you very much. And thank you for everything you guys are doing.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you. We appreciate you sharing with the Commission. Do we have 71 and 72. 71. 71. Good evening.

>> Good evening and welcome to Kalamazoo. Thank you for being here. Thank you for your good work. Your task is one not to be envied.

Cameron Brown, my wife and I have homes in Kalamazoo County and St. Joseph County. In your formulation of criteria for determining communities of interest, as you consider drawing new maps, consider this: The bottom tier counties of our state have a certain affinity that they don't share with any other counties throughout the state.

Think about it. They're border counties. They border not just other counties to the north but they border other states. Some areas actually border two states. Some border counties, border another country. These border counties have unique affinities. And those affinities are: The economic advantage or disadvantage they have vis-a-vis the other states that they border. The economic policies of the other states impact the advantage or disadvantage of the border counties.

So please keep the border counties and unique affinity in mind as you develop new District maps. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much, Cameron. If we don't have number 72, and it does not look like we do, that concludes our in-person public comment and we will move on to our remote or virtual public comment.

Thank you for those in the room that stuck around with us. We really look forward to the opportunity to sit and listen and to learn about the communities that each of you represent. And we encourage you, if you are able, to stick around for our virtual portion.

A few reminders. 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. I will call your name and our staff will unmute you.

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 the host would like you to speak and prompt you to press star six to unmute. I will call on you by your name. And also please note that if you experience technical or audio issues or we do not hear from you for three to five seconds, 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 [redistricting@Michigan.gov](mailto:redistricting@Michigan.gov) and we will help you troubleshoot so you can participate during the next public comment period at a later hearing or meeting.



First in line to provide public comment is Lynn Gray. Lynn Gray, please allow a few moments for our staff to unmute you.

>> Hi, yes. Can you hear me okay?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Yes, we can hear you.

>> Thank you for this opportunity. To Madam Chair and Commissioners and all those gathered in person in Kalamazoo or virtually good evening.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Good evening.

>> There we go. I'm sorry. I'm unfamiliar with this process but I'll keep going.

My name is Linward Gray. I testified today as the chapter president of the Battle Creek Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, a public service organization. Members provide public service in local service under our five-point programmatic thrust economic development, educational development, International awareness and involvement, physical and mental health and political awareness and involvement.

I rise virtually today to support the Battle Creek Area I-94 economic corridor project proposal of a shared community of interest with Kalamazoo. We believe we should not and never should have been aligned with Grand Rapids as it currently stands as we have little shared economic or other community interests.

Our economic and other community interests, recreation and leisure, shopping, dining, infrastructure, et cetera, are shared with Kalamazoo.

Our health equity work to get our communities tested and vaccinated, working with our shared healthcare systems Bronson healthcare and Borgess, and other partners, our criminal justice reform offering expungement informational forums with our shared organizations, legal services of South Central Michigan. And the social services are supported by the United Way of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region.

For instance, I am a legacy. Because my mother was a member, she co-chartered the chapter in Battle Creek in 1980. But not before she co-chartered the chapter in Kalamazoo in 1973, forever connecting the two chapters and areas.

Our members in both the Kalamazoo and Battle Creek alumni chapters work, live, and worship between both communities, boosting the economy of both of these closely tied areas.

Over the years we share ideas and collaborate where it makes sense on programming ranging from our youth to our more seasoned citizens and everyone in between.

And, in conclusion, we ask that you return our voice and representation by aligning Battle Creek with Kalamazoo. Thank you for the opportunity to give remarks as the representative of the Battle Creek Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated.

Thank you for your time and thank you, Commissions, for your service to our great state. Have a blessed evening.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much, Ms. Gray, for your comments.

And we will move on to our second virtual public comment. And this is Tamara Mitchell. Please excuse me if your first name is Tamara. And allow for a couple of moments for our staff to unmute you.

>> Hello. Can you all hear me okay?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Yes.

>> Wonderful. Thank you.

My name is Tamara Mitchell. I thank you all for all that you're doing in this process, the Chair and the Commissioners. I know that it's a very daunting task, but my prayers are with you.

Once again, my name is Tamara Mitchell. I'm a resident of Kalamazoo County. I live in Texas Township, the 61st Congressional District. And, excuse me, the 6th Congressional District.

And I love my community. I love Kalamazoo County. I love the essence of what Kalamazoo County has to offer. And I enjoy the special touches that Kalamazoo County has to offer.

When I think of communities of interest, my mind not only goes to what I share with other people here in the community; but it goes to the feeling, the live, the heart of the community and how people interact and feel about being here.

And that is something that you cannot really value just by, you know, speaking it in terms of words. But it has to be something that is felt within the heart. It's often something that it's unexplainable. But you know it when you see it, when you feel it.

Down to I go to Harding's Friendly Market, for example. And they truly are friendly. Every time I go in, everyone turns around and says good morning. How are you today? Those are the unique touches about community that help me to cherish where I live even more.

I like living in the 6th District. I think that we are unique in that, in that friendliness quotient, the welcoming quotient. And I want to see that preserved.

I ask of you as you are drawing the maps that you keep our community intact. I ask that you respect the municipal lines and the township lines. Because, you know, as a person here in Texas Township, in the District that I live in, in the 6th District, I see how wonderful it is. And I'd like to see that preserved. And I thank you so much for all that you are doing. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much, Tamara. And we will move on to number four, James Gallant. And allow a few moments for the staff to unmute you.

>> Hello.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Hi, James.

>> Okay, can you hear me now?

All right. Okay am I on?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Yes, we can hear you.

>> Yes, okay, so my name is James Gallant. I'm with the Marquette County Suicide Prevention Coalition. And my community of interest is the entire State of Michigan.

I'm here to request that you consider scheduling an additional public hearing to clarify the Commission's decision making processes and approve the rules of procedure including the Robert's Rules of Order. I base this request on several apparent violations of the rules by the Commission in the current business that you have conducted so far, including assigning the floor for debate without establishing an immediately pending question by having a motion that is seconded.

And so I quote in Robert's Rules of Order, Page 386, Line Five, under summary of procedures to debate until a matter has been brought before the assembly in the form of a motion proposing a specific action, it cannot be debated.

As explained in three and four, the motion must be made by a member who has obtained the floor and no question is pending or while the motion is in order, if it's not a main motion. After which it must be seconded by another member unless it is by the direction of a board or committee and must be stated by the Chair.

The Chair may conclude their statement of the question on the debatable motion by asking are you ready for the question?  
Or thus formally is there any debate.

I see that this is...I saw this recently with the Michigan Suicide Prevention Commission. They do the same thing. The business is brought before the Commission in the form of debate and discussion and not in the form of a motion to where you have an immediately pending question. And that is a direct violation of the Bylaws in the Robert's Rules of Order that have been approved for this Commission and it's un-American. It's what they are calling...it's what I liken it to the facilitated dialog thing that they are talking about and to where they facilitate the deliberation, that's wrong.

This is about due process. The people here at this public hearing have a due process right to bring these issues to you. And have the right for you to be following the rules.

So if you would schedule a public hearing concerning the Bylaws and the rules of procedure so that can be clarified, that would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, James, for addressing the Commission. We will move on to number five, Anthony Pennock. Please provide a little moment to be unmuted by staff.

>> Hello. Anthony Pennock, Battle Creek, Michigan. I'm also the president of the Battle Creek Education Association, the largest teacher union in Calhoun County.

And I'm a Battle Creek native. I went to Pennfield schools, graduated there, went to school for my teaching degree right here in Battle Creek.

But as I've grown, I've seen the communities of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo so inextricably linked from my father as a labor worker to my mom as a custodian. And I just see us so linked together with Kalamazoo. It feels almost natural.

We have satellite locations for Western Michigan University in Battle Creek. We share a lot of our staff, a lot of my teachers live in Kalamazoo. My own superintendent lives in Kalamazoo but works in Battle Creek.

We are a community of interest. And I ask the Commission to look at the history of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo and how closely linked we are and even founding stories.

It is important that we remain linked and that our voices are heard. Especially as ten years ago you saw voting start dropping off because our votes almost felt so diluted being linked with Grand Rapids that so many people stopped voting. It's important for us to be linked back together again. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much, Anthony, for taking the time to address the Commission. We will move on to seven, Cheryl Vosburg.

For the purposes of those attending and public record, we did not have a number one or a number six, so our final comment today is number seven, Cheryl Vosburg.

Please allow a couple of moments for staff to unmute you.

>> Good evening. My name is Cheryl Vosburg and I'm the Executive Director of River Watershed Council. I'm speaking to you tonight on behalf of the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council Board of Directors. The Council has an office in the City of Kalamazoo, but we represent stakeholders throughout the entire Kalamazoo River Watershed. And I was happy tonight to hear so many people talking about the Kalamazoo River and how it connects us.

We envision the Kalamazoo River and connective waterways that are free flowing with good water quality and healthy eco systems that are managed and protected by decisions and actions made in our region and provide environmental, social and economic benefits.

We believe this will be best accomplished by engaging a strong and effective community of dedicated, aligned partners.

Battle Creek and Kalamazoo and nearby communities along the I-94 corridor together compromise or comprise an economic and cultural community of interest.

In addition, they are within the same watershed, the Kalamazoo River, with the mainstem flowing through the cities of Albion, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, and Marshall.

Because of the common elements, we believe they should be drawn together in the same U.S. Congressional District.

Prior to 1992, Battle Creek and Kalamazoo were together in Congressional districts. And people familiar to and with our communities represented our shared interests.

The Albion, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, and Marshall areas are I-94 and Kalamazoo River communities. Collectively they have far more in common economically and culturally and socially with communities along the east/west I-94 corridor than with similarly distanced communities to the north and south.

In addition, the Kalamazoo River flows either through or near each of these communities. On behalf of the Kalamazoo River Board of Directors, based on

geography, economy and transportation, healthcare and education, recreation and leisure and history, we wish to express support for drawing the Kalamazoo River watershed communities together in the same Congressional District. We believe this new District boundary will meet the constitutional criteria as outlined in the redistricting guidelines.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission for your work on this issue. The outcomes will have far reaching impacts. And we thank you for this opportunity to provide input.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Cheryl. That concludes both our in-person and virtual public comment. At this time we will have acknowledgments by our Executive Director Sue Hammersmith.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: I just want to thank all the people who stuck with us. There are not too many left, but we do appreciate those who attended this evening and gave public comment. We encourage those who are able to do so to go on the public comment tool and actually put those comments on that tool at Michigan.gov/MICRC so we are absolutely sure about the maps you talking about.

There are lots of other ways to engage too. You can catch us on Facebook at Redistricting Michigan. You can also request a presentation on our website. Or if you don't have access to the Internet, we encourage you to mail a letter to us at PO Box 30318 in Lansing 48909. You can call the 1-833-You Draw number for information. That is 1-833 ---

[ Audio and visual  
Difficulties ]

And we are traveling next week to Marquette and Gaylord and we invite the public to join us at either one of those locations or any one of our upcoming public hearings that are listed on the website. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: And we also acknowledge Commissioner Rhonda Lange and Commissioner Erin Wagner who are with us in this virtual space. So we just want to make sure, yeah, they are waving. We miss you, having you here.

And at this time, since we are done with the bulk of our business, I will take a motion to adjourn. Cynthia Orton has moved. Do I have a second?

>> Second.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Who seconded? Okay. Seconded by Commission Doug Clark. All those in favor signify with an aye.

>> Aye.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: All those opposed?

[ Laughter ]

The meeting is adjourned at 9:00, and thank you so much for attending.