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MICRC

06/22/21 5:00 pm Public Hearing

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>> CHAIR KELLOM: Good evening. As Chair of the Commission, I call this meeting of the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to order at 5:02 p.m.

This meeting is being live streamed on YouTube.

For anyone in the public watching who would prefer to watch via a different platform than they are currently using, please do 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, Bengali and 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 or needing other specific accommodations should also contact Redistricting at Michigan.gov.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'll start with Doug Clark.

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Juanita Curry.
>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: present.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Anthony Eid?
>> COMMISSIONER EID: Present.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Brittini Kellom?
>> CHAIR KELLOM: Present.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rhonda Lange?
>> COMMISSIONER LANGE:
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Steve Lett?
>> COMMISSIONER LETT: Present.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Cynthia Orton?
>> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Present attending remotely from Battle Creek, Michigan.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: MC Rothhorn?
>> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Present.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rebecca Szetela?
>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Present.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Janice Vallette.
>> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Present.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Erin Wagner?
>> COMMISSIONER WAGNER:
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Commissioner Wagner, we will return to you. It looks like you may be experiencing technical difficulties right now.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Richard Weiss?
>> COMMISSIONER WEISS: Present.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Dustin Witjes?
>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Present.
>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Erin Wagner? All of 13 Commissioners are present and there is a quorum.
>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Michigan Department of State staff.

Now, without objection, I would like Commissioner Witjes to provide a presentation. Hearing no objection, Commissioner Witjes, please proceed with our welcome and introductions.

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Do my best.
>> CHAIR KELLOM: You got it.
>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Hello, my name is Commissioner Witjes. And I would like to welcome each and every one of you to the hearing we are hosting in Port Huron. We are happy you are here to learn about Michigan's new redistricting process and how you can ensure through the process that your voice is heard.

Looking at the agenda, please note that the vast majority of our time this evening spent listening to you.

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

In addition to hearing about District lines, we also want to hear about your communities of interest that are important to you.

At this time I would like my fellow colleagues in the building to introduce themselves and share where they live in Michigan, the Great Lake State.

Actually Erin Wagner and Commissioner Lange seem to have some technical difficulties.

So we will skip them for now and we will start over in the corner here with Mr. Clark and we will snake around to the left.

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Well, thank you all for coming out this evening. We appreciate it and we are very pleased to be in Port Huron.

My name is Douglas Clark and I'm one of the Commissioners and I live in Rochester Hills, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER WEISS: Good evening. Thank you for coming. My name is Richard H. Weiss and live in Saginaw Township in Saginaw, Michigan.

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: My name is Rebecca Szetela and I live in Wayne County, Michigan.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: I'm a Detroit native. My name is Brittini Kellom, Commissioner and acting Chair, and it's an honor to be here.

>> COMMISSIONER EID: Hi, everyone. My name is Anthony Eid from Orchard Lake, Michigan. It's nice to be here and hear from you all tonight.

>> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Welcome, everyone. My name is Janice Vallette and I live in Highland. And we are anxious to hear what you have to say. And thanks everyone for coming.

>> COMMISSIONER LETT: Welcome tonight. My name is Steve Lett and I live by the Traverse City Area in Interlochen. We are glad you are here. I kind of represent the northern boundaries on the western side since I'm the closest one up there. So I will be interested to see what the east side has to say.

>> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Good evening, everyone. My name is MC. I live in Lansing, Michigan. Thanks for being here.

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: My name is Dustin Witjes. I live either in Ypsilanti or Howell, Michigan depending on what day of the week it is. And I'm looking forward to hearing what every single one of you has to say.

>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Good evening, everyone. My name is Juanita Curry. It's good to see each of you out. It lets us know that you are just as concerned because of your presence as we are. And we are eager to hear you out tonight and let us know

how you feel about the redistricting process. And you are welcome to be here. And I'm from Detroit, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: I almost forgot Commissioner Orton.

>> COMMISSIONER ORTON: I'm Cynthia Orton. And I wish I could be there with you in person, but I'm glad to at least hear what you have to say. And I live in Battle Creek, Michigan.

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Commissioner Wagner is attending remotely via telephone so she is going to say hello right now as well.

>> COMMISSIONER WAGNER: Hello. This is Erin Wagner. And I'm listening from Charlotte, Michigan. And I wish I could be there. Thank you.

>> COMMISSIONER WITJES: For a little bit of a history lesson here, in 2018 61% of the Michigan voters intentionally and deliberately passed proposal two, a ballot initiatives for voters not legislatures to take responsibility for map fairness and public feedback of the redistricting process and created the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission or the MICRC.

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

We are comprised of 13 randomly selected Michigan residents that include four who affiliate with the democrat party, five who affiliated independents and four who affiliate as republicans.

This was done through a lottery held by the Michigan Department of State.

And it was also done through a vendor of their choosing. I believe it was Raymond Accounting Services that actually did the drawing.

MICRC has the exclusive authority in the new redistricting process for Michigan's Congressional, House and Senate Districts.

As fellow residents, the MICRC understands your expectations to draw maps in an open and transparent manner, that meets constitutional mandates.

The mission and vision exemplifies our resolve not for today but future generations as well.

Your interaction with the MICRC and its staff, you should witness the core values of integrity, respect, transparency and being purposeful.

Once again, we are glad that you're here. And we look forward to hearing from you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Commissioner Witjes.

Without objection, Executive Director Sue Hammersmith will now provide a presentation about our public hearings.

Hearing no objection, Sue Hammersmith, you have the floor and you can share about our public hearings.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: Thank you, Commissioner Kellom.

Good evening and thank you everyone for being here this evening. We are happy you have joined us in Port Huron for our 13th of 16 public hearings.

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To ensure fair and impartial maps, the MICRC is required to solicit public input during at least ten public hearings before drawing the first line on any map.

This is 16 public hearings will be hosted, so I like to say our Commissioners are overachievers.

They only had to host ten, but they are hosting 16. Not a single line has been drawn or will be drawn before the public hearings are completed.

And when the lines are drawn, it will be in open meetings.

There are three purposes for the public hearings. These are stated in the Constitution.

One is to inform the public about the redistricting process.

The second, to share the purpose and responsibilities of the Commission.

And, three, to solicit information from the public about potential redistricting plans.

And, most importantly, we are glad you're here tonight.

So what is redistricting? Every ten years after the census the lines must be redrawn across America to accurately reflect the populations.

The process of drawing the lines is called redistricting.

In 2020 the census reported Michigan's population as just over 10 million people.

And there will be 161 different districts that will need to be drawn.

13 Michigan Congressional districts with an average of about 775,000 people.

38 Michigan Senate districts with an average of about 265,000 people.

And 110 Michigan House Districts with an average of 91,600 people.

The Commissioner's purpose and responsibilities include exercising the constitutional power granted solely to the Commission to redistrict Michigan.

This is the only entity that can draw the lines in the new districts.

Secondly, the Commissioner operates in an impartial and transparent manner that instills public confidence in the integrity of the process.

Third, this Commission conducts statewide public outreach and invites meaningful participation in the redistricting process.

Also, another responsibility of the Commission is to adopt three sets of maps, one for each type of District, while complying with the U.S. and the Michigan Constitutional mandates.

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

And, lastly, the Commission needs to insure compliance with the redistricting criteria. There are seven criteria that, again, are listed in our Constitution.

The first is complying with Federal law that includes equal population and adhering to the Voting Rights Act.

Secondly, districts must be geographically contiguous.

Third communities of interest are taken into consideration.

And fourth and fifth, no disproportionate advantage for a political party or favor or disfavor an incumbent elected official or a candidate.

Six the lines must reflect consideration of County, City and Township boundaries.

And, lastly, the districts must be reasonably compact.

It's a pretty tall order, but I can tell you this Commission is up to the challenge.

What are communities of interest? We have been hearing a lot about these throughout the state.

Our Constitution says they may include but are not limited to populations that share cultural or historical characteristics or economic interests.

They do not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or candidates.

So what does the MICRC want to know about your community of interest? If you would like to share about yours, please give us a name for your community of interest, tell us about the common bond that makes it a community of interest.

Share the geographic area that's covered by your community of interest.

And share about what governmental policies may be important to you as a group.

And how keeping your community intact would enhance the quality of your representation in Congress or the Michigan legislature.

And, lastly, are there other areas that would strengthen or weaken your community of interest?

So why are we here? To hear from you.

To hear directly from you about your ideas to redistrict Michigan's Congressional, House and Senate Districts.

And we are here to listen and learn about your community of interest.

Why should you care? This is an historic process.

This is the first time ever citizens have had input into redistricting and the State of Michigan.

The process empowers citizens to provide input for the lines that best represent the interests that they share and their values.

There is openness and transparency in the process for statewide participation, and we invite the communities of interest to share their voices, so how they can best be represented.

So, again, thank you for being here.

And for sharing your thoughts with us this evening.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Sue.

Without objection, we will now have our public comment guidelines.

Hearing no objection, our General Counsel, Julianne Pastula, will come to us to talk about...talk to us about our public comment guidelines.

>> MS. JULIANNE PASTULA: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And good afternoon St. Clair County. Thank you for the warm welcome.

I would like to cover the public comment guidelines with you this evening.

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First in-person public comment will occur first, followed by remote public comment. The time limit for each speaker is two minutes. Please conclude your remarks when you hear the audible timer. And there will also be a countdown clock on the screen.

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

Please provide your public comment and/or submit proposed plans in the public comment portal, which can be found at www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

Thank you,

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you General Counsel.

Without objection, we will now move to our public comment.

Hearing no objection, we will proceed to public comment.

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 you hear your number called.

You will have two minutes to address the Commission.

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

Please go to the public comment tool and share your comments in writing, including any specific area on the map that you might be speaking about.

The public comment tool is located at www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

First, in line to provide public comment is number one.

>> In 2017 and 2018 I was a volunteer for a group called Voters Not Politicians.

This group was instrumental in getting the independent redistricting proposal on the Michigan ballot.

One of my duties was to canvas voters asking them their views on redistricting.

One of the areas I was giving actually was right around this Blue Water Convention Center right now.

What I found out is, rather, voters identified themselves as democrats, independents, republicans, the majority answered they wanted districts drawn fairly that could be won by either party. The voters wanted districts where candidates would listen to their views and not the wishes of a political party.

They did not want one District full of voters for party number one and another District full of voters for party number two. They wanted fair, impartial districts, that is what they told me going door to door.

After doing this canvassing, I was fairly sure that the ballot proposal, when it was on the ballot of November of 2018, was probably going to pass. But I was surprised that it passed by almost a two thirds vote.

Thank you.

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

I will also say, though I am calling your number, you can introduce yourselves to us as much as you are comfortable with. So thank you, sir, for taking the time to provide comments to the Commission.

Two.

>> Hello, my name is Andrew.

I'm fortunate enough to have grown up in this area, spent about a decade away and moved back to call it hopefully the home for the rest of my life.

I really like this area. So this I'm so glad to welcome you to the area. And thank you for listening to our thoughts.

I jotted down a couple of notes. Firstly, you have already kind of mentioned it, I think transparency is really why you exist. So having that as a priority really above all is very important. So I'd love to see it. I know no lines have been drawn, but I think as soon as they are, making them as widely available to the public should really be a priority to increase that awareness.

You also kind of asked about community of interest, and that is what I wanted to speak about. I guess my name and probably many of the people here have a name for this area, the Blue Water Area.

I think it's an area that shares -- I'm a professional historian. So I can tell you of the past we do share many common ties.

This would be St. Clair County up to about Lexington or so and down through to the St. Clair River, down into the Lake St. Clair.

This area had a lot of historic economic ties. And I think it would be something that would benefit from having many of the same issues to be represented there. For example, that we are an international border.

And many of these border communities would share those kind of common interests. I know, for example, in our current state District map, the City of Port Huron has been placed in the 83rd District, along with other parts of the thumb. And while kind of colloquially I would mention to people, I always show on my hand map, we are the knuckle of the thumb, and this area might have more in common with Metro Detroit than necessarily up in the thumb.

I know many people who travel down for odd jobs in Metro Detroit, not really going out to the farm fields. So hopefully the Blue Water Area can be considered a community of interest.

And, again, thank you for all of the hard work you are putting into this.

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

Three.

You don't have to run.

Take your time.

>> Good evening, everyone. My name is Ryan Johnson. I'm with the St. Clair County democrats and Chair of the tenth Congressional District Democratic Committee. I'd like to welcome the Commissioners to my home, the beautiful City of Port Huron. We are happy to have you here and appreciate the hard work you are putting in to try and draw fair districts for Michigan.

A major factor in the extremism we see in our politics today is unfairly drawn districts that give one party an inordinate advantage over the other.

Unfairly drawn districts lead to less representation and sitting and aspiring public servants do not need to listen or respond to voices coming from the other side of the aisle.

Rather because they are unfairly drawn District is weighted so heavily in their party's favor, they only listen to the loudest, most extreme voices on their side, leading to legislation that does not have majority support.

Fairly drawn districts, on the other hand, are more competitive and ensure that either side has a real shot to claim the seat.

Competition in the political sphere is a good thing as it leads to aspiring public servants, truly listening to everyone in their District regardless of party affiliation.

More folks have a chance to sway their public servant, which is what true representation is all about.

Improved representation encourages open and honest discussion, debate, and ultimately comprise through good-faith negotiating. This will effectively move office holders away from the extreme edges, away from heated rhetoric meant only to activate fear, anger and hatred and allow cooler heads to prevail and craft legislation meant to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Thank you for your time this evening and for the work you are all putting in to help strengthen democracy here in Michigan and I hope you enjoy your stay in Port Huron.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Ryan, for taking the time to come out and address the Commission.

Four.

>> Hello. My name is Mark.

The thing we need to remember as we enter this first time ever opportunity to redraw the districts is how very little competition there is among the existing Congressional districts we have right now. Realistically only four of our Congressional districts are considered competitive from one election to the next.

That cannot stand.

We need fair representation.

We need real competition because there are too many problems that get kicked down the road when there is a sameness in thinking.

And so forth.

So the one thing I really want to emphasize is the fact that we really need to make sure that each and every Congressional District that we possibly can draw is competitive and has fair representation. Thank you.

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

Five, please.

>> Good afternoon. My name is Mike.

Until we have a proportional representation, we need this citizen redistricting committee. But the goal should be the same.

That all voters deserve representation and that all political roots in society deserve to be represented and our legislatures in proportion to their strength in the electorate.

In other words, everyone should have the right to fair representation.

Voters took the extraordinary step of mending our state Constitution to put you, the citizen Commissioners, fully in charge of this District drawing process.

61% of Michiganders voted in support of this amendment in 2018.

The majority of voters in Michigan lean left, indicated by statewide voting results, yet the state legislature leans right.

This stokes feelings of unfairness and results in laws and policies unsupported by the majority.

In other words, minority rule.

This is fundamentally un-American.

Republicans have sought to undo this Commission.

They are the minority, trying to push an agenda on the majority.

A three Judge Federal Court recently called how Republicans drew the Districts as political gerrymander of historic proportions. You must find a way to allow everyone's voice to be heard. I call on this Commission to draw districts that reflect Michigan's communities of interest. By law this redistricting Commission must now take into consideration Michigan's diversity and communities of interest.

You can give these communities a real chance to speak about themselves, to speak about the concerns that they have, and to speak about the power of their communities. Equity is important and it is real.

Some have said that the districts just need tweaking.

Drawing new maps based on our current gerrymandered maps is a terrible idea. You have a clean slate. You have a fresh start. Thank you.

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

If you are speaking and the timer goes off while you're speaking, we encourage you to finish your sentence, as well as visit our public comment tool, that's www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

And you can always continue your thoughts there or any...or talk about any specific area that you might have brought to our attention here. As well as if you have something with you that you don't mind and you want the Commission to have, whether it's a map or something that you are reading from, you are welcome to approach the table and give that to us.

We won't bite you.

Not today.

Okay, six.

>> Welcome you guys.

I'm Dean Burden from Snover, Michigan, Sanilac County, which is just the first county north of here. I'm an organic farmer. We have been organic farming for 34 years now. And we also have our own cleaning plant. So we clean for 100 other organic farmers.

And just to give an example, we have some problems that the normal representative wouldn't know about.

A few years ago we were shipping a bunch of containers, in fact, we ship containers of product all over the world, but in one instance we had a shipment that had hit rough water from here to Japan and six containers in the water.

So we had an issue that way. So we had to use our representative, National and State Representative, to help us get that issue.

But what my main concern is that we have so many problems because we are connected to for example, Port Huron.

Port Huron people don't know what the farming in the thumb is.

And so I would encourage you guys to try to put farming areas together because it's really critical for us in the future.

I don't think one of you did not have a meal today. So we need farmers and be able to have farmers that can produce good quality food for you, whether it's chemical or organic, that's your choice.

But we need to have representation that is fair for all of us.

Example being, Huron County and Sanilac County are connected counties and it would be really nice to have, because Port Huron is one of the largest cities, and I see one of you is from Saginaw, and in that then Saginaw really is in the middle of an area that is really high population.

We need to be caring for our farming area because we all need farmers.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to share about your community and make us more aware of those differences.

We appreciate that.

Seven.

>> This doesn't sound like it's on. Now it's on. Okay.

Thank you.

Little shorter than I thought.

My name is Kathy Burden. I'm from Sanilac County also, Lamont Township. And we about an hour and a half from here, and also a rural area.

And my comment to you would be I'd like to see the lines drawn so the communities are square and compact, easy to get around and keep people of like-minded occupations together to be represented as the former speaker has just mentioned.

But I thank you for taking the time.

It's a hard job to go around to listen to people and we are very pleased to have you here and welcome you to our area now. So thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Kathy, for taking the time to address the Commission as well as give us that warm welcome.

Eight, it looks like you are ready. Eight, number eight, it's your turn.

>> I'm ready. I know where the Snover is, home of the Snover snoozer, I've heard. And most of the people that aren't going to be farmers, they moved to Port Huron. So their relatives live up there, but they usually might not vote for the same thing relatives vote for.

I know you probably will show of your hands, but is everyone happy with the \$40,000 a year you are getting for this wonderful job that you have? You don't have to say it. But was the Commission funded correctly? Because that was the worry that the -- they were not going to fund this Commission, so it was not going to be able to do their job. That is a question I have.

I did not research it enough to see if it was, but it was a question in the beginning.

And then the main thing about the Districting in Michigan as opposed to Ohio is we are not...we don't have straight lines at all.

When you put a City in, it usually has water on one side of it or hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland right next to it.

So where do you put the line? Do you put the line right at the grain elevator? Do you put the line at the tractor supply? Do you put the line at the public pool? Because people move into those areas, their kids move into those areas. They go to college in those areas. And then hopefully they will move back to where they were raised.

So the districts, with the difficult job you have to put the districts together, the...I'd like to kind of give analogy of that toy that you used to play with where you had the square and then you had to put a round piece in the square and then a triangle and a whatever other shapes were in there.

Almost an impossible job.

Once you had more experience, you could do that.

Hopefully this Commission gets that experience to put those different shapes in Michigan's hand.

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

We appreciate you.

Nine.

>> Hello. My name is Ruth. I'm a resident of Port Huron, Michigan. And I thank the Commission for the opportunity to present my concerns.

And they are the following: You need new maps.

Throw out the old maps.

Start fresh.

The districts need to be competitive as possible.

That's very important.

Avoid the packing and the cracking.

So there is...to promote fair representation.

And my community of interest incorporates an urban area extending to rural areas.

The citizens have varying educational levels, many different professions ranging from doctor to farm worker and everything in between.

As of July 1st, 2019, there were over 159,000 residents in St. Clair County.

The average income was only \$45,494.

We are below the national average and the state average on that.

The population is 91% white.

2.6% Black or African/American.

.5% American Indian.

.6% Asian.

And 3.5% Hispanic.

So it's important to look at that.

It's also important to have fair redistricting to promote fair elections.

And I, again, thank you for your time, for your very important job.

Thank you.

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

Ten.

>> Good evening. My name is Pat.

I live up along the lakeshore about 35 miles. And I thank you all for coming to our beautiful area, because I believe the work you are doing is incredibly important to us.

If I had to label a community of interest that I feel connected to, it's diversity.

I've been an independent my entire voting life and retain that.

I want districts where it's been said over and over again partisan politics won't dictate who wins. And I'm concerned about the emphasis on communities of interest because when you emphasize one special interest in a District, those of us who don't belong to that special interest, or any other special interest, frankly, go underrepresented.

As I feel I am in my District today.

So that would be my plea.

As you're optimizing the districts, as you are directing what variables will be most important for consideration, a diversity that reflects our state, that gives equal opportunity to qualified candidates, whatever their partisan politics, that is my plea. Thank you for being here.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Pat, for sharing your comments with the Commission.

11.

>> Hello. My name is Dick Cummings. I have lived on a farm where I currently live since around 1960.

However, my whole lifetime I have worked with industrial situations.

I would like to suggest that as a community of interest that St. Clair County in the thumb area, the counties north of us, all be in one District because there is a commonality of interest.

And the thumb area in St. Clair county there is light industrial areas out throughout the communities, okay, but the heavy thing is agricultural and tourism.

And right now we are tied in with Northern Macomb County, which is heavy industrial, plus the voters there work in heavy industry, okay, in the Detroit areas and like that. So I don't think we get a fair shot out here, okay. I think the agricultural situation and the Tourism Bureau and light industry as well deserve a fair shake. And thank you and welcome to our community,

Ms. Chairperson and delegates, and I think this is a great thing having the people from the situation say what their situation is so everybody can understand it better. And thank you for your time and welcome to our area.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Dick, thank you so much. We appreciate your comments that you shared with the Commission this evening.

12.

>> Well, I'm number 12. My name is John P. And I live in Memphis, Michigan, about 25 miles west of here.

My voice is not very good.

But I will pursue.

You're all talking about people of interest, common interest.

As far as I'm concerned, once you start down that path, you are gerrymandering.

I think you ought to start with an area and put a circle or a box around it, expand it until you get the right number on to the next box.

I really believe once you start thinking about who is voting for who, like all you farmers want to talk about one thing, which is opposed to cities, but we are all people.

And we believe in basically the same things. So just deal with people and numbers, not desires or common interests.

Thank you very much.

Have a good day.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for sharing your comments with the Commission. And it is a pleasure to hear you all, fellow citizens, listening to each other and expanding your way of thinking. So this is what this process is all about.

13.

>> My name is Peggy and I'm from St. Clair County here.

And I just have a few comments.

I'm so glad you're here.

I am so glad to have a voice in this process.

And it is important to me that you as a committee stay focused on being impartial.

We depend on you to draw the maps that will not advantage one party over the other.

Our democracy is being threatened on so many sides today.

And I ask that you make sure that our voters have a voice and that they are represented and representatives are motivated to listen to them.

The more balanced the parties in any District, the better choice or chance that voters can pick their representatives, not the other way around.

So go for preserving democracy, remember we are counting on you.

Thank you.

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

14.

>> Good afternoon.

My name is Tom Walker and I live in Port Huron 48060.

I'm here because I want to advocate a community of interest, people of color.

And I say this living in Port Huron in which the largest proportion of people of color live in St. Clair County. And what I would like to propose is, well, first of all, I'm looking at the tenth Congressional District of which I'm a resident.

And as a person of color, this is a fairly large Congressional District.

I believe 723,000 residents are a part of it.

Of that 723,000, less than 3% are Black people.

So my promotion of community of interest is that I think that this District needs to be redrawn.

I think that as much respect as I have for the thumb area in general, I really think that the farther you go up in the thumb the less diverse and representative it is for people such as myself.

So my proposal is that the District be redrawn to be St. Clair County and Macomb County.

The portion of people of color, especially Black people, grows significantly when you redraw in that way.

So that's my proposal.

Thank you for the work that you're doing.

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>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Tom. And we encourage anyone that is coming up and speaking about a specific area, as you see many of us are from have vastly different spaces all across Michigan, but please do submit those specific maps or even in writing, describing the area. And you can find that public comment tool, Michigan.gov/MICRC.

15, please.

>> Hello, I'm Patricia from Sandusky and Sanilac County and I would also like to thank you for hearing and taking into consideration our comments.

The first thing I'd like to say is I am very happy with the present state of the State House and State Senate lines in my area.

But I would encourage you not to use the roadways as dividing points.

I would really also like to encourage you not to split neighborhoods and split counties if possible.

I know when we get into some of the larger counties, that may be something you have to do.

And to not split Townships.

Neighbors, Townships are all their own communities of interest.

So thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time to address the Commission. And we will move to 16.

Would you like a seat? Are you sure?

>> It's the start of the standup that causes the pain.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: I understand everyone needs a little push, it's okay.

>> Hi.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Hi.

>> My name is Don Durby. I live in Marysville, St. Clair County, Michigan.

And I'm a Vietnam Era Vet of the United States Navy, with the privilege of having worn the uniform of the Navy from our country for 16 years total. From 66-70 with the regular Navy and from 80-92 with the reserves.

I receive many services from the Veterans Administration in our area here and down in Detroit.

So they are very high on my priority list.

I also pastor two churches.

One this Sanilac County and one in St. Clair County in the Methodist religion. So I have a great interest in issues that address religious freedom and hope that you will be looking at how that can be addressed in your lining of districts.

The churches that I serve are in rural farming districts.

So I have a great interest on those who make their living on the farm.

And bring us the foods that come to our tables.

I am a strong supporter of the Constitution of the United States, especially the issues that reflect the issues of the first, second and fourth amendments.

And how they are interpreted and applied in our state.

I would particularly like to see constitutional carry of firearms in the State of Michigan considered.

I would like to see the boundaries in the State of Michigan drawn in such a way that is equitable and just for all our citizens. And I thank you for being here tonight.

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

17.

>> Hello. I'm Leslie Lambright. There are three points, I hope I can remember them all.

They are short.

I'm going to go to the third first.

When you put up the criteria about what kind of interests in this actual area, I would suggest if we are going to organize around an interest it be the Great Lakes, that it be Lake Huron and St. Clair River.

I mean, we are an extraordinary state. And this area is exceptional because of the water.

And we need to protect it and care for it.

It feeds, sustains and gives us great pleasure.

A comment about the religion. I'm a loyal reader of the Michigan News, I'm blocking on the name, Bridge, bridge.com.

It's a neutral, well researched, online. And one of the things I read, that brought me here tonight, is that many of the comments were asking to organize around religion or congregation.

I want to speak against that.

This country was absolutely founded on the principle of separation of church and state. And it is very, very important that we continue that founding principle.

Then the third point is, but it looks like you've done it, I was going to read from the Brennan Center For Justice. But looking at the initial criteria, you have clearly integrated that criteria into the principles.

I would recommend everyone here that they look up the Brennan Center For Justice because Section 3 has six suggested criteria for redistricting.

Thank you for being here.

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

We appreciate that.

18.

>> Good evening, Commission.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Good evening.

>> My name is Ken Harris. I have been very appreciative of being able to represent some of the people of the City of Port Huron and other various groups in the area. But I guess my really concern here tonight as we visit here, there is a couple things. I guess the United States Supreme Court, by avoiding attack on these type of commissions, I think and giving you guys a blessing in disguise that we would be able to create such a Commission and get some things done.

But I think one of the things that really stands out, and I think it should really stand out for the citizens of Port Huron and St. Clair County, is the fact the current census is going to reduce the Congressional districts by one as far as in the representative count. And if you look at that number right now, and they have already...somebody has drawn a line someplace and said what a nice place to get rid of a U.S. representative, and that is in this District.

So I think your job here tonight is very important. But the other thing I'd like to say is, you know, 2018 is only three years ago. Yet our country has changed immensely in the last three years. We have grown from a country that did a lot together from a country that threatens and intimidates different styles. I hope that you guys are fortunate enough so you don't have to put up with this in your deliberations and I hope you have a check and balance so it does not occur. Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission.
19.

>> Good evening.

Thanks for coming to Port Huron, our community. My name is Jim Frank. And I'm Chair of the St. Clair County Democratic Party. And we are grateful you are here because we supported this Commission right from the start in redistricting. And you all should know this is also the site where the Port Huron statement was written more than 60 years ago.

And that statement is advocacy for participatory Government, which is indeed what this Commission is engaged in.

And we appreciate that.

Port Huron is also a great example of cracking a District. They have taken a largely Democratic City and attached it to Sanilac County, which for all intents and purposes it forfeits republican when it comes to voting. That dilutes the votes of democrats and mutes the voice of democrats in St. Clair County.

If you also look at St. Clair County you will see St. Clair County is divided up into three State Representative districts, the 83rd, the 81st and the 32nd.

As a result of this sort of carving up of our County, our County is not given the opportunity to let its voters voice their concerns about a number of different issues within the State of Michigan.

And it limits our ability to communicate with our representatives at the State Senate level, the State Representative level and even at the Congressional level. Because I agree with Mr. Kircher and I agree with the other and Mr. Walker, that our Congressional districts in the 83rd districts really do need to be redrawn.

So thank you for your time.

We appreciate you all joining us here at this site, at the place of the Port Huron statement.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you very sharing that bit of history and for sharing your comments with the Commission.

19.

You were 19, 20.

Sometimes I don't always keep good track.

I apologize.

20.

>> Good evening. My name is Joe, DTE retiree. I do live in northern St. Is Clare County, close to the border of Sanilac County. It's about time we get rid of the gerrymandering that has gone on in past years. And I for one believe that in my area we have more in common with the upper thumb than we do with the northern part of Macomb County.

I am a little small time farmer, so I like to thank you, you people.

You guys have a tremendous job ahead of you.

So please take care and concern about everyone.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for taking the time to speak to the Commission.

21.

>> My name is Judy Linburg. I'm a native of Detroit and now living in Marysville, Michigan.

My comments, in addition to squaring up by considering drawing distance along current county and community entities, a review of current Congressional districts were 82, 81 and 34, in a shape of a cross in the middle of a square.

It doesn't make sense.

And this is a good opportunity to square them up and keeping some interests together.

We are a small...we are a community of small towns with a distinct Maritime flavor.

A life of fishing, boating and hunting in the large state game area.

One common connection is sharing the shorelines of Lakes Huron and St. Clair, as well as an international border.

Factors in redistricting that should be considered for our community is the geography of the St. Clair River Watershed and the communities that have developed along the rivers draining into it.

We share the Lake Huron shoreline problems such as high, destructive water levels and the threats of pollution from industry or farming on the rivers.

These current problems have created a strong base for addressing environmental issues now coming forward as we address climate change.

That's the environmental community here is strong.

And I think that it's important as our nation is looking at climate change and the factors we need.

And I thank you for this opportunity to have some input in a very vast problem.

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

I see you all eying the timer. And I'm glad that you are honoring the time, but still finish what you have to say unless you have a whole other page. But make sure you are finishing your comment. And please do share if you are someone that had a little bit more to say, take the time to go online, if you can, and please do share the rest of what you were going to say because we do want to hear. So thank you.

22.

>> Hello. My name is Mona. I'm an interloper from the south. So I was born and raised in Pontiac and I live in Waterford Township, which is in Northern Oakland, so I do have some comments about that, that I will address.

But I want to thank the Commission for this, for your service and for the opportunity to advocate for my community and the state in general.

In 2017 I volunteered for Voters Not Politicians, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose mission it was to pass proposition two, which would amend Michigan's Constitution to establish an Independent Commission to determine the drawing of our districts.

That is all of you.

The thing that impressed me most while gathering petition to put proposal two on the 2018 ballot was the nonpartisan disapproval of gerrymandering, the manipulation of boundaries to favor one party or one constituency.

I met Clinton and Trump voters who signed the petition and were eager to remedy the unfair aspect of creating districts to suit the needs of one party. As the name of the organization implies, much of the public felt that candidates maneuvered the lines in order to choose their voters.

The results were all too familiar, uncompetitive elections, ideological extremism, lack of transparency, and a loss of true representative Government. The resounding 61% to

39% victory for prop two is all the evidence you need that your mandate is clear. Start fresh and draw fair, equitable and competitive districts now.

In terms of redrawing the lines for North Oakland County, I believe Waterford Township has more in contact with Pontiac and West Bloomfield than with its rural northern neighbors and the farming communities of North Macomb County.

In conclusion, while the United States is very divided culturally, economically, and politically, let us take this historic opportunity to right this wrong and return electoral decision making back to the people of Michigan. Again, thank you for allowing me to weigh this on this very crucial issue.

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

23.

>> Hello. Thank you for being here.

My name is Patty. I'm a resident of the City of Port Huron and I am a writer and a graphic designer.

So math and numbers are not my thing.

And but I do understand that we are in this situation, in the state and in other states as well because historically both political parties have gerrymandered to their advantage, and they have done that nationwide.

But I also know that the way they did that in both parties was we had -- they all had data available to them, as I'm sure you do, as they are drawing the Districting lines. So I ask that you use that data to very carefully create a metrics to fairly use the data so that we no longer end up with an election like 2018 where we end up with a Governor with one party and a legislature of another and then nothing gets done. And I think everybody all around the state gets very frustrated. So thank you so much for coming and for allowing us the opportunity to speak tonight.

Thank you for being here.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

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

24.

>> Greetings.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Greetings.

>> I could do friends, Romans, countrymen.

My name is Richard. I'm a Veteran of the United States Navy and a resident of St. Clair County since 1968.

Yesterday I had to drive old M21 because 69 was all torn up from Emlay City to Port Huron. And I can assure you that St. Clair County is doing quite well as a rural Christian community.

And I hope you don't try to intermingle us with the parts of Flint or Detroit.

I looked over the original voters, not politicians ballot proposal and the list of donors. And truthfully, I was dismayed by the fallacy of some of these documents.

It looks to me that just different politicians have replaced former politicians who previously gerrymandered our districts.

Now it is this board's turn to gerrymander our state.

It would seem to me that it would have made it much easier if this committee had proposed the changes they expected to do prior to these meetings.

Rather than trying to get or go to all these different locations and get the community of interest issues.

It seems that it was such a waste of time for both of us.

Every night just before I go to bed, I look in the mirror and ask the question that my father taught me.

Did I do the best I could today? Now, it's your turn to answer that very same question. God bless your journey.

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

As a point of clarification, we haven't drawn or done anything yet.

There is no secret or veil. We are excited to hear about what you have to offer us and then proceed after that, in which you will also have the opportunity to look at those maps and weigh in.

So this is all about our integrity and transparency, and I think I could speak for all the Commissioners when I say that we are excited to do the job that you have charged us with.

Though skeptical, excited to do the right thing and to use us as a valiant opportunity to create democracy.

So 25.

>> My name is Jerry.

Full disclosure, it was the unsuccessful democratic candidate in the 82nd state rep last fall.

I'm currently the Vice Chair of the Lapeer Democratic Party.

My...when I addressed the Commission back in Flint a few weeks ago, the community of interest that I was trying to express is this torn up I-69 highway that we have here from Flint all the way to Port Huron.

Generally what I see is the community of interest is where people live, that's how you are going to be setting aside these districts. But what makes their community of interest important is also where they work.

So, for example, I lived in Lapeer and I would work in Flint. Or for a few years I lived in Lapeer and I was a manager at the Birchwood Mall here in Port Huron, that hour distance seems to be a limit where people would drive.

So when you have a District that extends all the way from Macomb County up to Port Austin, that is well beyond a reasonable District, Congressional District.

So people are expressing their community of interest, but there should also be a community of interdependence. And the idea I was trying to propose is that we link urban areas with rural areas so that the legislatures and our representatives would represent both sides of the story.

And that's what we are looking for.

One final aspect that I want to remind the Commission is what's been called prison gerrymandering.

For example, in Lapeer we have the Thumb Regional Correctional Facility, that has a thousand inmates, a thousand inmates that are counted toward the Lapeer census. However, these inmates are not from Lapeer County for the most part and they do not have any right to vote.

So keep that in mind when you guys are redistricting. And have the -- there is a proposal in the legislature, 4276 in the house and 151 in the Senate which would have the inmates, although they can't vote now, but have their census data go to where they were from prior to incarceration.

Thank you.

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

26.

>> Hi. My name is John.

I'm from Saginaw. And I'm here to speak to the business of the Commission, not any particular District.

As you're receiving your public comment, this includes proposed redistricting maps. And my understanding from reading the amendment and current news reports, those maps and our comments are advisory to the Commission.

The Commission will then look at all that information and propose maps that they will put out for public comment and then the Commission will vote on them.

I would like to ask the Commission to publicly commit to taking at least one map that the public has proposed for each type of District, Congressional, State Senate and State Representative, and proposing that as one of the maps they will put out for public comment and then vote on it.

There are people out there working very hard on those maps.

They have to follow the same seven criteria this Commission does in creating those maps.

And as we have heard from the Executive Director, Sue Hammersmith, the communities of interest identify themselves.

So as each person is proposing a map, one must assume they are proposing a map from their community of interest viewpoint.

And I think it is valid to look at those maps as the ones the Commission will create by synthesizing all the data and comments they get.

The second thing I would like to mention is that considering the comments made yesterday during the Supreme Court hearing on the Commission asking to extend the deadline to create maps, I would tend to agree with some of the questions from the justices.

I would like this Commission, first, to try to get its work done by its constitutionally mandated deadlines.

If an extension is needed at the point where it is not able to be met, is when to ask for that extension.

Thank you.

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

And we will move to 27.

>> Hello. My name is Marty. I'm a resident of Port Huron. And as a voter and someone who participates in both partisan and nonpartisan activities, I'm here to tell you that I hope that you will be drawing new maps that don't start out with the old maps because they're not really the way they should be. They are gerrymandered and we need somebody better than that.

Also we, I hope that you will draw as many competitive districts as possible so that the districts themselves can be as fair for any political party.

And the community of interest that I'm really here to represent is the community of small business owners.

I operated a consulting practice in Port Huron for five years.

I'm retired now, but I'm very active in a number of business groups. And I am the Chair of the Blue Water Area Chamber of Commerce Public Affairs Committee that brings all kinds of candidates and public office holders to speak to this community.

I'm also the Chair of the Sierra Clubs, Blue Water Committee. And Sierra Club, as you know, is the largest and oldest grass roots environmental organization founded in 1892 and is nonpartisan.

So I'm really hoping that you can do the best that you can do to make the districts for whatever the race is as fair as possible. And I appreciate your time tonight.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking the time to address the Commission.
28.

>> Hello. My name is David Allen Tyler. I have the privilege of serving as the Chair of the Sanilac County Democratic Party.

I live in Peck, Michigan, a largely rural area, in Michigan's tenth Congressional District. It happens to be a traditionally republican District.

And I've always wondered why we let that be written off.

We in our District, if you were to look at the map, it's like a poorly designed jigsaw puzzle.

And not competitive for the most part.

I also have the privilege of serving on my County's, and I'm going to butcher this word so I apologize, the rapprochement commission for the Commissioners. I'm the only democrat that serves on that committee, but we came together and gave criteria that is unifying.

I want to share some of that with you.

All districts, we have agreed, so single member districts of nearly equal population as practiced using the latest census data.

All districts shall be contiguous, all districts shall be compact and of nearly square shape as is practical, depending on geography of the area involved.

No Township or part thereof shall be combined with any City or any other part thereof for a single District unless combination is needed to meet population standards.

That applies to Villages and Townships as well.

And, lastly, the one that I want to share with you, is we shall draw no District for a Commissioner to affect partisan advantage.

Our first District in our county is massive compared to the rest of them.

And people don't see their Commissioner.

I hope we can avoid that.

The suggestions I've made will also help simplify ballot elections as well.

I urge the Commission to create new, fresh, Congressional districts that make sense.

It should be easy to know what Congressional District you live in.

And I want to thank you all for being here.

It means a lot because everybody needs to participate in this process.

Thank you.

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

29.

>> Good evening. And I would like to thank the Commission for being here and listening to so many of us with different opinions.

My name is Tom Oby.

I'm from Columbus Township, St. Clair County.

I taught philosophy, logic and English at St. Clair County Community College for 45 years.

And, therefore, since I was teaching philosophy, it certainly included political philosophy.

I have a strong concern with the nature of the districts, particularly as they have been drawn, I think, inappropriately in the past.

And I recognize the difficulty this Commission will have in making fair and equitable decisions about the districts.

I do have a couple of recommendations based on my experience with political philosophy.

Many of them will reflect the words of others who have spoken tonight.

First of all, please get rid of the gerrymandering and serving political interests only and not for people that are supposedly being represented.

Secondly, I do strongly believe districts should be not just compact but also of shared interests or, as has been said tonight, communities of interest.

It does not make sense to put rural districts in connection with large cities because that will clearly disenfranchise the smaller rural communities of lesser population.

That is just not fair.

Secondly or thirdly by now, districts, yeah, they should be compact.

Neighbor based.

Lastly, and, obviously, they need to be fair and equitable.

Some of these may actually prove to be a little bit contradictory, and I recognize that.

And that is the difficulty your task will have to deal with it. And, therefore, I have great sympathy for you; but I deeply appreciate you're being here to listen to us. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for your comments to the Commission this evening and your sympathy.

We appreciate it.

30.

Okay. For purposes of the public record 30 is choosing not to speak, which you are allowed to do.

So if anyone else feels that they don't want to speak, even though we need you to, speak on our public comment tool online. And, 31.

>> Good evening. My name is Carol Middleton. And I live in the City of Port Huron, Michigan. And I wasn't prepared to speak tonight.

I was inspired to speak.

So first and foremost, thank you to the committee.

I do not envy you, your jobs; but I'm thankful that you took the positions.

We are a divided country in so many ways and have been for decades.

This didn't happen overnight, the situation we are in, where we need to readdress boundaries.

We have so many boundaries that we've all allowed to take part of our lives.

So what I ask the Commissioners to do is with an open mind, as unbiased as possible, make the decisions that are best for all, not one.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much for taking the time and being inspired to speak.

We appreciate that.

At this time we are going to take a 20-minute recess.

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We encourage you to stay with us because we have more after the recess.

So we will be returning at 6, what do I have, 39, let's make it 6:40.

See you at 6:40.

So please sign up if you haven't.

You have until 7:00, but we are in a recess right now and we will return at 6:40.

[Recess]

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Good evening.

If we can all find a seat and wrap up those exciting recess conversations.

I call this meeting of the Michigan independent citizens Redistricting Commission back to order at 6:43 p.m.

For purposes of the public record, I will turn to the Michigan Department of State staff to do a roll.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Hello again, Commissioners.

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

please announce during roll call that you are attending the meeting

remotely. And unless your absence is due to military duty, please announce your

physical location by stating the county, city, township or village and the state from which you are attending the meeting remotely.

I'll start with Doug Clark.

>> COMMISSIONER CLARK: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Juanita Curry.

>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Commissioner Curry, could you speak closer to the microphone, please?

>> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Thank you.

Anthony Eid?

>> COMMISSIONER EID: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Brittini Kellom?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rhonda Lange?

>> COMMISSIONER LANGE:

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Steve Lett?

>> COMMISSIONER LETT: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Cynthia Orton?

>> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Present attending from Battle Creek, Michigan.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: MC Rothhorn?

>> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Present.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Rebecca Szetela?

>> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Present.

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>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Janice 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.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: All 12 Commissioners are present.

And there is a quorum.

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

At this time we will return to our public hearing and hearing from all of you all. As a reminder, you will have two minutes to address the Commission, we have a countdown timer that I believe is visible on both screens. So keep an eye out for that, but it's much more important for you to express your comments and thoughts to the Commission and we will keep an eye out on the time. You will hear the timer. If you talk much past the timer, you will hear my voice, that is gently and lovingly reminding you that your two minutes has concluded.

Thank you.

I'm glad that you enjoy that.

So when I call your number, you will step to the microphone and you will share your thoughts with the Commission.

I'm also happy to see so many of you to return back to the room.

The Commission really appreciates that. We need that kind of sustained conversation.

And by my count we are at 32.

>> Hello. My name is Jim.

My apologies for earlier. I was rudely out in the hallway, frantically signing up.

Again, my name is Jim.

I'm a resident of Port Huron. And I am professor of philosophy at St. Clair County Community College.

I was not planning on speaking today but, my predecessor, Mr. Tom Oby, number 29 to all of you, spoke and, well, like always, I'm just following in his footsteps.

So I am here.

If I may express something about a community of interest. My recent research has been on moral decision making and urban planning.

Urban planning, urban policy, and these sorts of things. And so I might be speaking for some motivating reasoning here. And I fully admit that.

But I want to express and share with you that Port Huron is the urban center of St. Clair County.

There is something about Port Huron and its history and its background of being this urban center where we have a vibrant, dynamic, urban area.

We have also gone through the waxes and wanes of all of the large macro-economic changes in America.

We've suffered through urban renewal.

We have suffered through the collapse of auto industries and the resurgence and that sort of thing.

We also have all of the struggles of urban areas.

And we have the wonderful winds of urban areas.

We have this wonderfully vibrant and diverse city, and it's fantastic.

And so if there is a community of interest, I would say it would be sort of the City of Port Huron to one and done. Thank you.

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

33.

>> Hi. My name is Frank.

I'm originally from Saginaw.

I moved down here to Port Huron in 1986 on a five-year plan and somehow ended up staying.

I did not plan on speaking either because I normally can't even introduce myself in two minutes. But I was motivated to speak because of something I heard earlier. And my caution to you as a member of three Commissions in my earlier life, nominated by the Governor, or somehow in the Government of Michigan, we all went in with the attitude we were going to be independent. We were not going to feel coercion or cause coercion to anyone else or have it brought down on us. And I don't know any of you personally, so please don't take this personally. But I did not vote for this Commission. I don't believe that any citizens Commission in Michigan right now can be independent. And I would caution you to be stubborn, watch the movie 12 Angry Men. And if you have a position, you believe strongly in be Henry Fonda and make sure that you talk out those positions to the end and stand up for yourself. Because in all of those Commissions that we went into with starry eyes and open minds, every time we came up with a recommendation that didn't seem to suit the people that put us into that Commission, that recommendation suddenly didn't make it into a final report or never got acted upon. And so I just don't...I wanted to share with you that please be careful of those pressures, that you put on yourself. And that might be put on to you.

But what prompted me to speak to you was one of the people that put the ballot proposal together and made sure it came in an off-year election when people don't care, talked about one of the motivations being extremism.

Well, when I was ten years old, it was extreme to ask for 70% of someone's income as the Federal tax rate was. Now it's extreme to ask to keep 70% of your income. So who defines fairness and who defines extremism? That is all I have to say. Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Frank, for taking the time to address the Commission.

34.

>> Sorry.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

34.

>> Hello. My name is Marcus Middleton. I'm a resident of the City of Port Huron. I'm sitting here and I'm listening to all the comments.

And everyone has an interest one way or another that, well, it kind of benefits themselves, that is what they are trying to look for.

And they are trying to convince you for one certain reason or another.

But what is really interesting here, the only younger individuals here I'd say have to be here.

And there is a few that are interested.

And I think what the Commission should look into, while you're sitting there looking in the audience, look at the age group of the audience.

And there, again, listen to the comments, because ten years from now after this is drawn, we have ten years of bleed before it goes again.

In ten years these interests are going to be completely different than what they're saying right now.

So I'm asking the Commission to look at your audience because where are you going to be in ten years, are you going to -- is this Commission going to help these younger people? And that's what I'm concerned about.

You know, I've already seen. I've already been down the road. I've done it one way or the other.

And, you know, whatever comes, okay, fine.

It's these young ones that need help right now.

And I think that's what I'm asking the Commission.

Sit there and look at your audience and thank you for what you're doing.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much, Marcus, for drawing our attention to that point. And we appreciate you addressing the Commission.

35.

>> Good evening.

I'm Karen Morgan from Port Huron.

To follow Marcus, you should look at yourself, the number of young people on the Commission itself is minimal.

I think that's very important.

I think the question of, the reason the Commission is here is because people could not get the legislature to behave appropriately.

So if we could just have appropriately drawn districts with the right number of people in a regular shape, that would be a great thing.

When I was in high school, and studying political science, there were some things that you were told to look at and be careful about.

The medical student's disease,

Diseases described and you think, oh, my gosh, I must have it.

Or a band wagoning.

Or gerrymandering.

Today gerrymandering is a way for your party to win. And whether it's a fair thing, or not, is seemingly irrelevant.

If you watch golf, you will see they don't move the ball unless there is somebody standing there watching.

We surely could take better care of our vote than we do of our golf balls.

Thank you very much.

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

36.

>> Good evening. My name is Lee.

I live in East China.

There are some mornings when I wake up and I'm fearful that our democracy is not going to be in existence as we know it for my great grandchildren.

I notice there is no national flag. There is no state flag.

But what I want and what I came here tonight was to impress upon the Commission that you need to be honest.

You need to be fair.

You need to be impartial to...you just need to be impartial.

You're not here to serve any political committee or political party.

You're not here to serve any ethnic group.

You are here to serve the State of Michigan's citizens.

And as you carry out your function, please, I want you to keep that in mind.

I'm sure, when you're all done, no one in here is going to agree with everything you came up with.

But just if you do it as honest and fair and impartial, that's all that I ask for.

So thank you for letting me participate in Government.

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

We appreciate you.

37.

>> Hello. My name is Carol Seeber and I've lived in St. Clair County for 56 years, right now in the area of Waddams and Kimball Township.

I wasn't going to say anything because I didn't think I had anything important to say. And I was chatting with one of your members up there and he said are you going to speak? And I said, no, not really.

He said, well, you should.

That's just what we want to hear.

Well, I have very little to say, but I will say it.

I would like to mention, I hope you are enjoying our beautiful waterfront here, which goes all the way down to the Bay. So that right there is an interest for the District here.

The only thing I would have to say is what I was discussing with my Township supervisor.

He and I were discussing this issue.

What would we say would be the interests of this area? So he said, and I thought it was pretty good, I want to use his words, he says rural living with City convenience.

And I thought, oh, that is good.

And then we started to talk about, well, what are those things? And he said outdoor living.

I said okay, that is good, that is good.

Camping, fishing, hunting.

And that pretty much sums it up.

We have seen changes here over the years, but not an awful lot.

We still have the feeling of rural living with City convenience.

We have the beautiful waterfront.

We have seen people move in, of course, and businesses expand. But it's pretty much still the same feel of rural living, and we like it that way.

I thank you.

That's it.

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

And if you have a map to talk about what outdoor living looks like in the Port Huron Area, please do share that with us.

We would like to see it.

38.

>> Hello and welcome.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Hi.

>> My name is Paige.

For tens of thousands of years, this spot right here was called the gathering place. The whole northeast quadrant of our continent and all of the indigenous cultures that lived would come here, central Pine Grove Park, not too far that way, to meet, to mediate, to celebrate, to hunt, to collect, to marry, to pray, to compete. And I do believe there is the synagogue that gave Ben Franklin or someone democracy. One way they change when they meet in a circle and they would all hear each other out.

It's so expiring.

This is such a special area we are in.

300 years ago they said, you know, we got some white bread coming and it's going to be rough but then you get the kids with the braids and the beads and there is apparently a manifest destiny of our country for the colors of the four people all over the planet to come here and become a community again.

Some say we already have enough food to feed everyone on the planet. We already have enough technologies. It's the fighting over the turf instead of nurturing the garden that is getting in place and what is that? That's the two previous people, it's, what is his name, the beagle guy, he had a theory of competition and nature. It's not. It's cooperation.

And we had a guy Rock Stevens downtown he said, yeah, there is a human race. All humans.

So it is about cooperation.

I'm old enough that I was of the 60s and I was conservative.

Man, I was conservative and I went in and changed the world from the inside. And 33 I went, no, look for a different way.

So I've been practicing healthcare.

Got some fliers to leave with you. Thank you.

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

At this time we will go to 39.

>> Good evening.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Good evening.

>> I'm Christopher Cummings. I reside in Rochester Hills and I drove all the way up here tonight to talk about my community of interest, which is the Rochester Area. I know you heard about it at a previous hearing.

Rochester Area to me specifically is the two combined cities of Rochester and Rochester Hills.

36 square miles. We were previously told they share in common services. I should say the library, the older persons Commission, School District, the District Court, and of course the Chamber of Commerce.

They also have in common the historic society as well.

I think you should be looking at, again, these historic districts as much as possible when you take into consideration the drawing of the District lines.

So my request is for Rochester and Rochester Hills to be combined and not separated for all three of the maps, State House, State Senate, and the U.S. House.

Furthermore, just to the north is Oakland Township, which does have a Rochester mailing address for part of it, some of its residents. And I would encourage you to encourage Oakland Township along with Rochester and Rochester Hills together in any State Senate or U.S. House Districts that you draw to keep them together.

I don't think there is...I think there might be too much population for all three for Oakland Township to be included in a State House District with Rochester and Rochester Hills, but that was my purpose for coming up here tonight, is to advocate for my community of interest.

Thank you very much for your time. And thank you for all the effort you've put into this.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

We appreciate you addressing the Commission and driving all that way to share about your community of interest.

And 40.

>> Good evening.

My name is John Danielle.

I live in Grosse Pointe Woods, which is in the northeast portion of Wayne County. And, first, I would like to express my thanks to the Commissioners for volunteering to take on this enormously and difficult task and it's a very important task, so thank you very much.

I respectfully ask that as you consider the boundaries that you recognize, the five Grosse Pointe municipalities, Grosse Pointe Woods, Grosse Pointe Farms, Grosse Pointe Shores, Grosse Pointe Park and the City of Grosse Pointe, and those communities north of the points is my community of interest.

I live in Grosse Pointe Woods. I shop there. I socialize there. My neighbor's children attend Grosse Pointe Schools.

I obtain my medical and dental services there. I dine out there. I enjoy the library services. And there is close cooperation between the fire and police agencies of the five municipalities of the Grosse Pointes. And it's important to understand that my community of interest extends beyond the Grosse Pointes to the communities north of the points. And as evidenced in that northern orientation, I would like to just mention that my own City, Grosse Pointe Woods, our City park actually lies within the boundaries of St. Clair Shores, which is in Macomb to the north of us. And significant portions of Grosse Pointe Shores actually lie within Macomb County, outside of Wayne. And the Grosse Pointe School District encompass significant portions of Harper Woods, another suburb north and to the west of the Points.

Those aspects of my life that are not lived out in the Grosse Pointes are lived out almost exclusively in the northern communities. I conduct additional shopping there. I personally worship in Roseville. My other neighbors attend church in St. Clair Shores. And my place of employment is in Warren. Therefore, I ask as you draw the District boundaries, I respectfully ask that you keep the Grosse Pointes whole and connected to the communities north of the Points.

These are the facts of my life. And I'm very confident that they are strongly representative of the typical resident. So, once again, thank you sincerely for your hard work.

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

We appreciate it.

41.

>> Hello.

How are you all? My name is Marie Hackleman. And I'm not in my community of interest right at the moment.

I'm also from the Grosse Pointe Area and have come up here and so grateful for the opportunity to speak to you.

Thank you for what you are doing.

So as there are -- my name is Marie. And I live in Grosse Pointe Park and that's in the county of Wayne.

And the Grosse Pointes, as you may know, are nestled in the northern most spot of Wayne. Grosse Pointe Park, City, Farms, Woods and Shores. They are all interconnected.

We live as one community, even though we are technically five municipalities. We have mutual aid between all of them.

We share services between them.

Our school District is the Grosse Pointe Public School District.

Presently we are divided into two House Districts. It complicates things. It would be great if we were in one District together.

Our school District also incorporates a portion of Harper Woods. And Grosse Pointe Woods actually has a waterfront park, which is located in St. Clair Shores and Macomb Township to the north of us.

Grosse Pointe Shores is actually located between a portion in Wayne County and another portion in Macomb County.

There are many things that tie our District together with those north of us.

The schools, our athletics, competes, and lands cruise, and Anchor Bay, those areas.

We are along the water, the lake, Lake St. Clair. We are at the bottom portion of Lake St. Clair. Those other communities along the lake, there are issues we need an

advocate for and representation regarding various threats, disasters, that have to do with the water.

And it would be great if we could be connected, you know, with the...our as the Grosse Pointes including Harper Woods and those communities north.

Thank you so much.

I really appreciate it.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Marie, we appreciate you taking the time to address the Commission.

We don't mind community of interest crashers. You can come anywhere in Michigan as long as you want to be heard and to talk with the Commission, so we appreciate that.
42.

>> Hi.

My name is Martin.

I come from Port Austin, which is a small community in the tip of the thumb, which is Huron County.

I'm here because right now Huron County is part of the tenth District, and it has been since the last realignment.

And I'm asking that Huron County be in the same District as Bay County, which it was prior to the last redistricting.

Huron County and Bay County have a lot of commonality when it comes to shoreline fishing, boating, recreation. In Huron County we rely on Dade County media, WNEN, TV5, the Bay City Times, not Detroit media particularly.

Our athletics mostly compete with Bay City Area athletics.

We use Bay County for shopping, restaurants, entertainment, doctors, when we can't get the necessary care, that isn't available in Huron County. So thank you.

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

We appreciate it.

And if you would like to specify the area that you were just speaking about, please use our public comment tool to submit a map or the comments you just shared in writing, we would appreciate that.

>> Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: You're welcome.

At this time we are going to move to our remote public comment.

Individuals who have signed up and indicated that they would like to provide live, remote public commentary to the Commission will now be allowed to do so.

I will turn the floor over to Michigan Department of State staff. And if you are on a computer, you will be prompted by the Zoom app to unmute your microphone and speak.

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If you are on the phone, a voice will say that the host would like you to speak and prompt you to press star six to unmute.

Michigan Department of State staff will introduce you. And note that if you experience any technical or audio issues and we don't hear from you for 3-5 seconds, we will move on to the next person in line and then we will return to you.

If you're still having issues and we can't connect with you to share your thoughts today, for commentary, you can e-mail redistricting@Michigan.gov and we will arrange a way for you to participate during the next public comment period at a later hearing or meeting.

Again, just like we did for in-person, you will have two minutes to address the Commission.

Please do conclude your remarks at the end of the two minutes.

You will also hear a timer, even though it's virtual, please do listen out for our timer.

And you can go to the public comment tool and share your comments in writing, including any area of the map that you will be speaking about.

Again, that public comment tool is www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

For purposes of those present and also those watching and listening, we have three virtual public comments, just three. So if you are in the room, maybe you listen to the three. If you don't have time, we love that you sat this long with us and was an ear to the peers as well as giving voice to your perspective with the Commission this evening.

So Michigan Department of State staff, Sarah Reinhardt, you have the floor.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have one public comment participant present, that is James Gallant. And please allow us a moment to unmute you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for the clarification.

>> Hello.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: We can hear you.

>> All right then. My name is James Gallant. I'm with the Marquette County Suicide Prevention Coalition. And my community of interest is all people that acknowledge that Robert's Rules of Order 2020 as the fundamental principles of parliamentary law in the United States of America.

It seems that there is only two people in the State of Michigan so far that agree with me that this Commission must follow the Robert's Rules of Order.

And that is your former attorney, Mr. Mike Brady, and your Executive Director, Ms. Hammersmith, as she pointed out at your meeting earlier that the constitutional amendment requires a majority rules process.

That means all decisions being made by majority vote at a public meeting, under Open Meetings Act. It seems that this Commission is attempting to move towards a collaborative, facilitated dialog, consensus type process that is not compatible with the Constitution in the State of Michigan.

And please remember that in Court fairness will only be measured by this Commission's fidelity to be approved Robert's Rules of Order and the fundamental principles of parliamentary law in America.

Now, your colleague, Commissioner Clark, suggested earlier at the meeting that he favors a consensus process in favor of that, you know, and I paraphrase, that pesky, you know, motion and vote thing.

So I believe that it will be a big mistake for you folks to allow anybody to dissuaded you from following the Robert's Rules of Order, which you voted to approve anyway. And you are personally responsible for your vote. And, like I said, in Court the fairness is going to be did you follow the rules. And like they said, Mr. Richard Bill didn't follow the rules, well, guess what that just changed the name. And like some of the folks earlier said, you're changing the name and gerrymandering here if you are talking about your community of interest and your peoples and whatever it is you're talking about, doesn't matter.

If it's the fundamental principles of parliamentary law in America that protect everybody equally. And people talk about this community of, you know.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Mr. Gallant, your allotted two minutes has ended.

>> Okay, we will finish up in two more minutes later.

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

I turn the floor back over to Michigan Department of State staff, because I believe we have a second comment.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time we will now allow participants who have requested to speak for a second time to provide public comment.

We have one participant who made this request, that is Mr. James Gallant. If you could give me a moment to unmute you.

>> Okay. Are you still with me? Hello.

>> MS. SARAH REINHARDT: We can hear you.

>> There you go. Yeah, so we can continue here. James Gallant, Marquette County Suicide Prevention Coalition, community of interest of interest, you know, people that believe in Robert's Rules of Order and the American way.

So, as I was saying, you know, I said earlier that I found the three applications of this Commission were disqualified during the random selection process. Well, I reviewed everybody's current member. And it appears that we have several members that have incomplete applications also. Commissioner Kellom, the Chair; Commissioner Lett; Commissioner Szetela. They wrote choose not to answer on the questions that were, they said to ensure that you don't have a conflict of interest, they wrote all the same answer, exactly the same phrase, choose not to answer as if maybe they were coached to do so.

And then we have Commissioner Wagner, Commissioner Decker and Commissioner Eid that have no date stamp on their applications, verifying that they were there before the deadline on January 1, 2020. And also Commissioner Eid said that on, he wrote down that he is of Middle Eastern race.

And, as we learned earlier from your...the person that you contracted with, Middle Eastern is not a race.

It's not a race.

They want it to be and they are trying to make it that, but it's not a race at this time. So I believe his application has two missing things on it.

So please note to receive a written report from your attorney concerning the applications and with the completeness of the application of the current numbers in order to verify that they have been, I have spoken to Mr. Rawl who conducted those and the Government -- Governor's Office and my Senator. And we are going to try to get into this. And I believe all, what will that be, six people, five, six people should be removed from this Commission immediately and we should be reappointing somebody immediately and before you get too far in the process, and, you know, especially with the three people in a committee thing. And I believe somebody mentioned that you're doing the divide and conquer like they did in California.

Well, the democrats in California by the...it's known on the Internet as...I'll be submitting the articles, that the democrats, they ended up on the upside.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Mr. Gallant your allotted two minutes has ended.

>> Well, thank you.

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

At this time we are done with both in-person and remote public commentary. And if there are no objections, I will have our General Counsel provide acknowledgments. Hearing no objection, General Counsel?

>> MS. JULIANNE PASTULA: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. And thank you again to St. Clair County for being so welcoming this evening.

The Commission would like to thank the League of Women Voters as well as Voters Not Politicians volunteers for staffing the event and helping to make it a success.

We would also like to thank the Blue Water Convention Center for being such a wonderful host.

Thank you again, Madam Chair.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, once again, to everyone who was involved in putting today together, as well as each of you that took the time out to share comments.

We encourage you to continue to provide those comments in writing. And, as you see, you can come to other public hearings, the last two that we will have, and any other town hall, please keep in the conversation because we do need the input.

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At this time, with no further items left on the agenda, and the Commission having no further business, I would like a motion for adjournment.

COMMISSIONER WITJES: So moved.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Motion made by Commissioner Witjes. Can I have a second?

>> COMMISSIONER LETT: Second.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Second by Commissioner Lett. Is there any discussion about the motions? Hearing none, all those in favor, please raise your hand and say aye.

>> Aye.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: All those opposed raise your hand and say nay.

The ayes have it.

The motion carries. And the meeting is adjourned at 7:19.

Everyone be well and be safe, please.

[Meeting concludes]