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MICRC

05/25/21 6:00 pm MICRC Public Hearing

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>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Good afternoon. As Chair of the Commission, I call this meeting of the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to order at 6:11 p.m.

Thank you for bearing with us. We had a few technical issues going on and thank you for being so patient and waiting.

This Zoom webinar is being live streamed at you tube at [www.YouTube.com/michsos office/videos](http://www.YouTube.com/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 MI 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 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 at Michigan.gov.

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

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

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

Members of the media who may have questions before, during or after the meeting should direct those questions to Edward Woods III, Communications and Outreach Director for the Commission at WoodsE3@Michigan.gov or 517-331-6309.

For the purpose of the public watching and the public record, I will turn to department state to make note of the Commissioners present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT:

Thank you, Commissioners. Commissioners, please say present when I call your name. If you are attending the meeting remotely, please

announce during roll call that you are attending the meeting remotely. And unless your absence is due to military duty, announce your physical location by stating the county, city, Township or village from which you are attending the meeting and state. We will start with Douglas Clark.

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Juanita Curry.

>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Anthony Eid?

>> COMMISSIONER EID: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Brittini Kellom? Rhonda Lange?

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

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Steve Lett?

>> COMMISSIONER LETT: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Cynthia Orton?

>> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: MC Rothhorn?

>> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rebecca Szetela?

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Janis Vallette.

>> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Erin Wagner?

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

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Richard Weiss?

>> COMMISSIONER WEISS: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Dustin Witjes?

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Present.

>> 12 Commissioners are present and there is a quorum.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you. Without objection Commissioner Doug Clark will provide a presentation. Hearing no objection, please proceed, Commissioner Clark.

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Thank you very much. Good evening. My name is Douglas Clark. I'm one of the commissioners on the MICRC and I'm from Rochester Hills Michigan.

Welcome to the public hearing in Midland. It's a pleasure for the MICRC to be here this evening. We look forward to it and the time has finally come. We are happy you

are here to learn about Michigan's new redistricting process and how you can engage throughout this process to ensure that your voice is heard.

In looking at the agenda, please note that the vast majority of our time this evening is spent listening to you. We are eager to hear your ideas either in person or remotely about drawing Michigan's Congressional, house and Senate districts. In addition to hearing about District lines, we also want to hear your ideas about communities of interest.

A little history about the MICRC. In 2018 more than 61% of Michigan voters intentionally and deliberately passed proposal two. A ballot initiative for voters, not legislatures to take responsibility for map fairness and public feedback in the redistricting process and created in the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission.

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

The Commission is comprised of 13 randomly selected residents and that includes four republicans, four democrats and five individuals who are affiliated as independents.

These individuals were selected through a statewide lottery and that lottery was run by the Department of State. The MICRC has the exclusive authority in this new redistricting progress for the Michigan's Congressional, House and Senate districts.

As fellow residents, the MICRC understands your expectations to draw maps in an open and transparent manner and it meets constitutional amendments. Our mission and vision exemplifies our resolve not just for today but for future generation as well.

In your interaction with the MICRC and the staff, you should witness the core values of integrity, respect, transparency and being purposeful. Once again, we are glad that you're here. We look forward to hearing from you.

And now I'd like to introduce the rest of the Commission. We are going to start with MC on the first row and once we complete the first row, we will come back down to Anthony in the second row. And we have two individuals that are remote tonight and we will get to them. MC.

>> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Good evening, everybody. My name is MC Rothorn and I come from Lansing, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER LETT: Good evening. I'm Steven Lett and I'm from Interlochen, up by Traverse City.

>> COMMISSIONER WEISS: Good evening, I'm Richard H. Weiss and I'm from Saginaw, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Good evening. My name is Dustin Witjes and I and from Ypsilanti, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Good evening. I'm Cynthia Orton and I live in Battle Creek, Michigan,

>> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Good evening. I'm Janice Vallette. And I'm from Highland Township, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Good evening. My name is Juanita Curry and I'm from Detroit, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER EID: Well, hello Midland. Thank you for coming out today. I'm Anthony Eid. I'm from Orchard Lake, Michigan.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Good evening. Rebecca Szetela. I'm from Canton, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: We've got two Commissions that are remote, so we will start with Erin. Apparently, she can't hear us. Can you hear us. Rhonda?

>> COMMISSIONER LANGE: Yes. Good evening. I'm Rhonda Lange and I'm from Reed City, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER WAGNER: Good evening. I'm Erin Wagner and I'm from Charlotte, Michigan

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Thank you. And we have got two members of our staff here.

>> MS. JULIANNE PASTULA: Thank you so much, Commissioner Clark. My name is Julianne Pastula. I'm the general counsel to the Commission. Thank you for having us.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: I'm Sue Hammersmith. I'm the Executive Director with the Commission.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you very much, Commissioner Clark. Without objection, our Executive Director, Suann Hammersmith, will now provide presentation.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: Good evening and thank you for being here tonight with us. This is our fifth public hearing.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Hearing no objections, please proceed, Ms. Hammersmith.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: I assumed there were no objections. Sorry about that. I just like jumping into things.

So good evening and thank you for being here. This is our fifth public hearing of 16 that the Commission will hold. And we are so happy you joined us.

To ensure fair and impartial maps, the MICRC is required to solicit public input during at least ten public hearings before the first line of the map is drawn for the State of Michigan.

This Commission is hosting 16 public hearings, so I like to call them over achievers. But I do want to reinforce that not a single map line will be drawn until public hearings are complete. And when the lines are drawn and the meetings, the Michigan Constitution states three purposes for the public hearings. The first is to share information about the redistricting process.

The second to share about the Commission.

And the third, and most importantly, to hear from you.

What is redistricting? Every ten years following the census District lines are drawn for the U.S. Congressional, State House and State Senate districts. And they must be redrawn to accurately reflect the population. People are born, people pass away and people move to different place so the lines need to be redrawn every ten years. This process is known as redistricting. In Michigan the District lines this Commission will draw include 13 for the Congressional districts, 38 Michigan Senate districts and 110 Michigan House Districts.

The MICRC is the one and only entity responsible for drawing the District lines. The MICRC operates on an impartial and transparent manner that instills integrity in the process. And the public outreach ensures fairness, awareness, transparency, and engagement that seeks to meaningful participation by at least 10,000 distinct public comments. So that is why you're so important tonight.

The MICRC must adopt the maps for the districts in Michigan. They must ensure integrity, public availability and accountability for the data that will be used when drawing the maps. And also for the data regarding the public comments and Commission information.

The districts will be drawn to comply with Federal and State laws. So the Constitution outlines seven criteria. They in rank order, so the Commission knows the order of their business.

Firstly, districts have to have equal population. So for Congressional districts, it will be approximately 770,000 people in a District or seven districts around 260,000 residents and for a House District about 90,000 people.

The Commission must concur that with the Voting Rights Act also. So this is Federal legislation that prohibits racial or language discrimination.

The third criteria is communities of interest that reflect the State's diverse population and may include, but are not limited to, populations that share cultural or historical characteristics or economic interest. They may include arts districts, neighborhoods, business alliances, agricultural groups, education, waterfront communities, you name it. The communities of interest are identified themselves.

The fourth and fifth criteria refer to the partisan fairness. So there cannot be a disproportionate advantage to any political party. And the lines cannot favor or disfavor an incumbent elected official or candidate for office.

Six, the lines must reflect city, county and Township boundaries. And, seventh, they must be reasonably compact. So again that is a very tall order to follow all of the criteria in rank order.

So why are we here? Simply speaking, we are here to hear from you where to draw the lines for Michigan's Congressional, Senate and House Districts in Midland greater area and throughout the State of Michigan.

And why should you care? For the first time ever Michigan residents have a say in the process. You have a say. Openness, transparency and public engagement represent the principles of this new redistricting process.

And as the third criteria in the process, communities of interest now have a voice. The districts that are drawn will last for ten years. And this Commission is committed to making the maps as fair and the best that it can be. This can only be achieved with your input, so please accept our gratitude for your participation in this historic endeavor. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you very much, Executive Director Hammersmith. Without objection our General Counsel will now provide a presentation. Hearing no objection, please proceed, General Counsel Pastula.

>> MS. JULIANNE PASTULA: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I would like to go over public guidelines for the benefit of our guests this evening.

Our public comment will include both in-person and remote public comment. Our remote guests will be either by telephone or Zoom participants.

All public comments will be at a limit of two minutes per speaker for both in-person and remote. In-person public comments will occur first, followed by remote public comments.

I would also like to highlight that the Chairperson may warrant any person or curtail the opportunity to speak for failure to be germane for vulgarity, redundancy within comment, for speaking more than the allotted two minute time limit, for technical issues or failure to address remarks to the Commission. The Chairperson may also rule a person out of order and that person would forfeit their opportunity to speak further.

Lastly, any meeting attendee who at the direction of the Chairperson for a breach of the peace committed at the meeting will be escorted from the meeting room and not be admitted for the remainder of tonight's public hearing.

Thank you again for welcoming us to the community and we look forward to hearing from you this evening.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you. Without objection we will now begin the public comment portion of our meeting.

Hearing no objection, we will now proceed with public comments. 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 name. I will call you up in groups of four. You will have two minutes to address the Commission and when your two minutes have ended and you hear the timer, please go to public comment tool as well as speaking here and share your comments in writing including any specific area of the map of which you are speaking. The public comment tool is available at www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

First in line to provide public comment are the numbers are 1, 2, 3 and 4. You may now approach the mic. And, number one, when you are ready you can start speaking. And the microphones are on the other side of the room here.

>> Good evening. I'm Barb Miller, a retired professor from Delta College. I live in Bay City, Michigan where I raised a family. I'm a part of a Bay County community of interest and our focus is to see Bay County aligned with Saginaw, Midland and Genesee Counties in a Congressional District.

I will speak to higher education. Over 40% of college students start at a community college. Our communities are tightly connected. And Delta 81% of students come from Saginaw Bay and Midland Counties. At Delta college and Mont Community College in Flint, over 30% of students transfer to a university. We need representation to work for fair Federal loan and Pell grant policies and for fair access.

In addition the students who transfer from Delta College are most likely to go to four-year universities that are in proximity. SVSU, Northland University in Midland, and University of Michigan Flint are at the top ten of colleges that they transfer to.

The Bay Area community foundation has awarded almost \$2.7 million in scholarships since 2008 to Bay Area high school graduates who are the first in their family to attend college and who will enroll in either Delta or SVSU. These colleges carefully select programs based on a needs of this part of Michigan with an emphasis on medical, business, education and science engineering.

The college also plays a key role in revitalization of downtown. Delta College has a downtown Bay City campus and new buildings in downtown Saginaw and here in Midland. University of Michigan Flint is key to downtown Flint development. SVSU has classrooms in downtown Saginaw as well as CMU for medical students.

So, in short, the strengths of our higher education system and the Michigan economy would be helped by representation in a consolidated urban Congressional District. Please consider the effectiveness of aligning Midland Bay and Saginaw and Genesee Counties in Congressional District. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number two.

>> Members of the Commission, my name is Terry Miller. I taught for 30 years in the Saginaw City Public Schools and 20 years at Delta College in the District. I believe your job is vital, fairness to the Michigan's electoral process.

My community of interest begins with Bay County where I grew up and raised a family and integrity values. For state representation I urge you to respect Bay City Township and board. For consideration I intend to honor the interest urban areas of Bay, Bay County, Saginaw County and Midland require representation, share industrial history and share in infrastructural needs, and share in recreational water system.

Also all industrialization has brought wealth it left a legacy of contamination and Dioxin both of which have and are being addressed. New threats such as agricultural and fertilizer and pesticide runoff and operations require vigilance and climate change. And

yet for decades our state Senators because of gerrymandering had come from rural and agricultural cultural communities and requires redress.

Similarly I believe my community for interest for Congressional representations should follow the rivers and should include Bay, Saginaw, Midland and Genesee Counties. We are bound to the I75 corridor. Our history and the watershed that has Saginaw and Tittabawasee Rivers as its lifelines.

For decades the joint U.S. community group, international joint commissions have identified the Saginaw River and Bay Area as one of the 42 most areas of concern. Great strides by both Governments to address these water impairments. And the Federal advocate is essential if progress is to continue, likewise the protection of wetlands. In the most biologically robust Ecosystem provides Habitat, flood control, and commercial and recreational fishing. And a committee Federal watchdog. And cities will play a central role in coping with climate change. Please consider keeping the legislative needs of these core cities in mind when redistricting and thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number three.

>> Hi there. I'm Jacob. I live in Bay County and Bay City and I'm here to discuss the Senate districts. I am a member of Local 1098. Sorry, my community of interest is the Labor Law 1098. For a little background the laborers international union is made up of highly skilled and well compensated construction craft layers. We build roads, wetlands, and basically everything in between within the core area here. And the majority of my brothers and sisters in Local 1098 actually live in the urban and suburban areas around Midland, Bay, Saginaw and Bay City, making up what we used to call the Saginaw Tri-City Area. So we call that a little bit.

And as well as living here, we spend the majority of our time and revenue in areas around this corridor. We go to baseball games one day with our family and the next day we take our friends to Saginaw spirit games then we go for fireworks in Bay City the right time of the year.

Our area has not been properly represented as a core unit. For my entire life I looked up to the maps. And we have been gerrymandered into different pieces for years and years. And I'm asking to keep the urban and suburban and Tri-Cities together so it can be properly represented for the first time. And thank you very much for your time. And I also have a map and I can give it to somebody I'm told.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: You can bring them up here. Number four, you can address the Commission.

>> My name is Mark. I'm with the Midland County Board of Commissions, one of my positions. I also serve with the Midland business alliance and the Great Lakes bait convention of visitors Bureau. So I have a lot of affiliations and work with as well as the small business of the current politicians have handled it the last few years.

Many of you know we had quite a flood last year. And I will tell you that the help we got from our congressman to our Senators and state reps was fantastic and nothing short of top notch. So my request at this point would be to keep the lines. I know they are going to change some, but as close as possible to what they are now because knowing my congressman is from Midland and knowing everybody, it just helps me as a county Commissioner to get things done and are always successful. So very happy with the way the lines are now. And I would ask you guys to consider keeping those. And also tell you thank you very much for being willing to serve and do this very important job you have. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. I know invite 5, 6, 7 and 8 to approach the microphone. And, number five, you can begin speaking as soon as you reach the microphone.

>> Good evening. My name is Karen Tighe. I'm a retired probate Judge from Bay County. I'm here to discuss the State Senate map. About two decades ago Bay County was gerrymandered away from the closest community, Saginaw, and we were placed with a rural State Senate District with Tuscola and Lapeer Counties. Our most recent two State Senators have both been family farmers whose interests are understandably centered on agricultural with the needs of an urban, suburban on the industrial corridor have not been their main focus.

We identify ourselves as a society and Tri-Counties of Midland, Bay and Saginaw. We share an international airport with initials MBS which is administered by our three local Governments.

We share Delta College, a community college district that is supported by Tri-county tax millages and its board members are elected from each of our three counties.

U.S. office of management and budget literally defines our three communities as a Metropolitan area characterized by relatively high population density and our close economic ties.

Our economies developed because of our proximity to the navigable Saginaw River, which is the shipping channel for freighters. And we have five bridges to prove it.

Midland developed on the bays of the Tittabawasee while Saginaw and Bay are on both sides of the Saginaw River. Midland became the world headquarters for Dow while Bay City and Saginaw are home to General Motors power train plant. Our area's largest employer is next to formerly steering which provides over 5,000 local jobs.

Even our television networks recognize Flint, Saginaw, Bay City and Midland as a discrete media market. Our state Senator from Lapeer receives his local news from Detroit affiliates, and that leaves them out of the Mid-Michigan loop.

The Metropolitan region such as ours should be recognized with State Senate representation by a person who lives and works in the Tri-Cities and Tri-Counties. We hope you will recognize that when you redraw the state snap map. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you very much for addressing the Commission. Number six.

>> Good evening. My name is Bill Wright. I was born and raised and still live in the Bay City Area. I've been blessed to do land use transportation, economic development and environmental protection planning for 50 years in Saginaw Bay.

I'm here to reinforce that counties, townships and cities should be treated as communities of interest.

We are here tonight to protect the integrity of our right to vote as referenced in Article one of the Constitution and refines throughout our nation's history, including a creation of this Commission and its effort to protect communities of interest that reflect cultural, historic and economic ties among groups of people.

In the northwest territories, townships were prescribed by the ordinance of 1785, passed by Congress three years before ratification of our Constitution.

The ordinance sets standards for surveying territories. In this part of Michigan, surveying did not begin until the Government urges millions of acres from the Ojibway at the previous Saginaw in 1819. That transaction required a huge cultural change in the native's understanding of the ownership of land.

Now land ownership is the bedrock on which Michigan's economy has been built. Taxes paid by private landowners support the services provided by our local Governments. Today tax rates and quality of services are big factors in our choices about where you will live. Local units of Government are rooted in the history, culture and economy that shapes our lives.

As you create voting districts, respect for County, Township and City boundaries is not just a matter of convenience for clerks. It also shows respect for each citizen's choice of where they live.

In much of Michigan population density and the array of local Governments allow you to use local units as the building blocks to create State and Congressional districts. I implore to avoid dividing any county, city or township with a population smaller than the current target population or a state legislative district of 90,000. This is because I believe that local units of Government are communities of interest. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for your remarks. Number seven.

>> Good evening. My name is Carl Haron. I'm a retired Bay City math teacher. I've lived in Bay County for over 38 years. I'm here to discuss the State and Senate District maps. Our community is Bay County, which is on Saginaw Bay. We are adjacent to both Saginaw and Midland Counties.

I'm asking that when drawing District lines for the State Senate, please put Bay, Saginaw and Midland cities together in the Senate District with as much surrounding county as District tolls allow.

I have submitted written testimony to the portal, which includes a video addressing the impact the Government has recently had on our waterway. I hope you will watch it.

Counties defined in the landmark is the Saginaw River and the Saginaw Bay. Saginaw and Bay City share the impacts and economic influence of the Saginaw Bay and river shipping channels, which are maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

We also share the designation of the Saginaw River Bay Area of concern by the International Joint Commission. As such, we are one of the most polluted places in the Great Lakes.

Thousands of people in the Saginaw Bay watershed are working to protect and restore the health and beauty. The video posted to the portal was submitted with testimony and shows one example of how Government policy and funds can directly improve conditions of a major resource of transportation, recreation, fishing and the economy in the area.

The City of Midland is connected to Bay City by U.S. 10 On Midland Road and to Saginaw by M47, M46, I-75 and I-675. Thousands of commuters use the roads to travel between these three cities for work, shopping, arts and entertainment and healthcare each day. These cities are known as the Tri-Cities. They share a history, development, MBS airport, sports competitions and higher educational institutions. There is enough population that they should be represented in the State Senate. Thank you very much.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for your comments. Number eight.

>> My name is Mary Kurr. And I'm a retired attorney living in Bay County, in Bay City actually. What I would like to address is the community of interest centered around the auto industry. Although you might think that the auto industry is constituted in the Detroit area, it has a very strong presence in Genesee, Saginaw, Midland and Flint Counties.

In fact, General Motors was born in Flint.

Over the years the companies and the auto parts plants, which are so necessary for the auto park, for the auto plants to function, have moved up north to Saginaw. And now the General Motors most northerly plant is located in Bay City.

Basically employees from all four counties, as does the next tier, the former General Motors facility in Saginaw and Dow in Midland is also an important part of the auto industry because it makes homes, sells home, lubricants and many other products used to assemble vehicles. And also makes the components to make paint.

There is no other industry that comes to mind that stays heavily regulated as is the automobile industry from design, mission and safety standards. The Federal Government honors every step of this process, then there are international treaties such as NAFTA and overseas sales.

Because of the complexity of the heavily regulated automobile industry, community of interest should be one Congressional District. There are other things that tie us together. We are one medium in Marquette. We watch the news. In Bay City we watch the news from Flint or from Saginaw. To seek recreation or entertainment or to shop,

we cross county lines. We don't have any committee big box stores in Bay City. So if we want to buy a computer, we would go to Saginaw or to Costco, which is right across the road here in Midland.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for your comments. Your two minutes have elapsed.

I'm going to call numbers 9, 11, 10 and 12. I'm going to ask to make it easier on the staff who are wiping the microphones, if we can have the odd numbers 9-11 over here and then the even numbers go on the right, and 10 and 12 on the right, please. And, number nine, you can begin speaking when you are ready.

>> My name is Frank. And I'm here tonight representing the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

One of the reasons why I wanted to come and spend some time with you folks is a lot of people don't understand we are recognized and in the Eastern Federal Districts and the Federal District in Michigan.

We are a community because we don't have a tax base and have to rely on economic development as sustainable for our communities. And we have interests from southern county all the way down to Genesee County and into Isabella County.

I'm the Board Chair for the Great Lakes Bay Alliance, which is one of our largest market shares. The influence that we have been able to grow through the years is because we are very familiar with those community partners that we have in the Great Lakes Bay Region and in Genesee County. And we would like to see that stand out.

We haven't always had a very healthy relationship with the State of Michigan when it comes to communication and understanding. But the treaty and trust rights of the Federal Government, and that of the State of Michigan is for consultation and going to respect and ask you folks to please consider further consultation to be recognized by the State of Michigan so we can be a part of the decisions that are made, that have an influence and bearing on us. In our language for thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number ten.

>> My name is Walter. I'm a lifetime resident of the City of Midland. And I'm an Army Veteran and I'm 92 years old. I'm a registered voter in the county and I consider voting a privilege and a duty. I trust in your considerations for establishing core districts that you will place in high value and maintaining city, township and county. You will not have a wide variation length and width of districts and that all parts of the districts will be contiguous. I believe that is a requirement any way. Please consider our county as part of the more rural northern communities of the state tied to recreational, agricultural and medical services, which are in contrast to our chemical industries that are worldwide.

To better understand your charter, I would also like your Commission to work for all parties the following statement that is in quotes, quote, acceptable measure of partisan fairness.

Thank you for your service and thank you for your time.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for your comments.

[APPLAUSE]

>> And those who serve on the Commission welcome.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: I'm sorry, could you lean closer to the mic?

>> Thank you. My name is Ann and I live in Lincoln Township, Michigan, which is in Midland County with a standard mailing address.

Tonight I want to address the communities of interest of Midland County, Gladwin County and the surrounding townships within District Four. One year ago these counties had suffered catastrophic, historic flooding that wiped out several businesses, destroyed numerous homes, beyond repair and neighborhoods beyond recognition. Many in our communities lost everything. The evacuation process during this disaster was a combined effort of our county's police, firefighters and EMTs and how hard they worked, making it a priority to ensure the safety of the people evacuated in the area and the transporting of patients from our Mid-Michigan health facilities in Midland to other safe facilities throughout our counties.

Retirement relocation decisions was not easy, was very easy to make for my husband and me. And it was based on amazing people and, of course, the recreational water amenities that they had to offer. The Tittabawasee River being the largest watershed that flows through our counties and provides endless hours of enjoyment. But now priorities have changed since the floods. We are now in recovery and restoration mode. And helping our businesses and citizens rebuild so that they can stay in the counties that they love and have lived in for so long. Therefore, I'm asking the Commission to consider these communities of interest of Midland, Gladwin County to remain intact in their existing District and allowing the communities to continue their recovery together by working with the same local departments that they began with one year ago. We will be strong again working together. Thank you for your time and God bless.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 12.

Do we have number 12? If for some reason I skip your number, you can let us know and we will add you back on later. So let's go now to 13, 14, 15 and 16. And I will ask 13 and 16 to go on my left side. 14 and 16 on my right side. And, 13, once you are up to the mic you are welcome go ahead and begin speaking.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. Thank you so much for your service on this Commission. My name is Angela Maring. I'm the president of the associated builders and contractors, the greater Michigan chapter. I represent an organization that is comprised of more than 20,000 employers and employees.

The communities we serve are Midland, Saginaw, Bay City, Frankenmuth, Greater Lansing, Jackson, Ionia and Ann Arbor. As a community of interest, a majority of our members live and work in the Great Lakes Bay region. Their businesses and livelihoods are built on the business relationships and Government leadership in this region.

I'm here to emphasize that the Great Lakes Bay region is a thriving economic force on its own and that the representation and leadership of our local, state and Federal levels of government are partially responsible for our vision success.

We do not believe that our region and the communities that makeup the Fourth Congressional District should be sliced and diced. You will hear from others testifying, as you already heard, about the flood and how that was devastating to our community.

Our community was self-sufficient and showed current leadership, generosity and team work to rebuild this community. We do not support any efforts to dissect the region our members worked so hard to start rebuilding.

Commissioners, please, we ask that you please respect the opinion of over 20,000 members of the community by respecting and maintaining the current State and Federal District lines of the Great Lakes Bay Region. Thank you for your time and consideration.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 14.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. And thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

My name is [indiscernible]. I live in Ingersoll Township, which is in the southeast corner of Midland County. And I'm a fourth generation of Midland County. Just a little history about Midland County. My great grandfather, Edward Ostrander, moved to Midland in 1870s. And we have chosen to call this place home for a variety of reasons. We are a community of talented people from all walks of life and work together to fuel economic growth and rich cultural opportunities.

Yes, we are home of the fortune 500 company. And the extraordinary history of Dow is another depression. We are a community sustained long ago by the logging industry utilizing our famous river system. We are a community of higher education with our international renown University. We are a community of famous architecture, diverse music and the arts. And we are a community of generosity.

And, finally, Commissioners, it's imperative for Midland to remain a part of the District Four. With myself as a county Commissioner along with the Commissioner who spoke previously, we also have Commissioners who are here, hi, Jeannette, and the rest of the Commissioners held as well as Labyrinth County Commissioners. Our priorities to guide the restoration of Sanford and Wixom Lake may be due to completion, which frankly will take several years.

Midland Counties are currently working as a team towards the initial strategic planning stages of dam financing and reconstruction. With that in mind, we clearly need to stay the current course. Unified on our membership and our local, state and national leadership. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 15.

>> Good evening, Commissioners and audience. I'm not going to speak specifically to any particular Districting. I want to point out to the Commissioners the weaknesses in

the original amendment as passed, that you are going to have to solve, the complex grid.

The first one is about the districts reflecting the communities of interest. Since they are not defined, and to quote Director Hammersmith, communities of interest identify themselves. You will effectively have conflicts and overlaps in these communities of interest. And it will be the Commission's job to create a hierarchy to solve that because within each county there are overlapping communities of interest such as the rural portion, the urban portion, the organized labor, the free labor segment. So I ask you to look carefully, and especially in that if there is no definition, all definitions should be equal in your eyes. And so you will have to make many decisions about that.

Another area lacking definition is that the new districts shall not provide a disproportionate advantage to any political party. And this is said to be solved by using accepted measures of partisan fairness.

There are no accepted measures of partisan fairness. They do not exist under law or statute. They are not defined in the environment. And you must create that definition or disavow that Section of the amendment because it is a myth that there are accepted measures of partisan fairness.

You will further have to look at your Section about adopting the plan, by using these criteria, what if all plans fail? Because some of the criteria including shall not favor or disfavor an incumbent elected official or candidate. In the U.S. Congressional District, we will be losing one District, which will inevitably create possible advantages for a party or incumbent because there will be one less.

So I ask you to look carefully at how you can use all seven of these criteria for redistricting to create districts that will match them. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 16.

>> My name is Mary Ann Tab. I live in Ingersoll Township in Midland County. Our little community is a well-balanced package in this beautiful city. The hospital complex, the great variety of businesses, the farming and recreation. Our community in Midland is a place where family values and faith thrive. It's a wonderful community in which to live, work, raise a family and retire. Midland County is my community of interest. It has functioned very well and we love it and we want to keep it as it is.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. I will now call up numbers 17, 18, 19 and 20. And if 17 and 19 can go on the left side and 18 and 20 go on the right side, I would greatly appreciate it. Go ahead.

>> Thank you, greetings Vice Chair and Commission. My name is Cathleen Meelik and I'm from Garfield Township in Bay County, and have been a Bay County resident, don't tell anyone, 74 years.

What is great about our county in particular or the natural resources, which includes several beaches along with a Bay City State Park and recreational area. Also the public transportation that reaches rural areas where I live is very important to me. I realize I

am one small voice. However, listening to what others share will give you an idea of the importance of the task that has been set before you. Thank you for your diligence and serving pure Michigan. And your willingness to make the mapping of districts simpler than it is now.

When you look at the Michigan House Districts, in particular Bay, Saginaw Counties it looks like a puzzle. It should be more compact and reflect City and Township boundaries.

Simplifying districts is a large task. However, I believe this Commission will be able to accomplish this. I ask you to consider wisely how redistricting will affect my community of Bay County and other rural areas. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 17. I'm sorry, number 18.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. And welcome to Midland. My name is Charles Tab and I live in Ingersoll Township in Midland County. My family has lived in Midland County for over 66 years. We choose to live here for many reasons, but most importantly because of the way our community of values. There are many different people who work together to make our community in Midland thrive.

We have a rich history and people choose to live here because of the culture and shared values that we enjoy. My community of interest is the entire Midland County and our rich history of culture. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 19. Number 19? All right, number 20 we will go to you.

>> Good evening. I want to thank the Commissioners of the MICRC for your difficult and important work on redistricting. As a resident of St. Louis and Northern Gratiot County, I hope they can avoid separating our community from other communities of interest.

The U.S. Census Bureau treats Alma to Mount Pleasant as a compound statistical area where two communities have historically shared, having been home to the ancestors of Saginaw and Chippewa Tribes who we retain rights sufficient for the watershed in the community lines.

The Pine River in Gratiot County sustained terrible environmental issues due to the PBB accident of Michigan Chemical and the current farm runoff. The Pine River in Gratiot and Chippewa in Isabella are one watershed that are 30 miles northeast of both communities. Limited access to 127 highway also ties into communities together easily economically.

Especially for the last decade we had been artificially separated by the State House District with Gratiot County being divided into two districts that the county population with the voters of few shared perspectives. And Isabella County, there are counties of Saginaw, Midland, Bay to our east than the western rural areas which we have been

currently grouped. Therefore, I'm asking that you consider these shared concerns as you are completing your task. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. I'd like to remind everybody that we do have the public comment tool available online and you can go on there as well to share your comments in writing, including specific areas on the map that you are speaking about. The public comment tool is available at www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

I would like to now invite Numbers 21, 22, 23, 24 to address the Commission. And if 21 and 23 can go on the left side, 22 and 24 on the right, I would greatly appreciate it.

And, 21, as soon as you reach the mic, you can go ahead and start speaking.

>> My name is Jake from Ingersoll Township in Midland County. When people think of Midland, they think of Dow Chemical. But you may not know is that Midland Township has more than 500 farms and 88,000 acres. Here the farmers raise predominately cash crops with a few livestock operations involved.

Our farming operation has three generations including myself the youngest, my dad and three uncles and my grandfather. Our farm has significantly benefitted from representation and clearly understands the importance of agricultural here in Midland Counties and Michigan. We have been thanking the leadership as has vested interest of the family farming operations in these communities.

We ask that you keep Midland with us as Central Michigan for this reason. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 22.

>> My name is Amy. And thank you for all your efforts and time tonight. I have lived in Midland County for 50 years. I was born and raised here and I raised my family here. I'd like to ask the Commission to please consider keeping Midland County intact and aligned with the agricultural counties.

We might be neighbors with Saginaw and Mid-City and Gratiot, but they have much different populations, much different tax base and very different other issues such as crime, things like that.

So I guess everybody else wrote really nice comments. And I'm just speaking from my heart. I love Midland County and want it to stay intact. And I'd like it to stay with all the northern counties. Thank you. Thank you, Commission.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 23.

>> Good evening. My name is Amanda. I live in Sanford in Midland County. Last year's devastating dam failures and floods are no better example why Midland County needs to be whole in the redistricting process. When the dams failed and first responders going through our community and telling us that the dams had failed and had to immediately evacuate it devastating to me and my two children.

And 911 and I know this was no easy task for our first responders. Public lines, devastating event like this opened my eyes even more to what first responders do. I

witnessed working together as they are trained to do extensively to ensure not one life was spared, not one.

It took the county with leadership and resources working as one to get the residents their emergency information to stay safe and help in the cleanup process and the effort. As the entire county we were able to access State and Federal dollars and get the resources we needed and needed then.

Midland County is my community of interest in keeping it whole, is in the best interest of this community. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 24.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. And thank you for your service. My name is Dennis. I'm a lifelong resident of Midland and currently reside at 3309 Ford Drive.

I'm requesting that you keep the current fourth Congressional District intact and do not add or delete anything from my District.

I grew up in Midland and chose a career in healthcare. I chose to work at then Midland Hospital because I wanted to serve this community and because this community values its social interest, best lined up with mine. I had an opportunity to go work here. I used to work at large Metropolitan hospitals, but stayed reporting three years here for the same reasons.

Over the years we retained Mid-Michigan health and the name change itself represents the patient population and communities that we serve, which is largely the fourth District. The hospitals in Clare, Gladwin, Alma and West Branch chose to become affiliated with us versus larger Metropolitan systems because, again, we truly have become a healthcare community over the years and best represented their community of interest values.

We were the first healthcare system that the University of Michigan became affiliated with due to our long-term history of fiscal responsibility and the strong community of interest in our healthcare system has developed and maintained with its employees, physicians and Commissions we served in the Fourth District.

This is a perfect example of why our District should remain the same. Any changes would invalidate our community, current community of interest as a whole and change how we are represented.

We are not a large Metropolitan area and do not share their social, economic and political interests. This is why I'm requesting that you keep the Fourth Congressional District intact as it is and do not add or delete any counties.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present here this evening. And thank you for your service.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. I will now call on numbers 25, 26, 27, 28. 25 and 27 can go to the left and 26 and 28 go to the right, I would appreciate it.

25 can start speaking when you are ready.

>> Thank you. Good evening. I'm Diane Middleton. We are a combined development organization and commerce located here in Midland and we represent over 3,000 businesses. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening.

I work at the Advocacy Council and had the opportunity last week to meet virtually with your Vice Chair and get an overview of the Commission and of your work. We appreciate the critical nature of this process for our state and for the individual communities as well.

With that in mind, I'd like to offer our perspective on a community of interest. Many would assume Midland County itself is a community of interest. The dam failure and flood of May 2020 changed that and created a much larger community of interest. Almost exactly one year ago during the midst of a pandemic, two dams were breached causing great destruction throughout Midland County and the surrounding counties as well.

How our communities have come together to assist continues to be inspiring on a daily basis. Seeing cooperation and shared spirited resilience emphasizes a community of interest is Sanford, Coleman, Edenville, Mullet Creek and the City of Midland.

But beyond those areas we have seen collaboration with the community of Gladwin in particular and other adjacent communities as well. We are connected in our challenges, infrastructure, geography. And in that tougher to define way of helping one another in daily, showing what it means to be a true community of interest.

In closing, again, we urge your consideration of the communities of land impacted by the dam failure flooding of May 2020 as a community of interest as you continue your critical work of developing new districts in the State of Michigan. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 26.

>> I live in the City of Midland County. I also own a small business in the City of Midland. When people hear the word small business, they often also think about large corporations, making millions of dollars. But here in Midland County, in Mid-Michigan there are people like me, individuals that work hard, invested their life savings and a handful of people in our community.

Small businesses are the mom and pop shops that makeup our main streets. This is different from a metropolis areas in our state like Saginaw and Detroit. And I encourage this Commission to keep us whole with a District with similar counties.

My community of interest understands and appreciates small business. Thank you for your time and service in this most difficult task.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 27.

>> Good evening. My name is Robin. And I live in St. Louis, Michigan, also known as the middle of the wind.

My community of interest is Gratiot County. I'm sorry, my community of interest is Gratiot County. In the redistricting process, I would ask of the Commissioners to keep our counties whole and not to slice and dice them.

Gratiot County is the kind of place where people go to get away from the city and to raise a family. We are a rural area. Not urban. And we need to stay connected with our rural areas such as Midland, Clare and Gladwin. Rural districts could be at risk of being put in an urban District or urban districts and I'm asking you to prevent this.

The current District lines they make sense. And we need to update them according to the population and keep our naturally drawn county lines. Thank you for your time and patience.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 28.

>> Good evening Commissioners. Thank you for coming to Midland. We really appreciate you coming and listening to everything that we have been saying tonight.

I'm the Midland County Clerk here. And I live in the City of Midland, don't tell anybody, for about 52 years. So I'm here to talk about the elections. As the chief election official here I administer all elections that are Local, Federal, State, County and I take my position very seriously as all of you are doing on this Commission.

And I want to make sure that you know I'm doing it sufficiently, effectively, transparently, and cost effective. When you come into a community and you start doing redistricting and dividing different areas, you have to remember to maintain townships, cities as a whole. And once you start splitting those areas, what you end up doing is making a lot of costs for those communities.

For example, I have a Township that is out towards the Mount Pleasant Area. They have seven different school districts in their area. When they have an election, they have seven different ballot styles. So even though the community only has 900 registered voters, the cost of their election tends to be higher than a community that has 3500 registered voters in it simply because of the programming, the ballot splits, all of those things.

So I would ask you make sure when you look at how to draw the lines you are not dividing things up to make it more cost effective for everyone in the community and keeping Midland County as a whole, it would be wonderful as well. Thank you for your time.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Numbers 29, 30, 31 and 32. And, again, the odd numbers 29 and 31 go on my left and 30 and 32 go on my right, I would really appreciate it. And, number 29, you can start speaking when you approach the mic.

>> Good evening Commissioners. I'm Terry, a lifelong resident of Saginaw, Michigan and President of the Saginaw NAACP. I want to offer some input to the important work this body is undertaking.

In 2018 voters approved the constitutional amendment transferring the power to draw legislative District maps. The NAACP advocated for the passage of proposal two. Thus it is important we continue efforts to ensure the will of voters is adhered to.

By now you understand the distortion of democracy endured due to gerrymandered legislative districts. When decisions were left to elected public office holders, too often basic fairness and equity were factor considerations when those decisions were made. Our faith now rests with this Commission to correct the unfairness forever.

There are two issues I want to highlight going forward. First, there is much angst as to how this body will reconcile the scheduled release date for new legislative maps and release of final census data. This may be a matter for the courts to decide. However, our position is final maps must be constructed with real numbers, not be based on preliminary data already released.

There have always been issues concerning the accuracy of the census, particularly under counts and communities of color. A senseless thing, and this effort is worth doing right.

Next, we know you have listed the criteria to guide your decisions for a new legislative maps. These include such factors as districts having equal population, compliance with the Voting Rights Act, districts need to be geographically meticulous. Of importance to the NAACP is that the final maps account for the distinct diverse population and communities of interest. Simply stated, communities of color and various ethnic backgrounds must have an equal building to elect representatives who understand and reflect their interests.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts. And, again, our faith and hope is that this Commission will fulfill the intent of the voters.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 30, you can speak now.

>> Thank you and good evening. And my name is Bill and I appreciate this opportunity to speak before the Commission.

I believe very strongly that Midland County and the greater Midland Area is a community of interest that should be represented at the Federal and State levels. There are many aspects that tie our community together. What I'd like to highlight for the Commission is how our educational system and schools are an important aspect, that connects the area and forms the fabric of our local society.

Midland County is blessed to have a number of top performing K-12 public school districts, private schools that provide religious, educational opportunities, colleges, universities and vocational training schools. These schools not only prepare the young people in our county for success and teaching and study, but also provide opportunities for social engagement and extracurricular activities.

I attended Midland Public Schools from Kindergarten through high school. The education I received helped prepare me for a career working as an intelligence officer for the Department of Defense.

But being a part of the school district also introduced me to friends and built relationships that I maintain to this day. I rode the bus to school from kids from all

different neighborhoods. I played sports with many classmates from across the county. And I got the chance to volunteer in community projects and school sponsored clubs. By virtue of ties from our county system, I learned what I needed to perform professionally, but I also developed lasting community ties to the journey back home.

I moved back to Midland after working for the Defense Intelligence Agency. One reason I'm so enthusiastic about being back home is because we have a gem in our local county schools. A system like this deserves to be preserved and I think that is happening if we maintain it as a community of interest and our strong representation that we have in our State and Federal Government. Thank you for your time.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 31, you can approach the mic and you can start speaking.

>> Good evening. My name is Chris. I live in the City of Midland. I'm working on my 30th year as a resident in this area and may have been striving to work diligently on our vision of regionalism for over more than a decade.

I'd like to share which counties are already highly connected and working well together. And this defines what I believe to be an important community of interest and publicly helps you as you are drawing these District lines.

Where you currently are is what we refer to as the Great Lakes Bay Region. You've heard it many times tonight. I would be happy to be in the City of Midland, but Bay County reflects how much we overlap.

What counties makeup this region? I'll tell you. According to our Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance it's an eight-county region in Central Michigan. Those counties include Saranac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland, and Saginaw. These counties share similar demographics, economic interests and people live in this region for a shared quality of life. We share types of the work, sports teams, shopping, healthcare, art venues, and many great outdoor activities even connected by trails.

The alliance may say it best in its mission, we work together to encourage support and celebrate regional collaboration and initiatives through the economic vitality and quality of life in the Great Lakes Bay region. It came together voluntarily.

The organizations in this region are Saranac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland and Saginaw already identify and work together as one. The Great Lakes Bay Region is my community of interest and you would be serving residents well by keeping this region together when you revise the District maps. Thank you for the time to speak.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 32.

>> Good evening. My name is Kathy and I live in Midland County. And I want to thank you for serving on the Commission and the opportunity to provide.

I'm here tonight to talk about an issue that has been important to me, and it's rural broadband. I believe it is a community of interest for you to consider when updating the District maps. Here in Midland County we still have spots, driving west down M20, for an example, where Internet service just completely disappears. Or you go north and

are in a complete dead zone. This issue connects Midland with our rural communities to the west and north who also have limited access.

We all know how important it is to have Internet access in our global economy. I can give you a multitude of examples of why Internet access is so important. Our businesses need it to be able to compete. Our farmers utilize the Internet to manage their crops. Our students need the Internet to further their education. Our seniors benefit greatly from telemedicine to get care.

However, unlike the Metropolitan areas of the state and the bigger cities of Grand Rapids, Lansing, Saginaw and Flint, our residents do not have the same access. I believe Midland County should be put together with the other rural counties in Mid and Northern Michigan. Working together our voices will not be lost to the densely populated areas that do not have the same needs.

I'd ask for you to keep Midland County whole and included in a District with our rural, neighboring counties who have only understand our need for rural broadband but are already working together with us to address this issue. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. I would now like to call numbers 33, 34, 35, 36.

>> COMMISSIONER EID: I say we recess until 7:40.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: You can go ahead and do that. Do we get a motion by Mr. Eid to recess until 7:40, seconded by Commissioner Clark. All in favor please raise your hand to indicate and our remote Commission.

All opposed same sign? Okay, the motion carries. We will be in recess until 7:40. Thank you very much. [Recess at 7:27]

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: I'm sorry, can I talk for one second? We need to take a roll to start. So if you can pause for one second, I apologize. And I'm going to ask the Department of State again to take a roll of Commissioners present and also look at the time that we are starting at 7:44 for the record.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Thank you, Commissioners. Commissioners, please say present when I call your name. If you are attending the meeting remotely, please announce during roll call you are attending the meeting remotely. And unless your absence is due to military duty, announce your physical location by stating the County, City, Township or Village and the state from which you are attending the meeting remotely. I will start with Douglas Clark.

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Juanita Curry?

>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Anthony Eid?

>> COMMISSIONER EID: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Brittini Kellom? Rhonda Lange?

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

- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Steve Lett?
- >> COMMISSIONER LETT: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Cynthia Orton.
- >> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rebecca Szetela?
- >> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Janis Vallette?
- >> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Present.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Erin Wagner?
- >> COMMISSIONER WAGNER: Present; attending from Charlotte, Michigan.
- >> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: 12 Commissioners are present and there is a quorum.
- >> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you very much.

With no objection, we will now resume the public comment portion of our meeting. Hearing no objections, we will now resume public comment. And, number 33, you can now go ahead. Thank you very much.

>> Thank you very much to the Commission for your difficult and important work. I'm Fred Thomas. I'm somewhat different from the other people that are not a long time resident. My wife and I chose to move to this area 2.5 years ago and chose to live in Freeland, which is in Saginaw County but almost equal distance from Midland, Bay City and Saginaw. And we like that because we feel we need to draw all three of those communities to get what we want.

I also want to point out that I feel very good that when the people in this area have had a need to work together, they have generally done so and the community of the three communities. For example, setting up the MDS airport, integrating the three-county District. We've heard some about the flood issues in Midland, and sometimes people seem to forget the flood waters continued on down the tip of Owosso, flooding areas in Freeland and carrying other materials and creating other damage in terms of the pollution. And also issues of the recreation so that the Tittabawasee and Saginaw River system really does tie the three counties together in very important ways.

As one or two other people have mentioned, the Federal Office of Management and Budget recognizes that Saginaw, Midland and Bay Counties are a combined statistical area, which is the three counties in a very high degree of social and economic integration. And my hope that the Commission will recognize that this is a community that needs to be held together.

One of the big disappointments when we moved here was the realizing that there is a very jagged line which carves out different parts of the area around us and to me formed one of the worst examples I have ever seen. So thank you to the Commission for moving us over to a nonpartisan process.

>> Thank you very much for your comments. Number 34.

>> Good evening. My name is Jen Bishop. I'm a resident of both the City of Midland and Midland Counties. I'm also a local business owner for over 20 years.

I'm encouraging the Commissioner to keep our county intact during the redistricting process. I was born and raised in Midland and chose to move back here when my children started school due to the wonderful education I received and the small town values.

Midland is a blend of many amenities, yet we have also preserved small town delays and a small town view. I believe it's essential to keep Midland and neighboring counties together in order to maintain that small town feel, which is very different from the needs of larger urban areas.

Thank you for your consideration.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for your comments. Number 35.

>> Good evening. My name is Nicholas Cole and I live in Midland and I have lived here almost my entire life. And I work here and I'm raising my family here. And I'm proud to be a member of this community. Thank you to the Commission for having me.

So my community of interest is bigger than just Midland. It is the Tri-Cities, as identified, Saginaw and Midland and Bay City. We are a collection of cities that have outlined small towns and smaller areas and communities around us that identifies as a part of this and have distinct differences and concerns as well.

We have a lot in common with shared history overlapping in education, entertainment industry, transportation and even pollution concerns as highlighted this evening. But despite all of these things we have in common, I want the Commission to take into consideration different needs of urban versus rural communities as these lines are drawn since these districts are of different sizes.

The small communities like the outlined towns of the Tri-Cities as well as the larger community of Tri-Cities could be marginalized by including larger population centers outside of our area or by splitting up the existing areas into existing communities we have. It is the Tri-Cities and it's what I call home. Thank you for listening.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 36.

>> Hello. I'm Mary Murphy. And I still want to urge you to keep the lines the same and hoping the change will not cause a lot of frustration going onward, so thank you for coming.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. I will call up numbers 37, 38, 39 and 40. If 37 and 39 go to my left and 38 and 40 go to my right, I would greatly appreciate it. And, 37, you can begin speaking as soon as you are up.

>> Good evening. My name is Diane. I live in the City of Midland. It's my understanding this Commission is interested in drawing lines with all communities of interest. If that's the case, then I can't think of a better example than the current Fourth Congressional District.

There are 15 counties that makeup the Fourth Congressional District and many things of interest. Agricultural. Many counties in the fourth are farming communities. Small business. Most of the businesses in the District are small businesses. Many of them that are here to support larger businesses. Healthcare and Michigan Medical Center has hospitals in Midland, Clare, Gladwin, Alma, and West Branch.

In addition, the Medical Center has helped parks in Freeland, Gladwin Harrison, Houghton Lake and West Branch as well as urgent care facilities in most of these locations.

Schools. The District has schools that are run very successfully by their local school boards. The District has fire and police departments that are supported by the residents, fully trained and ready and able to respond to community emergencies like the devastating floods of a year ago.

Frankly, many of us no longer watch what are supposed to be the local TV stations; instead choosing to watch TV9 and 10 as they cover our communities of interest instead of the crime in the larger urban cities.

If you are really interested in communities of interest, I ask you to look no further than what we already have in this community, the current Fourth Congressional District. It isn't broke. Don't fix it. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 38.

>> Good evening. I'm from Larkin Township. So Larkin Township was started by the John Larkin back in the mid-1800s. And John Larkin is also known as the father of the rest of Midland Township, and that most of the rest of the county kind of came after that.

And so we have a history that we are very proud of here in Midland County. And it unifies us together as neighbors. And many people have mentioned the Sanford flooding or really the flooding of the rest of the county as well.

People came from all over our districts and, you know, even people not affected by the flood, they came in. It was neighbors helping neighbor. We are all connected by right in our community, pride in our history, and that really makes us a community of interest.

We don't have many of those connections with other urban communities such as Bay and Saginaw Counties. And, in fact, we have more connections with rural counties despite the fact that many people put the city of Midland as an urban area. It has a very rural layout to it. We like our wide open spaces. We like our small businesses, and we like to know each other. I look around the room and I know probably about 30% of the people here. They are my neighbors and we are connected. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 39.

>> Good evening. First of all, I want to thank the Commission for taking time to listen to the public comments this evening. My name is Angie Miller. I live in Bridgeport and I'm a lifelong resident of Saginaw County.

Saginaw County is easy to get to since we are right down the I-75 corridor. When you review the data as it pertains to the Congressional and State Senate, I'd like you to consider keeping Saginaw and Genesee County working together.

We have several things that are very similar. When we are viewing the ALICE population, for those who were previously called the working poor, 26% of Saginaw County, even 25% of Genesee County residents are a part of that population.

We are looking at top employers. Saginaw County has next tier in health and healthcare. Genesee County has General Motors and Genesis Regional Medical Center.

When reviewing for diversity, you will see Saginaw County is approximately 69% white, 18% Black and 9% Hispanic. And we have Genesee County, which is approximately 72% white, 20% Black and 3% Hispanic. It's important that we not disenfranchise our minority community.

We also are with Genesee County, but we do not have with the other counties that touch our borders. And the diversity and other counties does not come close to what Saginaw and Genesee County has. I appreciate your time and consideration. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 40.

>> Good evening. I want to thank the Commissioners for their time this evening. I live in Edenville Township, which is located in Sanford and Midland County.

First, I wouldn't want to be in your position.

Secondly, I'm here tonight to share with you my community of interest in regard to the topic at hand. It is the Tittabawasee river shed which mainly includes Gladwin and Midland Counties. Midland is in the valley and I think what everyone has learned in the past years that we cannot move the way the water flows from Gladwin to Midland County. We are naturally and geographically very directly connected to each other.

Our two county mission of Michigan working together to form the task force in an effort to manage the watershed including the Tittabawasee River. And since the flood and devastating effects of the dam failures on May 19, 2020, this entity is now working on our recovery and they are still doing a tremendous job. I would not want to be in their shoes either.

The dam fillers last year effected the livelihood of so many it's truly incomprehensible. The Curtis Road Bridge is less than two miles from my home. I took my daughter and her friend to go see the aftermath once it was safe for us to return home.

I will never forget that day as many who were there viewing all the damage, destruction and devastation, there was an eerie silence. However, the strength and stamina of these communities have been nothing short of astounding. It was a time to man together and go to those in need.

There are or were no county lines as far as we were concerned. We have been there for one another and formed a type of bond to help get through this difficult time, which,

by the way, many are still suffering. And I personally want more than ever to keep the counties together especially in the healing recovery and rebuilding process of our communities. Together we are stronger.

I like spending time in Midland Township, like I stated, and I believe our issues should remain to be managed here in the most efficient and effective as possible. And keeping Midland County whole and connected makes the most sense because of being naturally and directly connected to one another. Thank you for your time.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. And I would like to call numbers 41, 42, 43 and 44. And if the odd one on my left and 41 you can begin speaking as soon as you reach the mic.

>> Good evening. Thank you for your service. My name is Tina and I live in Midland. My community of interest is small business.

I'm one of the more of 10,500 small business owners here in the Fourth District. My interest is to have representation that understands the importance of low taxes and reduced Government regulations so that businesses like mine can thrive and stay in business and provide jobs.

My current representation does an excellent job for us. I would encourage the Commission to update and not recreate the districts when drawing maps. Keep Midland County together and in representation with someone that lives with us and resides with us. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 42.

>> My name is Julie Atkinson and I've lived in Midland County for a combined total of 43 years. And it's easy to see that there is a lot of decisiveness in the world today. And I'm here to share ways that we might be able to increase cohesiveness instead of causing divisions or instead of causing divisions while you deal with the task at hand.

About 18 years ago, I wanted to help my community, so I served a term as a Township supervisor. Midland County has 16 townships. These townships are overwhelmingly rural in site and circumstance.

In Homer Township where I live and serve, something naturally divided us, the large busy roadway of M20 completely dissects our Township. As a supervisor I had to work very hard to help the north half and the south half of our Township feel united in spirit and in purpose by fostering projects and causes to unite us.

Gladwin, Isabella Clare, all feel more like Midland County than the more populated urban counties to our southeast. We love the outdoors. We live and enjoy recreation in the beautiful countryside that surrounds us. Farming, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, we value these things. We naturally feel connected to the rural counties on our western and northern boundaries who also cherish these things.

Trying to divide communities of like-minded people weaken some. I hope you do not divide Midland County. And I hope that you will not bundle our rural community with our

small town valleys into other highly populated counties who do not understand or share what is important to us.

Midland County naturally connects to other rural counties. Help us protect our outdoor roots. Don't create divisions where none should exist. My experiences in trying to bring a Township together help me to know that we should be working together to preserve connections. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 43.

>> Hello. Welcome to Midland. Hi. My name is Joel Chrisman. I'm a resident for 31 years and raised my three children here. And I'm a retired veterinarian and I retired in 2017 to help voters, not politicians create this very Commission. It's nice to see you in person. Thank you so much for doing this really important work.

Michiganders all look forward to having fair districts that make the geographic common sense and are drawn without intention of political gain. My ask is that my community of interest, Midland County, be kept whole in the 98th House District.

In the past reapportionments to the 98th has been drawn to exclude our surrounding townships. These have been included with Isabella in the 99th. But these people that live in these townships shop and send their kids to school here in Midland County.

Instead, the 98th has been about a third of Midland County including the city of Midland with the northern half of Bay County tacked on. These Bay County folks live, shop and send their kids to school in Bay City.

Either way these lines drawn in 2011 were based on the population of the 98th as determined in the 2010 census of 85899, which is really close to the same population as Midland County in that same census, which was 82,629.

Dividing counties unnecessarily dilutes our voice and our vote. It squanders our resources. It distorts policies and outcomes. It is gerrymandering.

I would suggest that perhaps our townships in the flood zone might have had more influence to address the dam issues before the flood happened if their representative was more in touch with their issues geographically.

It's time to draw other maps. My ask is to keep Midland County intact in the 98th District and draw a compact Senate and Congressional districts. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 44.

>> Good evening. My name is Julie Carrie. I live here in Midland. In the current Congressional District, almost 95% of jobs are created by small business owners. These are the mom and pop shops that employ our people in the main streets of Midland and the surrounding areas.

Living in Midland for almost 40 years with a history of several small family owned business in Midland and Clare, we, the small business owners, are a community of interest. I concur with what many other small owners had to say tonight.

Reviewing today's current maps it makes sense to keep Midland County with the counties of Mid and Northern Michigan because we share the same interests. Recognize that small business owners provide the jobs for our rural communities. I would ask the Commission when updating the districts that you keep Midland County whole and the counties that we share with similar interests.

It also makes sense to me to limit the number of breaks in municipalities. Just like a business doesn't want to break a supply chain, I think the same can be said for drawing District lines. Splitting up counties and Township lines will only add to delays and confusion for our residents, delays in getting the resources they need and delays in trying to vote. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to be heard this evening. Appreciate it.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. I would like to call numbers 45, 46, 47 and 48. And, again, odd numbers on the left, and 45 and 47 and even numbers on the right. And, number 45, as soon as you reach the microphone, you're welcome to start speaking.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. I'm glad you are here in Midland. It's an active part of the Commission and I'm very excited.

My name is Kathy and I live in the south end of Midland County, southeast area of Midland County. Someone else was speaking to that area. We are not in the 98th District. And my request is that you would consider having all of Midland County in one House District. I think that would be a great benefit to all the residents and the businesses. My neighbors and I can be better served by a representative who is more familiar with our area, our needs and our concerns.

Also, we would be more of a part of the community of the decisions that affect the businesses and the services that we support. It's critical that our District lines will be drawn in a fair -- as fair a manner as possible. Everyone's voice needs to be heard and prioritize getting to know the needs and concerns of all their constituents. By drawing District lines that are compact, all the citizens would have a greater ease of accessibility to the legislatures and this would enable the legislator to better represent the needs of our community. And legislators need to and will be able to listen and represent all of us.

I want to thank you for gathering comments all over the state. It's so important for us and for making all of your work available for us to look at and to learn from. And I'm really looking forward to seeing the maps of our new District lines. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 46.

>> Good evening and welcome to Midland. My name is Joe Sova and I'm the Midland County Drain Commissioner that spent the larger part of 20 years dealing with the city, building drains and over the entire county.

There is nothing that brings people and communities and regions together more than having to help neighbors pick up the pieces after a major flooding event. Can you imagine how that brings people in communication communities together? How it has

bonded us? And the folks that live in the Tittabawasee watershed community of interest have done four times in seven years.

Those four flooding disasters are among the top eight flooding disasters in the recorded history of the area, going back to 1916 or over 100 years.

That is neighbor helping neighbor. And to a great extent has been a strengthening agent for our communities in the watershed.

I am not in shy saying that there is no community of interest in the great State of Michigan that has gone through as many repeated disasters, coming out each with a greater sense of community. It really is unparalleled.

The only thing worse than another disaster for our communities in the Tittabawasee watershed would be to have them torn apart, dividing us with new political lines. The Tittabawasee watershed community of interest is made up of resilient and deliberate people, to many of the experiences we have shared and the future we envision together.

Please consider these unique bonds we share in the Tittabawasee watershed and keep us together so that we can continue to rebuild our neighbors with our neighbors by our side. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 47. Do we have number 47? Okay, moving on to number 48.

>> Good evening. My name is Steve and I live in Vineyard Township in Gratiot County. I'm a retiree as Joe and chose Central Michigan to be my home. I've worked and lived in several states throughout my career in the automotive industry. And I'm here to say in Michigan I believe it's the best place in the USA to live.

You that serve on this community have an opportunity to show the country and the world in Michigan we are able to work together for the common good of all the residents of our state. We are meeting here tonight to give you our input on the redistricting process you are charged with completing.

As I was thinking about how to use my two minutes, to come up here and speak to you, I was thinking of all the different things that people have already talked to you about that are communities of interest, and they are all very important. But I chose to make a different approach to this and appeal to you in a different manner. Something that we all share. We are all human beings. We all have the same air to breathe and water to drink. You the committee share this with us.

So considering the task of you I want to ask you to use all the tools you have available to you to make the best decisions you can, to respect one another as members of this Council and to consider each one's suggestion. Understand the significance of the difference between the urban and the rural areas and the lifestyles that makeup this state. The most importantly use equality and fairness to base your decisions. Not outside noise or the voices attempting to influence you.

And, finally, but most importantly we pray about your decisions. I will end with this: You the committee have the opportunity to show the people of Michigan to do the best for them and not for politicians is still possible. I ask that God grant you members the wisdom to make the correct decisions, the strength to endure the process, the power to withstand all the voices of attempted to back your decisions in the name of Jesus. Amen, and thank you very much.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. If we can have 49, 50, 51 and 52 approach. And, number 49, you are welcome to begin speaking as soon as you reach the microphone.

>> Hi there. I'm Jennifer Austin. I have lived almost my entire life in Midland County, Sanford, Hope and now the City of Midland. I'm a wife, mother, writer. And I'm also the Chairperson of the Miller County Democratic Party.

Michigan has experienced three decades of gerrymandering. In 2018 there was majority of votes for the democratic house and Senate candidates, yet the republicans won the house and Senate easily. And that has happened five out of ten times in this century. Many testimonies say they want to keep the lines the way they are, but this is evidence that shows we cannot do that.

On minority rule of majority is not representing democracy. That is why this Commission was voted on by 61% of Michigan's voters. I have full confidence this Commission will follow the rules that are outlined in our State Constitution with fair districts such as the Voting Rights Act. The districts should have equal populations and should be geographically contiguous. Communities of interest to share cultural, historical, education or economic interest. As many speakers have talked about, the Midland, Saginaw and Bay Counties, the Tri-Cities, that it's been that way my entire life. We have always called them the Tri-Cities. We have always been a group. And that also includes the watershed area. And I would point out some of the, you know, people talking about the flooding.

I moved back here just in time for two major floods to affect us. And I had people from Midland, Bay, Saginaw, Freeland all in our house volunteering to help us because we are a community.

And I also believe you will honor that no undue advantage will be given to a political party. And that you will respect County, City, and Township boundaries as much as possible as a couple people have mentioned.

Midland County is currently our State House District, has been split in two. We have 98 and the 99th. And I think it would be important for us to be part of one State House District. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 50.

>> Good evening. Thank you very much for the opportunity to address you. You do important work. Thank you for your service. And you are also showing a lot of stamina

tonight because I can imagine trying to remember everything that is being said. I hear that.

My name is Dr. Kathy and I live in Midland, Mount Pleasant University. And I ask that you consider educational catchment in your redistricting efforts for the State House District Number 99.

Mount Pleasant and the fellow county is a town of about 26,000 without the students, surrounded by small rural communities, right in the center of the state. We combine the best of small town life and University amenities.

In our immediate area we have Central Michigan University, the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College, Mid-Michigan Community College and Alma College. We provide a wide range of higher educational opportunities to local residents as well as students all over the region and the state.

The Mount Pleasant Public School District has a wide catchment area including students as far away as Rose Bush, Lake Isabella and Shepard. You can help us keep our educational community intact by redrawing the 99th District to include these areas.

We provide preprofessional studies in healthcare and a medical school. We offer resources in stem fields, language, the arts, history and ecology. Combining these communities into the 99th District will also streamline and simplify economic development, including public-private partnerships like CMU Research Corporation. Opportunity for lifelong learning and still retooling to support employment means for both for workers and businesses. Higher education and institutions are a powerful economic in the state and having a strong voice in Lansing to advocate for all of us, would benefit us and the region as a whole.

I submit a plan number 21434 for your consideration through the portal. Thank you very much for your time.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 51.

>> I'm Laura Gray and thank you so much for the opportunity to speak tonight. I live in Larkin Township and it's north of the City of Midland. I moved out of state seven years ago and came from a very populated urban area. And we chose to stay here because we have come to appreciate small town values of our community. Midland pulls in people from all over the world, gives them a large company that is headquartered here and it also pulls in people from the small surrounding rural areas who come to shop and work here.

Many people like me have chosen to stay here because we feel this community, this Fourth District, represents our values of faith, importance of education, wide open spaces and small town camaraderie.

I would argue that the three cities that make it the Tri-City area are three very distinct communities with very different issues. So I would request my area, Midland, and the Township remain in the District. It shares a small town and rural values. Thank you very much.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 52. Do we have number 52? All right. I will then call numbers 53, 54, 55, 56 up to speak to the Commission.

53, you can begin as soon as you reach the microphone.

>> Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak with you on this very important issue. My name is Karen Carrie. I live in Eatonville Township in Midland County. I was born and raised in Gladwin County and have been a resident of Midland County for 40 plus years and a proud treasurer for 12 years.

This is mine and my family's home. Our community. There is nothing better than to have a sense of unity and belonging, and that is what we've had while living in Midland County. I ask that we stay as we are. After all we have been through, the past year, it is the last thing we need is for Midland County to be separated from the very people that has brought us through these trials. Please keep us as we are today. Thank you very much for your service.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 54.

>> Good evening. Thank you for staying late and being here. And we already heard some wonderful comments and listening to our billing county residents. My name is Jan Snyder and I might as well tell you I'm a Midland County Commissioner for District One and includes four Townships, a village and a city. So like Julie said, we have 16 townships and we also have a village and two cities.

My townships are Juno, Jerome, Geneva and Warren. And the village of Anther and the City of Coleman. I live in Edenville Township. I work in Sanford and Coleman.

As you know, we've had much happen to our little community lately with COVID and then the flood. Our lake system that we are restoring spans across two counties, Gladwin and Midland, and Alma townships. So you can tell our area is very rural.

I'm not sure it makes sense right now with everything our community is dealing with to make major Districting changes. And I spoke to the clerk and she wholeheartedly agrees with me. She could not be in attendance this evening and asked me to speak on her behalf as well.

I believe when redistricting was brought up and put on the ballot these extreme challenges had not hit our community yet. Now they have and we are in full-fledged restoration mode for our community.

I believe we need to keep Midland County intact as much as possible and disrupt it as little as possible as we already have been dubbed a hand of disruption and this would only add a needed stress.

Rural areas like Gladwin are tied in with Midland County currently and we need each other. I fear that they may be forgotten if they are disconnected from us and if we are included within an area like Genesee.

Genesee and Flint and Saginaw, you've heard many times tonight, those are big, urban places. And so they will be okay.

And we've developed relationships with them. As everybody knows this is the Tri-Cities. We don't mean to be grouped in with them.

So I just want to say again I appreciate you taking the time to listen. I'm sorry I went long. My name is Jeannette Snyder. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 55. Do we have number 55? Okay, moving on to number 56.

>> Hello, my name is Steve Stakema. I'm retired and live in Midland City. I moved here 47 years ago to work for a large company. What attracted me to the Midland County is its rural nature. I grew up in Southern Michigan in a very farming-type community and I really enjoy the wide open spaces that we have here in Midland and further north. And I would encourage you to keep Midland County as part of its relationship with the more rural farmer communities to the north of us, and leave the north District as it is. Thank you very much.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. I would like to call numbers 57, 58, 59 and 60. And I'd also like to take this moment, you can also go to public comment tool online and you can put in comments in writing that you have. And the address for that tool is www.Michigan.gov/MICRC. Number 57, you can go ahead.

>> Hi. I didn't write everything down either, so bear with me. And thank you for taking on this monumental task. I think you are crazy, but really appreciate it very much.

My name is Chris and I'm from Gladwin. I was born at Midland hospital when we lived in Auburn. We moved from Auburn when I was 11. Before that, before we moved north, I was thinking about how the traffic ran. And the traffic ran from Auburn through Midland up the old U.S. 10 and all the way going up north, to stop in Gladwin and those areas.

Midland to me has always been a part of Gladwin and vice versa. And if you ask where the largest business was when I was growing up in Gladwin it was Dow. Dow is not located in Gladwin, but it is part of our community because of the jobs.

At that time farming was going on the wane, so most of the people had their own family farms and they drove down to Midland to go to work to go to Dow.

A few mixtures of this for me is not just a similarity of all of us. In my mind those people get off of work and in the cities, they go home and they do their chores and watch TV and, you know, get ready for the next day. The minute a person gets off work who is in the country, including Midland, they want to make sure that they can go swimming, snowmobiling, anything outside, that is part of being rural. So that is a commonality between Midland County, Gladwin County, Clare and that District.

But the advantage of Midland for us and who they would vote for to represent us is that Midland has people from all over the world. And we are influenced by that and very, very gratefully. So don't tip us over by having all the cities together and all the rural counties together.

Thank you very much.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 58.

>> Hi. Hi. Name is Brenda and I live at 2424 Mockingbird Lane in Midland. And I want to welcome the Commissioners to Midland. Thank you so much for coming.

I am the former schoolteacher and I'm here to tell -- ask you please keep Midland County whole and keep the districts compact when drawing the maps.

As a teacher, of course, I read through all the criteria you need to consider when drawing these new District lines. After reading it, a thought occurred to me, you know, I was a science teacher and I always made things simple because science can be difficult.

I taught English as a second language to adults and they are scared. It's scary, got to keep things simple. So I'm asking you and giving you some advice. Please keep things simple. We have natural boundaries that are already within our townships, cities and county lines.

Your own Commission is tasked with creating districts that take this into consideration. You already have a lot on your plate. You don't need to recreate the wheel. So keep it simple.

I would encourage the Commission to respect the natural boundaries we have with our Township, City and County lines. Try to create the least number of county bricks, if possible.

And speaking on behalf of my community of interest, I would be remiss if I didn't advocate to keep my home county of Midland whole and the districts compact. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 59.

>> Good evening. My name is [indiscernible]. And I live in Midland County and Larkin Township. I appreciate given the opportunity to address you.

Having lived here the past 16 years, I raised my family here in Midland where we enjoy much of what Mid-Michigan has to offer. And one of the main reasons we continue to live here is for our love of the outdoor recreational access that we have. And that's what makes this area unique from the larger cities in the state. And we are blessed with this abundance of nature and space.

And, you know, one example of that, there were many mentioned this evening, but one example of this that wasn't mentioned was that, you know, this is the home of the Pier Marquette rail tram. For those who are unfamiliar with it, it's a trail which it's about 30 miles of old rail that has been converted. And it really goes from Midland County up to Clare County. And this has been a thorough way for folks to travel on from a recreational standpoint. And you know it's recognized as one of the 25 Rails to Trails Conservancy of the Paul trails in the United States. And Midland and Clare county are connected with that and its residents.

And we share the same interests in those two counties. And as was shared, as my own as well, and, therefore, my community of interest, I ask that you please leave the Fourth Congressional District untouched and keep our current rural community intact. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 60. Do we have Number 60? We will move on number 61, 62, 63 and 64. Please approach the microphone. And 61 and 63 on the left and 62 and 64 on the right.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. My name is Alex and I live in Bay City. And I would like to start with a note that we can fix many problems if we just look a little bit outside of the realm of normalcy.

Currently the Michigan 98th District splits two counties and the U.S. Fourth District specifically gerrymanders Frankenmuth out of Saginaw County instead of putting it into a county by the Bay which is three points less republican in the 2020 election than Tuscola and Lapeer in the same Senate District, making any form of fair play for Bay County compared to, you know, the other counties impossible.

I would like to note the communities of interest, small business owners and small businesses have a community of interest. Large corporate lobbying that have come to the mic tonight do not qualify in my opinion.

Also, in terms of partisan fairness, I already gave an example; but it was said that there is no such thing. But if you have two counties or two Townships that are relatively close to the same building level, then there is no reason those two communities can't be put together, whereas, currently, many communities are split because of that. Where one town or one county that is an outlier is put into a different crack or path depending on how the situation is for the party to make it more generous for the party that made the decisions previously.

I attended your meetings and sent follow-up e-mails for the record. And I appreciate the work you are doing. But I also want to keep in mind that this body should be working with the science and the data that is being put forward by the Census Bureau once it's finally done. And as a secular nation, you can work together to ease our current logic and wisdom rather than looking for something that may not be there to help us. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 62. Do we have number 62? We will move on to number 63.

>> Hello. I live in Midland Township in Isabella County and I work in Mount Pleasant. Mount Pleasant to Isabella County to the west of Midland near the center of the work. My concern is the interest of Isabella are met by the Commission. Isabella has been tied into Midland and the State House for close to 20 years now. There are more political that fails to represent the communities of interest.

Much of Isabella surfaces and interests are in Central Michigan area. Within Isabella, for example, is Central Michigan University. And Isabella it groups many of our school

districts with our neighbors to the south in Gratiot Township. And the Central Michigan health department is in Isabella and many of our counties to the north.

Isabella is a challenging county in placing us in legislative districts and makes us makes it far more important to ensure effective representation. And I ask the Commission to recognize the needs and best way to represent needs and interests in Central Michigan. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 64.

>> Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. My name is Sarah and I've lived in Midland for most of the past 22 years and moving in and out of the community. I currently live in Larkin Township, just north of the Midland City limit.

There is something very special about Midland. It's a mid-sized city, but it's a very small town feel. In all my travels and experiences living in our communities, I've never found nicer or more welcoming people. I wanted to share this with you to enforce what makes Midland fit so well with the current District Four neighbors.

We are a strong and determined Christian family- oriented community that strongly cares about one another. This was even though the dam failed. Our summer cottage on Sanford Lake is completely destroyed. And the outpouring support from neighbors, friends, and strangers alike was truly remarkable and left me in grateful awe.

Many days during the cleanup effort we had more help than we could use. It was never more evident how much the rivers and lakes of this District are intertwined as we share the same issues and concerns especially when things go wrong. The rebuilding efforts will take years and the impacts to our communities will be long lasting.

I appreciate your consideration of these factors when you go forward making your District considerations. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. I would like to now call numbers 65, 66, 67 and 68.

Do we have a number 65.

>> Yes.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: 65, can you come over to the left side number 65? Thank you.

>> You said left but that is not my left. Go to stage left.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: 65 is walking over to the mic right now.

>> My name is James Gallant and my community of interest is the entire State of Michigan. And I'm concerned about the decision making processes, bylaws and rules of procedure. And I am hereby requesting a second public comment after all others have had the opportunity as allowed in the Rules of Procedure.

In my personal opinion, based on the facts, you currently approved Rules of Procedure and willfully gerrymandered to unfairly benefit those on the political left as evidenced by the approved recommendations of a closed session ad hoc committee including University of Michigan, Michigan State University and the principal

gerrymandering project as presented to use a Robert's Rules of Order cheat sheet for non-profits for use at the business meetings of this Commission. The study of the text included in the published Robert's Rules of Order book 2020 approved by the Secretary of State. Please consider scheduling a special meeting and public hearing to codify the precedence for the approved Rules of Procedure to correct the systemic defects created so far to ensure fidelity to the approved gerrymandering and the Constitution of the state.

The precedence with the constitutional rules established by the Secretary of State Benson and in the meeting of September 17, 2020, must be followed to provide due process and equal protection under the law. And Secretary of State Benson is supposed to be here. And she is required to be the secretary of every meeting of this Commission. And she's not here. She should be electing a secretary pro tem for one of your members.

Instead of following the precedence, they had a straw poll on September 8, 2020, immediately before the elected Chair. Page 24429, Line 15-28 states: Straw poll not in order because it neither adopts or rejects the language and is meaningless to go to the community as a whole or quasi community of the whole. And also encourage the members that improperly motioned it to table, the motion to reconsider to correct the public record.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Your allotted two minutes has ended to the Commission.

>> Thank you very much.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 66 please go ahead.

>> I'm an independent, democracy is the rule of majority. Because of gerrymandering, the Michigan legislature is republican because the Government position is not subject to gerrymandering and it's democratic. This is not because of democracy but of corruption.

The ordinary people have spoken. In order to correct this situation, districts should represent people, not politicians. Do not disappoint the ordinary people who elected you. Integrity is needed.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 67.

>> I live in Isabella County. And thank you for doing this. It's definitely needed. We do have some gerrymandering going on in Michigan. And Proposal 2 passed and apparently most of Michigan people believe there is some gerrymandering going on.

I live in the 99th District. The 99th District includes all of Isabella County and a few northern counties in Midland and a few southern counties, so it makes a C-shape. That is not right.

If you look at the Congressional districts, you will see that Congressional District Number Eight is almost a circle around traditional District Number 15. That is also not

correct. So I'd like to say thank you for doing this. Thank you for taking the time and please be fair to both parties. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 68.

>> Good evening. My name is Kelly and I'm a resident of the City of Midland and I work for a nonprofit right downtown. I'm speaking to you this evening because I believe that it is imperative to keep Midland County intact.

Unlike many who have spoken this evening, I have not lived here my entire life in Midland. Where I grew up in the suburbs of Oakland County, I can travel between six different Congressional districts just by driving 20 minutes from my childhood home.

Living in the 8th District but being right on the border with the 11th, I remember how badly it was to be in the same District as Lansing. But we are in the same District as my neighbors in the next Township over.

When I moved to Midland four years ago, I was amazed how different it was from the busy suburban environment where I had come from. And we need to consider Midland part of Michigan's up north. While it's debatable for up north, I can attest that the community cultures and values of Midland County more closely resembles my travel and interfaces of Clare, Roscommon and other up north destinations.

As someone who has experienced the frustrations of living in the District that didn't share communities of interest and needs, I stand here before you today in full support of keeping Midland County intact and urge the Commission to do the same. Thank you for your time.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Numbers 69, 70, 71 and 72 may now approach the microphone. And if 69 and 71 could go to the microphone on my left and 70 and 72 go to microphone on my right, I would really appreciate it. 69, you can go ahead and speak when you are ready.

>> All right. Thank you. Hello. My name is Rachel. I was born and raised in Isabella County and I now reside in Mount Pleasant Union Township. I own my own real estate brokerage and I work in all different areas of the state in Midland and Clare.

Isabella County is unique in the fact we have the University, CMU, and a large casino as well as the farming community. Our emergency services of our communities all work together and seem to be well coordinated.

I recently witnessed how all these service worked in a large barn fire in Shepard last week. The Shepard fire department was working on the scene, within a matter of 15 minutes the Mount Pleasant Fire Department showed up and assisted in saving the rest of the buildings on the farm.

This type of coordinated assistance is apparent in all aspects of the communities within Isabella County. The Soaring Eagle Casino contributes to the schools and various community services to assist all residents in Isabella County.

Central Michigan University offers many unique experiences for people from all walks of life from students to hosting the Special Olympics as well as to camps and many other events.

Isabella County offers a variety of opportunities for all the citizens and. Even though people take different avenues as far as employment goes, our communities remain intertwined in goals and support. It would be highly beneficial for the continued growth of this to remain in one District as it is. Thank you for all your work.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 70.

>> I'm Brenda Johnston. As a senior citizen, I've been a resident in Isabella County all my life. I own a small agricultural business. It involves working with farmers in Isabella County to Missaukee County. Isabella County is a good cross section of Michigan, grass roots for farmers and other agricultural business. And oil industry, construction, churches, hospitals and Central Michigan University.

I have been trying to read up on state redistricting. It is interesting and confusing. You as a committee have a large task ahead of you. I feel a lot of times we spend going over the census. And the redistricting in 2021 will make changes to our state. My hope is they will be positive and building faith in lawmakers and confidence back to citizens of Michigan. I hope you the Redistricting Committee can feel what is best for Michiganders.

Keeping that in mind you need to be here for Michigan residents. Make sure that you have the confirmed addresses of those submitting comments. Full name, city and zip code. This was brought to my attention that this could be a problem.

Keep our voting respectful and the privilege that we as senior citizens were brought up to believe in. Thank you for your time and dedication to making us feel good about a Pure Michigan. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 71. Do we have number 71? If not then we can move forward with 72.

>> Good evening, Commissioners. Thank you for being here today. My name is Chris and I live in Midland County, specifically the City of Midland, with my wife and two young children.

Starting in 2005 I began a 12 year career for both the region and the county. I'm currently in the private sector, but my experience in that region tells me that we are aligned more with the northern agricultural communities than necessarily with our southern neighbors.

Here in Midland we faced a lot of challenges in 2020. The flood and the breaching of two dams being one of them. And we can talk about the challenges and hardships, but one of the positive takeaways was that our region worked together. It was Midland County working together with Aranac County, Gladwin County, Iosco County and Saginaw County to get the requests approved at the Federal level bringing in millions of dollars in support.

Even though not directly listed on a declaration, I also include Bay and Clare Counties. Although they weren't hit like the rest of us, it was their county leadership that stepped up as well for our region through the once in a 500 year flood and devastating destruction caused by that.

Personally I have been working daily for the last year across the region to help families and businesses recover from this disaster. I've seen firsthand the impact our region can make as we work together to achieve positive results.

My community of interest is the region that I live in. It's comprised of Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Midland, Iosco, and Saginaw Counties. This region works well together and needs to stay as one. Thank you for your work on the Commission.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. At this time I will call out numbers 73, 74 and 75. 73, you can go ahead when you are at the microphone.

>> Members of the Commission, good evening. My name is Jerry Rogers and I have lived in the Midland for ten years. My wife, Olivia, and I are raising our nearly two-year-old son Andrew and are expecting our second son on June 25th.

Like many other young couples, we made an intentional decision to live in Midland and to raise our family here as part of the larger Tittabawasee River community. We believe our community has a lot to offer young families including great school districts, parks, small town values, the opportunity to explore the outdoors of our rivers and to learn about agricultural and many different industries.

Our community is not just the City or the Village of Sanford, but also among other communities on the base of our rivers and lakes connected by the Tittabawasee. My wife and I do not want to see our community sliced up into multiple Congressional and State Senate districts and merged with Metropolitan centers.

We worry that if our small town is lumped in with large Metropolitan communities that our needs, our values and our way of life will take a back seat to theirs.

The challenges of this past year, COVID, the resulting economic uncertainty, the closure of many of our local businesses and the historic floods caused by dam failures have scarred the public psyche of our community. But through it all, I watched our family, friends and neighbors come together in unbelievable ways to help each other through some of the most difficult times in the history of this region.

Our shared sense of loss and our united spirit to recover and rebuild has only reinforced our community's identity. I think it would be a shame to break this community apart. Please keep Midland and the surrounding Tittabawasee River communities together in one Congressional District as splitting it up will only hinder our efforts to recover what we have lost. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. Number 74.

>> Good evening. Thank you for your time Commission. We appreciate you listening to our concerns. My name is Stephanie and I was born in May County, lived most of my

life in May County. I moved to Midland County about 16 years ago and a resident of the Great Lakes Bay Region for my life.

And I listened to the people talk about keeping Midland whole. That sounds great. I agree. We want to keep it whole, but I do believe that this is about ball game. And the gerrymandering that happened in District Four that kept District Four the way it is, I have not been represented for 16 years. And I would appreciate if you would keep the Great Lakes Bay Region together so that I can be represented in Congress. Thank you for your time.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the. Number 75.

>> Hi. My name is Taylor Berchram. I live in Homer Township just outside of the Midland City limits in Midland County. My wife and I have chosen to live and buy our first home here because we valued access to a small city with rural surroundings. I grew up in neighboring Gladwin County, which was the southernmost county in the former first direction for much of my childhood where we rarely saw anything from our government representation. This made it difficult to civically engage until the current Fourth District lines were drawn, united by Midland Counties.

As a kid we would regularly go to Midland for shopping, recreation, and field trips. Our commerce and social lives and communities were and remain interconnected. I can attest firsthand that Midland has shared interests with counties like Gladwin, Gratiot, Isabella and Clare. It has meant a great deal to my family and friends in Gladwin and Midland Counties alike to have representation from the shared community of interest in times of disaster, need and fellowship.

Keeping Midland County united with our equally and more sparsely populated neighboring counties under the new maps, it is both complying with new rules and the right thing to do. Thank you for your consideration.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission. That concludes our live public comment in person for this meeting. We are now going to move on to remote public comment.

Individuals who have signed up and indicated they would like to provide remote public comment 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 that the host would like you to speak and prompt you to press star nine to unmute. I will call on you by your name or the last four digits of your phone number. Also, please note that if you experience technical or audio issues or we do not hear from you from three to five seconds we will move on to the next person in line and then return to you after we have done speaking. If your audio still does not work, you can e-mail us at redistricting@Michigan.gov and we will help you troubleshoot so you can participate during the next public comment period at a later hearing or meeting.

You will have two minutes to address the Commission. Please conclude your remarks when your two minutes have ended and you hear the timer. Please go to the public comment tool to share your comments in writing including any specific areas of the map of which you are speaking. The public comment tool is available at www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

So first in line to provide public comment is Joe Weer. Please allow a moment for our staff to unmute you.

>> Hello. Can you hear me?

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: We can hear you. Please go ahead with your comment.

>> My name is Joe Weer. I've been a resident of Midland County for 37 years. I'm a retired chemical engineer. And I was the 2018 democratic party nominee for the 36th State Senate District.

The 36th State Senate District is comprised of a string of ten counties with Midland County on the south end. The District winds its way northward up the east coast of Michigan all the way to Presque Isle County, near the tip of the Mitt. It's a three-hour drive from end to end. It also includes a few landlocked northern counties such as Montmorency and Oscoda. It does not include Bay or Saginaw Counties.

What are the shared communities of interest between Midland County and Montmorency and Oscoda County? What do Midland County and Alpena and Presque Isle County have in common? Very little, in fact. In fact, one frustrated resident of Alpena complained to me once that Midland and Northern Michigan don't even share the same corridor.

Of course, the purpose of the current structure of the 36th District is simply to ensure that a republican from Midland will always occupy the 36th State Senate seat. Those who drew the Senate District maps, there was no concern that the residents of Presque Isle and Alpena County have not been represented by anyone other than a Midland republican for decades.

My suggestion as a former candidate and engineer is that the best, fairest way to draw the District maps is simply to draw the required number of districts with equal population while minimizing the total length of the boundary lines. This is a relatively simple mathematical optimization problem that will ensure the most compact districts possible and cannot be challenged as somehow unfair or bias. By this method Midland County residents will likely be represented by a State Senator from somewhere in the Great Lakes Bay Region. And Alpena, Montmorency, and Alpena and Presque Isle County can be appropriately represented by someone from Northern Michigan. Thank you.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Thank you for addressing the Commission.

That concludes our public comment for the evening. So without objection, our Executive Director will now provide acknowledgments. All right. We did not receive

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your request for public comment until after the close of the time period to request public comments. So I cannot let you make that comment tonight because it's not fair.

Sir, can you please let me speak? The rules do allow that public comment. However, you need to notify us of that.

>> I will save it for next time. It's not even on the agenda, that is the problem.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: All right. I would suggest in the future if you want to speak twice please let us know before the deadline and we are happy to let you. You didn't let us know until after 8:00 p.m.

>> I told him. I told Edward woods a couple times, didn't I?

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: I want to thank the volunteers and who made comment. Thank you so much. We really appreciate you sharing your thoughts with us and also encourage you to share your thoughts on the public comment portal as Commissioner Szetela has mentioned several times, Michigan.gov/MICRC.

Our next public hearing is in Lansing. If you have friends or family there or other places throughout the state, please join us Thursday in Lansing at 6:00 p.m. And thanks for everyone who came out. We really appreciate the public comment. It's clear you care about your communities where you live and we appreciate hearing from you. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: As all items on the agenda are completed, and the Commission has no further business, a motion to adjourn is ordered. Do we have a motion to adjourn?

>> COMMISSIONER LETT: So moved.

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Second.

>> Commissioner Lett has moved and Dustin Witjes has second it. All in favor please raise your hand and say aye. All opposed same sign.

The motion carries, and the meeting adjourns at 8:58. Thank you very much everybody.

[Meeting concludes at 8:58 p.m.]