

Ottawa County is a community of interest at the federal level, local communities of interest within the county deserve their own representation at the state level.

Currently, the three state house districts represent three local communities of interest. The 88th district represents agriculture on the eastern side of the county, the 89th district represents the lakeshore, and the 90th district represents unique, historic cities. Locally, each of these environments face different challenges such as state regulations, zoning, local taxes, and more. Residents in Ottawa County deserve local representatives who understand and care about these communities of interest and will advocate for them in Lansing.

Limiting the Burden on County and Township Election Officials

As you know, running an election requires the dedication of county and township election officials. Elections are very costly and often complicated. Anytime one county is split, the costs and burden on local election officials increases. Large scale changes, like the proposed maps that split Ottawa County into three congressional districts, will inevitably lead to voter confusion. County and township officials will need to spend large amounts of taxpayer dollars explaining where the new boundaries are. Confusion also disenfranchises voters who may become frustrated by the process and fail to cast a ballot. Voters may also cast less-educated votes if they are unaware that their representatives have changed and spend time watching the wrong races. Splitting Ottawa County into multiple districts also complicates the process of counting and reporting vote totals on election night. Trust and faith in our elections are eroded by errors or recounts that may occur due to the confusion of split districts. I urge the Commission to keep voter education and local election administration on the forefront while crafting our new maps.

Thank you for your dedication to our state and for your service on the Commission. I urge you to move forward by (1) keeping Ottawa County wholly in one congressional district, (2) keeping state house and state senate districts within Ottawa County, and (3) considering the impact of revised maps on county and township election officials. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Z. H. H. H.", written over a light blue background.

Park Township Resident
Ottawa County

Please don't put me with Kalamazoo

To: Michigan's Independent Redistricting Commission

From: Sonja Patrick

Address: [REDACTED] Battle Creek, MI 49014

September 11, 2001 is a day that I will remember for as long as I'm alive. I was a Jr. in high school, and I remember feeling that this wasn't possible, things like this don't really happen. Shortly after, I was contacted by a recruiter for the United States Army. I enlisted under the delayed entry program, allowing me to finish high school and turn 18. 1 week after my birthday, I was off to Basic Training. Once I graduated from Basic Training, I went on to learn my MOS (job) as a 52D (generator mechanic). Then I was off to Germany and assigned to 1st Armored Division, 69th Chemical Company. I was immediately being fitted for DCU's (desert combat uniform) so I could receive my orders that I was going to Iraq.

Our orders stated that we were on deployment for 365 days. On the last day, we had our trucks loaded and ready to come home. New orders were handed down that we were going to be extended for an additional 4 months. That was a difficult day for any of us to get through. No one spoke a word; we didn't know why this was happening. A few of my friends lost their lives in the days that followed (mental illness doesn't only occur when a soldier returns home).

2 months after the extension, I became very sick. I was seen repeatedly in sick call for 2 weeks and the diagnosis was that I was dehydrated so I was monitored and ordered to drink water all day. The day of our physical training test I began to start hurting and was moving slow. When the 2-mile run portion of the PT test was underway, my platoon sergeant began screaming at me to finish the run. I finished it (barely) then collapsed. I was taken to a medical facility off base and found out that my appendix had ruptured during the PT test. Next, I was put under anesthesia and receiving an appendectomy.

At some point during my operation, the facility became under attack and a few mortar rounds struck the medical base, and I was thrown from the operating table. At this time, there was a no-fly order in effect for all of Iraq, due to constant enemy fire and how much of our military was engaged in direct combat. The no-fly order meant no planes or aircrafts were to leave or come into the area. I had completely lost the use of both of my legs, leaving me in a wheelchair, along with no feeling in my right arm. I was unable to care for myself, or wear any protective equipment (Kevlar helmet, Flak vest, etc.). I was medevac'd from the area and after a very long process was discharged from the Army in 2005. I came to Michigan to be with my mother in her final days. I arrived with only the clothes that I was wearing and a small bag that was strapped to the back of my chair. I spent my 1st several nights in my mom's room at an assisted living facility. One of my mom's nurses told me that I should be seen at the Battle Creek VA Medical Center. At this point, I was relying on taxi cabs and city buses to get around a city that I had never been to. I was also in a state of shock after being deployed for so long listening to and seeing gun fire/mortar/rockets every day, dust storms, 140-degree weather, wide open desert fields, showering underneath a PVC pipe, burn pits, and then coming to Battle Creek. Even the paved roads seemed different to me.

When I was able to find the VA, they refused to see me multiple times. No one would talk to me, and it was difficult for me to talk about what had happened to me. When I was sent to Michigan, all of my discharge papers were sent to my hometown in Texas. Thankfully there was a representative for the Disabled American Veterans who noticed me when I was filled with tears, frightened, alone and in pain. This man tracked down my DD214 and got me enrolled right away. It took me 17 years to prove to the VA what had happened to me.

When I was dropped off here, I felt like the Army discarded me in every way possible. I was no longer useful to them. Some of the thoughts that bothered me the most was "why did I survive?" A lot of my friends never got to come home. I wasn't married, I had no kids, yet I was allowed to live. My mother told me to follow my heart and trust that God has a reason for everything. I'm still not sure why I'm here.

After me legs were strong enough to move on from the wheelchair, then walker, and cane. Lots of acupuncture, surgeries, and physical therapy and I'm finally able to take care of myself. Throughout the years, I began meeting lots of other Veterans. After speaking with them, I started noticing similarities in many ways. Then I realized that because of my trials with the Veterans Health Administration, I was able to pass some information on to other Veterans. Now I volunteer with several Veterans Service Organizations and help as many Veterans as I can. This world is a sick place and what happens to these men and women that never gets media attention, is disgusting. I have heard so many horror stories from these Veterans. The kicker is that many of these stories are the same (meaning the Veteran isn't making up some conspiracy theory).

By now, you're probably wondering why I am telling you all this. The reason is because of how much this redistricting means to me. I am asking you... No, wait... I am begging you to please not include any part of Calhoun County with the city of Kalamazoo. Kalamazoo has a wonderful University that attracts a lot of young (not fully matured) students. They move to our area for a few years, they leave and never look back. Sadly, the majority of students these days are vastly losing respect for our military, and they have no aspiration to join themselves. Battle Creek fully supports our military members, along with Augusta, and Climax. Kalamazoo is also much larger than we are. Any representative would focus solely on Kalamazoo (because that where their voting power is). Anyone who claims that Battle Creek and Kalamazoo should go together, is a person doing so out of purely partisan reasoning.

There is a local candidate who has run for several elected positions in the past. This person has lost every election. He is trying to get rid of some competition by pushing us into Kalamazoo (which will cause a landslide victory for one political party). I don't know this person, never met him, seen him, talked to him. For all know maybe he's a nice person. He has put out a call to convince people (by any means necessary) to submit to you that Kalamazoo belongs with Calhoun. They use I-94 in a lot of these post. If we base communities off sections of Highways, then by all logic, every city connected by I94 would have to be paired with another city along that same highway. Why stop there? We would have to continue doing this for every highway. If you truly are an independent Commission (which both sides are speculating as to how independent) please don't put us together. I applied to be a 2022 precinct delegate for the very 1st time. I was happy getting people involved in our community and learning about the issues that are important to all residents here. If you put us with Kalamazoo, then I know that anything I've done or will try to do in the future doesn't mean anything to anyone. I don't matter and probably never did, knocking doors no longer matter, because my voice will be eliminated by Kalamazoo.

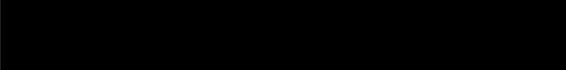
I grew up in a very diverse family. A mixture of every race goes back for generations. When I was younger, I live on N. Westnedge Ave in Kalamazoo. My mom, brother, and me were the only white people in the entire neighborhood. My brother and me were bullied, we were beaten up by other kids. A group of girls pretended to be my friends, then lured me into a 2-story condemned house and beat me head into the floor causing a piece of the 2nd story to cave in. Then they left me there, bleeding and in complete darkness. Me and my brother spent a few years in Foster Care because my mother was ill. I don't have any good memories from that time in my life. I was 9 years old. I have never treated anyone different because of their color. It's difficult for me to stop and think about someone being black when I spent most of my life in white minority communities. By putting Kalamazoo city with Battle Creek, it is the black population self-packing into a single district, when Kalamazoo can easily have 2 state House Representatives for just the city, then another 1 for the outer rural parts of the county. I haven't had the greatest luck throughout my life, but I am happy here. I love my new house and I'm quite comfortable in my little horseshoe suburb.

I mentioned before that I haven't figured out why I made it out of Iraq and why I'm still alive. The only thing I can offer to this world in return is by being the voice for our Veterans. I have never turned my back on any of them and I stay with them until they reach the end of their process (whether it's claims, home loans, homelessness, substance abuse, education, burn pits, or if they just need someone to talk to, I will always answer their call). I've finally found my place, which is right here in Battle Creek, Michigan. This is my home. I'm finally beginning to open up and use my voice. Please don't take it from me.

Commissioner Orton, please understand that Battle Creek also has Emmett Township, Springfield, Bedford, Penfield. We are mostly rural areas with small suburbs in between. These are beautiful areas, and good people here. If they put us with the city of Kalamazoo, none of us will have a voice and be nonexistent to our State and Congressional Legislators.

I know how difficult your job is and all of you must be completely exhausted. Thank you for your service to the 10 million residents in Michigan. I know that so many of them are ungrateful, unappreciative and leave very nasty remarks on the public comment portal. I'm sorry for the way people are behaving and want you to know that the majority of us appreciate you.

Kindest regards to all of you,
Sonja Patrick


Emmett Charter Township (Precinct 4),
Harper Creek School District, Calhoun County

My House Districts Map

DISTRICT 1: I honestly don't know anything about this particular area. I have never been to this part of the state. I started here, filling up the county until I reached the necessary population count. I don't feel there are really any alternates if they want to keep the district within their county boundaries.

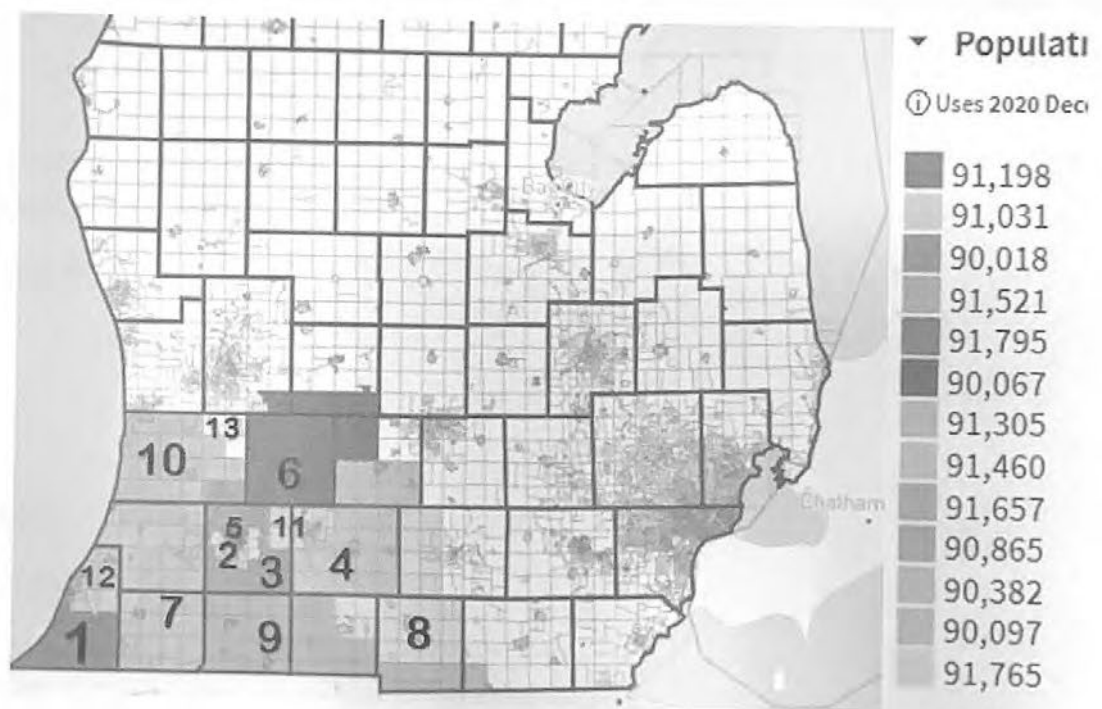
DISTRICTS 2, 3 & 5: This map gives the city of Kalamazoo 2 districts. Based on its size and minority population, I feel these district lines will give the residents in Kalamazoo the opportunity to elect a person of color if they so choose for 2 districts. This also gives them a larger voice in the state Legislature (and doesn't pack them into 1 district – muffling their voice) or spread them out into several districts (which would dilute their voice). I based all of my lines on the population count, reading public comment submissions as to which areas are better suited to be with others. I never looked at the partisan makeup during my line process. I am brand new to the political world and have absolutely no knowledge of what parts of the state have Democratic values and which believe in Republic values. I only recently learned about Dems being in cities and Republicans being in rural areas. I personally think politics is overrated and creating such a division in this country. I wish people would get over themselves and quit lying to the citizens in this country. Not everything is about money, and they can't take it with them when they die. I just want people to be nice to each other. To stop throwing their garbage on our earth. To quit being so self-involved that they never notice when someone is struggling & could use some help. After I was done with the map, I looked at the partisan makeup in the districts. Both of these districts are blue. The 3rd district consists of the rest of Kalamazoo County. The parts that are outside the city limits. This being a rural area has a slight Republican lean. The margin is very minimal and could easily be won by either party, making this a very competitive district.

DISTRICT 4: encompasses Emmett Township and the rest of Calhoun County. These are rural areas that house multiple generations of families who are connected to each other. Emmett township (where I live) has more in common with Leroy Township, Marshall, Clarendon, Clarence, Burlington Townships. All of these places are right next to me and tend to be more focused on long lasting generations of families who will take cookies to their neighbors when they are sick. These are agricultural areas and have different expectations than our urbanized neighbors. This district finishes in the bottom half of Eaton County. This is also a deeply agricultural area and part of Bellevue (Convis Township) is in Calhoun County. By drawing the lines here, it keeps the Bellevue School District together, as well as the village and township. Bellevue is such a small community that it doesn't make sense to divide them up.

DISTRICT 6: I took part of Eaton County and put it with Barry County. I feel that Vermontville, Charlotte, and Potterville have more in common with their rural neighbors in Nashville, and Middleville. I've read the many comments of people asking the commission to include Eaton County with the tri-counties region. I don't think this is accurate of how a good portion of Eaton County fits in. Part of Eaton County is in Lansing and that is a very different world from the rest of the county that is extremely rural, small, and close neighbors. I spent the last decade living in Bellevue and I know for certain that Bellevue is more connected to Nashville, Potterville, Vermontville, Middleville, and Charlotte. The people in this part of Eaton County don't travel to Lansing, they have no need to.

DISTRICT 11: This district will give the city of Battle Creek, its own representative. Someone who will be from Battle Creek and will focus on Battle Creek. The residents living in Battle Creek deserve much better than to a representative that they didn't vote for, whose only concern is the much bigger city of Kalamazoo. Not to mention Kalamazoo residents will vote for someone living in Kalamazoo, rather than someone who lives in a neighboring city. This district also keeps all of the military establishments under one house district and will hopefully offer a representative who is either a veteran themselves or at least someone familiar with concerns that Veterans have. Augusta is on the very edge of Kalamazoo County. Fort Custer National Cemetery is in Augusta & the majority of the other military establishments are in Springfield, which is in Calhoun County. Just like with the 3rd District, the 11th district has a slight Democratic lean. The margin is very minimal and could easily be won by either party, making this a very competitive district.

<https://districtr.org/plan/47048>
 Sept 14, 2021
 Plan/p4586 Congressional Districts



September 22, 2021

To Whom it may concern

I am writing in regards to redistricting Ottawa County. I was a citizen of Kent County for 2 years and I moved to Ottawa County recently. I am not in favor of moving Georgetown Township into a district with Kent County. I have lived in both Counties and they have a completely different vibe about them. I love the small community feel of Georgetown Township and I do not want to have my district moved into Kent County. It's a completely different culture and we need to remain separate!

Please do not split up Ottawa County into different districts. Please keep out local communities together that have similar cultures.

Thank you for your attention and I am asking that you would grant my request.

Sincerely

Penny VanDuinen

[REDACTED]
Hudsonville, MI 49426

Michigan Independent
Citizens Redistricting
Commission
P.O. Box 30318
Lansing, MI. 48909

Ms. Dianne Schley



Belleville, MI. 48111

Dear Commission:

~~MICHIGAN~~ Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission...
We are aware of a Chair Person being chosen every 6 mos. and we are aware that it should be a "Responsible Republican". When making the choice this time we are glad for you to choose a Republican when this should be done fairly & equally.

We are not satisfied with the redistricting portion of the downriver South East Michigan portion that you have presented. Please do not split the cities 3 different ways, which means don't do this to Wayne 12th District that I'm 6th Precinct Delegate for!!!

Sincerely,
Ms. Dianne Schley

4700 Sandpiper Lane
[REDACTED]

September 10, 2021

MICRC

P.O. Box 30318

Lansing Michigan 48909

I write regarding shocking allegations in the Detroit News that at least two self-professed "independent" members of the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission have strong ties to the Democrat party or liberal causes.

Reading my application for a position on the MICRC, it seemed quite clear "independent" members were to be people who are non-partisan, which by definition is "not biased or partisan, especially toward any particular political group." I thought, however, an applicant could claim to be "non-partisan," but, in fact, have definite partisan political leanings. How, I wondered, if the state would vet "independent" commission members to verify their claims - particularly since the application itself made no attempt to have the applicant demonstrate actual non-partisanship in terms of, for example: public statements; campaigning or voting history; past contributions to a party or candidates; or party membership history?? (Note that the applications by the "independent" commission members posted on line show no response provided to the question specifically asking why they claim to be "independent.")

Apparently, my skepticism the state would do its job to investigate their backgrounds was correct. This casts a very dark shadow of suspicion on any product by a commission whose membership is not constituted as required by our state constitution. Unfortunately, it appears the people of Michigan may well have been lied to and defrauded.

How, at this late date, are you going to address this serious problem? I would appreciate an answer.

Yours truly,

[REDACTED]

Kerry Greenhut

9/12/2021

Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission
P.O. Box 30318
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission,

We are aware of A Chair Person being chosen every six months. In all fairness, we are also aware that it should be a responsible Republican when make the choice this time.

Regards,

Wonda F Branch

Wonda Branch

Taylor, MI 48180

9/12/2021

Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission
P.O. Box 30318
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission,

We are aware of A Chair Person being chosen every six months. In all fairness, we are also aware that it should be a responsible Republican when making the choice this time.

Regards,

Carol Garcia