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MICRC

05/11/21 6:02 pm Public Hearing

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>> CHAIR KELLOM: So as Chair of the Commission I call this meeting of the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to order at 6:02. This Zoom webinar is also 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 visit our social media at redistricting Michigan to find the link for viewing on YouTube.

Our live stream today includes closed captioning.

Closed captioning, ASL interpretation 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 needing other specific accommodations should also contact redistricting@Michigan.gov.

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

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

There is also a public comment portal that may be accessed by visiting Michigan.gov/micrc.

This portal can be utilized to post maps and comments which can be viewed by the public.

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

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

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

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

Commissioner Clark.

COMMISSIONER CLARK: Present.

>> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Curry?

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- >> COMMISSIONER CURRY: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Eid?
- >> COMMISSIONER EID: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Kellom?
- >> CHAIR KELLOM: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Lange?
- >> COMMISSIONER LANGE: Present; attending remotely from Reed City, Michigan.
- >> CHAIR KELLOM: Rhonda, I think you are on mute.
- >> COMMISSIONER LANGE: Present; attending remotely from Reed City, Michigan.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Kellom?
- >> CHAIR KELLOM: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Lange?
- >> COMMISSIONER LANGE: Present attending remotely.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Apologies. We are having some technical difficulties.

Thank you, Rhonda.

Commissioner Lett?

- >> COMMISSIONER LETT: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Orton?
- >> COMMISSIONER ORTON: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Rothhorn?
- >> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Szetela?
- >> VICE CHAIR SZETELA: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Vallette?
- >> COMMISSIONER VALLETTE: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Wagner?
- >> COMMISSIONER WAGNER: Present; attending remotely from Charlotte,

Michigan.

- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Weiss?
- >> COMMISSIONER WEISS: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: Commissioner Witjes?
- >> COMMISSIONER WITJES: Present.
- >> MS. SALLY MARSH: All Commissioners are present.
- >> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Sarah.

Now we'll have the welcome and introductions.

>> I think that's me.

>> COMMISSIONER ROTHORN: I'm doing this on your behalf.

My name is commissioner MC Rothhorn.

Welcome to the MICRC public hearing in Jackson.

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We are happy you are here to learn about the redistricting process and how to engage to ensure your voice is heard.

In looking at the agenda, I think I'm the person that is supposed to advance this, forgive me.

In looking at the agenda, note the vast majority of our time this evening we are eager to -- senate districts.

We want to hear your ideas about communities of interest.

In 2018, more than 61% of Michigan voters intentionally and deliberately passed proposal two, a valid initiative to take responsibility for map fairness and public feedback in the redistricting process to get the MCIRC.

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

Comprised of -- excuse me, comprised of 13 randomly selected Michigan residents, four democrats, five independents and four who affiliate with republicans through a lottery of the Michigan lottery of the state.

MCIRC has the authority from the Michigan congressional house and senate districts. As fellow residents, MCIRC understands your expectations to draw maps in an open manner.

Our mission exemplifies our resolve for today and future generations as well.

In your interaction with the MCIRC and staff, witness the core values of integrity, respect, transparency and being purposeful.

Once again, we are glad you are here and look forward to hearing from you.

>> Thank you, MC.

We are going to hear from sue Hammersmith and she will share about the public hearings.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: Good evening and thank you for being here tonight.

We really appreciate having everybody come out to the very first public hearing.

I want to talk to you a little bit about what the constitution of Michigan says about public hearings.

First, before we draw the first line or any commissioners draw the line, the commission has to hold at least ten public hearings throughout the state.

Our commission is made up of overachievers hosting 16 public hearings and this is, as MC said, is the first.

There are three purposes for public hearings.

First is to inform the public about the redistricting process, second is to share the responsibilities of the commission and third and most importantly is solicit information about the redistricting process.

First, what is redistricting?

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Every ten years, lines have to be redrawn in states across America to reflect the population.

The process of drawing district lines is known as redistricting.

In Michigan, we will draw three maps.

One will have the 13 Michigan congressional districts, one for the 38 Michigan senate districts and one for the 110 Michigan house districts.

The commissions purpose and responsibilities include exercising the constitutional powers granted solely to them to redistrict Michigan, to operate an impartial and transparent manner that reinforces public confidence in the integrity of the redistricting process and to conduct public outreach throughout the state that invites meaningful public participation in the process.

Also, they will adopt the maps I mentioned, one for each type of district.

They will ensure credibility, public availability and accountability for data, for public comments and for the commission information and they will assure compliance with the redistricting criteria.

As you may know, if you have looked at the constitution, there are seven criteria for redistricting.

First, they must follow federal law that is equal population and follow the voting rights act.

Secondly, districts must be geographically contiguous.

Third, we must take communities of interest into consideration.

The fourth and fifth are about political parties.

We cannot give a disproportionate advantage to any political party or favor or disfavor an incumbent elected official or candidate.

Sixth, the lines must reflect county, city and township boundaries and seventh, be reasonably compact.

It's a tall order.

This commission is up for the challenge.

Why are we hear this evening?

To hear directly from you about your ideas to redistrict Michigan's congressional house and senate districts and to listen and learn from you about your community of interest.

Why should you care?

Because this is an historic process for the state of Michigan.

It empowers citizens to give input for the lines to best represent their interest.

It's an open and transparent process with opportunity for statewide public participation and invites communities of interest to share their voices for how they can be best represented.

Thank you for listening about public hearings.

I'll turn it over to the general council to talk about public comment guidelines before we get into public comments.

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>> Thank you very much, Sue.

Welcome, everyone, to our very first public hearing for the inaugural Michigan independent citizens redistricting commission.

Thank you.

The public comment guidelines I would like to briefly go through, including in person and remote participants can be by telephone or virtual.

This evening, the time period is up to two minutes.

You will hear the alarm.

[Alarm]

-- when your time is up.

The in person public comments will take place first, then by remote participants.

The public comment portal is www.Michigan.gov/MICRC.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Julian.

We will begin the public comment portion of the meeting.

Individuals who signed up and indicated they would like to provide in person public commentary to the commission will be allowed to do so.

Please step to the nearest microphone when I call your number.

We'll have two minutes to address the Commission.

Please conclude your remarks when you hear the timer.

First in line to provide public comment will have numbers one and two come to this mic to the left and three and four to the right.

Number one, you are now invited to address the Commission.

>> Good evening.

May I remove my mask to speak?

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Yes, it's up to your comfort.

>> My name is Chris Murphy.

I would like to thank you for your time to describe my community of interest.

I am the pastor at a congregational church.

My community of interest involves the churches in Hanover area.

Five years ago, we came together and created a joint operating agreement.

That agreement is made between two Methodist churches, a Free Methodist church, nondenominational church and my church.

Together, we do all kinds of work in the community for the good of Jesus Christ.

Each and every week for the 12 months of the year, we provide food for the children in need in our community for our school system.

We are able to do that with the aid of compassionate ministries, an organization housed at Jackson First Nazarene church.

The community of interest is Jackson, Jackson County and Hillsdale County.

One of our churches is located in Hillsdale County.

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Our youth go to a center there on Sunday evenings called Crossroads where they participate as well.

We also are in very early stages of possibly creating a Habitat for Humanity home and we are very excited about that.

Because of the things we do together, we are a group of like-minded people and we are all doing this for one purpose, for the purpose of Jesus Christ.

I think it is vitally important that we keep our community of interest whole.

I thank you very much for your time in allowing me to explain this.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for addressing the commission.

>> My name is Roberta Stanley.

I live in East Lansing, Michigan.

In my career, I work on funding formulas in Washington, D.C. and the Congress.

I became very familiar with the census and how it is applied.

I would be curious to learn how they have taught you and instructed you and how the U.S. census works.

Excuse me.

Do we have a problem?

Okay.

Anyway, how they have educated you and then I would also like to talk about the communities of interest because we used to make fun of North Carolina over a district that looks like a dragon because it flowed up and down and went all over the state to pick up certain voters.

We have some of those in Michigan now.

I think we need to concentrate on counties and communities that work and think together.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

As a note, we want to make sure we are going in appropriate order.

I have you, number three.

I'm sorry, I don't know your name.

You are invited to address the commission.

>> Thank you, Madam Chair and Members of the Commission.

My name is Connor Wood.

I live in Jackson.

Thank you for being here and your commitment to throwing out the old gerrymanders and drawing a fair map from scratch.

Welcome to Jackson, home of my favorite gerrymanderer.

My sister here mentioned the dragon in North Carolina.

We have a similar one in Jackson County, the 65th from Eaton around the city of Jackson, cutting my neighborhoods almost in half and down into runaway county.

Full disclosure as my republican friends would like to know, I'm a democrat.

I'm not asking you to draw a blue district.

I'm asking for a state house map that makes sense.

You could easily in Jackson County draw a district with the city of Jackson, the immediate neighboring urban and suburban areas around it surrounded by a more rural district that incorporated the remainder of the county.

That is what it looked like for decades and would be better representation for the urban core and the rural part of the community separate from one another.

Instead of two safe republican seats, you have a competitive seat that would be republican and allow voters to have their voice heard and make a difference.

That's what this is about, giving voters a real, authentic choice.

Going with the donut and the donut hole district for Jackson County, you have the urban core of interest and the out countries interest and further the goal of more competitive maps.

Thank you again for everything you all are doing.

Welcome to Jackson, it's a great town.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number four.

>> I have some maps I would like to give you for reference.

My name is Monica Day and I live here in Jackson.

The map I presented for you shows proposed state house districts, two of them for the county.

One would be urban and urbanized metropolitan area for the city of Jackson and the three surrounding townships, which include Leoni, Blackman and Summit.

This is a roughly equivalent population to the rural exterior 16 townships.

It is relatively balanced in that regard.

There are major differences between urban and urbanized and rural areas, namely infrastructure, which is one of our biggest public costs around infrastructure and decisions that impact urban folks around infrastructure and infrastructure funding are not currently represented in the gerrymander districts as they exist today.

I am a country girl at heart.

We have a home in Tompkins as well.

My kids say, am I a country boy or a city boy?

Even though we live in the city intentionally, we are comfortable in the country.

I love both places, however, the reason I think infrastructure in the city areas is so important is around wastewater and drinking water as well as transit, planning and zoning, education funding, road maintenance.

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These are all issues that differ if you are living in a very low populated area versus an urbanized area.

Thank you so much.

This is a great day to be a Michigander.

So happy to be here today.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you.

I would like to call five through eight to the mi cy.

We'll start with number five.

>> Good evening.

Thank you for all you have done and everything you are getting ready to do, I appreciate it.

I'm excited to be a part of this.

I'm Ryan Hussy, I live in Dexter.

I represent 900 electrical workers and 65 electrical contractors.

Our jurisdiction is Washtenaw and Jackson County.

There's a lot of my members that live in Jackson County.

I think there is a community of interest between businesses and workers in all the trades, quite honestly, that live in Jackson County and businesses, too, that cross county lines.

It makes a lot of sense to me for the district maps to be drawn in a way to where you work is represented by one person and one representative and where you live.

Certainly a community of interest there.

One other thing, as I mentioned, I live in western Washtenaw.

Broad band is terrible there.

There's a lot of rural areas in western Washtenaw and Jackson that fall in that category.

A lot of people have broad band issues because of COVID.

It's been difficult, but would be nice to have a representative to represent both of those populations in rural counties in western Washtenaw and rural Jackson.

Thank you for your time and efforts in this.

Thank you.

Have a good night.

Good luck.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Number six.

>> Good evening commission ores.

My name is James Johnson.

I live in rural Jackson area.

I'm a tradesman of 21 years.

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In 21 years, the majority of the time I have been driving into the sun to Ann Arbor for work.

I have issues with broad band.

I only have three MPS.

During the COVID problems, it's hard for the zoom meetings and teach kids via internet with 3M BS.

People in Ann Arbor have the same problem.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

Number seven?

>> Hello commissioners.

My name is Robert George.

I want to raise before you the natural areas that affect my community.

As a parks and recreation commissioner for Washtenaw County, I wanted to point to a couple parks that cross Washtenaw and Jackson.

The recreation area is the largest state park in the lower peninsula.

The Waterloo state recreation area is a major tourist draw but a particular favorite of Jackson and Washtenaw residents.

Park Lyndon is a favorite spot for bird watching, a particular passion for naturalists in both counties.

Watkins State Park straddles the Washtenaw/Jackson County line.

It is administered by the recreations department and a focal point of exploration for southeast and Jackson and southwestern Washtenaw counties.

They share many great natural wonders that support tourism, recreation and learning.

I ask the commission to consider the cross areas as they develop communities of interest as they cross the state.

Thank you and have a great night.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number eight.

>> Good evening commissioners.

I cannot tell you what a thrill it is to see you all together after so many zoom calls I have watched you in action.

I am one of the thousands of foot soldiers who worked for voters, not politicians.

I should say volunteer for voters, not politicians.

I knocked on over a thousand doors trying to persuade people to vote in favor of proposition two because I felt gerrymandering is such an evil in our society.

It was very gratifying to see proposal two pass.

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I come tonight to talk about my community of interest.

To talk in general about communities of interest throughout the state.

Those are the school districts of the state of Michigan.

I made past president of the school board.

I know, no issue is so important to people as the education of their children.

Currently, although I live within the Ann Arbor public school district, my section of the district doesn't vote with the rest of the school district.

You have heard a lot about cracking and packing in your instructional materials.

My area has been cracked off from the rest of Ann Arbor.

We are grouped in with voters from communities north of us such as Brighton and Howell.

Our state senators do not particularly represent the interest of our community of interest.

I encourage you to use school districts as building blocks for your maps.

No school district should be divided and voters within that district be represented by two different representatives in either the state house, state senate or the legislature in Washington.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

I'll now call numbers nine through 12.

Number nine, when you reach the mic, we'll begin with you.

>> Good evening commissioners.

My name is Julianna Moore.

I live in Adrian Township.

I have lived here for 48 years.

I have raised my family here and several of my children continue to live in this county and raise their children there.

I continue to have strong ties to the community as a resident, employee and volunteer.

One of my biggest passions is my health care career and spreading healthy living in my community.

I am a nurse and I teach diabetes education for a system that is a valuable asset to Monroe County.

I serve on the health network, a group that was formed in 2011.

This network is a group of community organizations that work collaboratively to improve the quality of health in our community.

Other entities that work together within the network include family medical center as well as United Way of Monroe.

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These community networks are important for improving the health of citizens within the community and as it applies to the government representation at the state and federal level.

The association of this network is detrimental to rely on that.

For this reason, I advocate for the continue district association between the counties as an important community of interest for the health and wellbeing of our citizens.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the redistricting project.

Have a great evening.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you for addressing the commission.

Number ten.

>> Good evening.

Thank you for holding this.

My name is Alex McKay.

I'm from Freedom Township in Washtenaw County.

I ask you to consider rural communities like my own of communities of interest for several reasons.

First, these communities often hold institutions like the farm bureau or 4H or future farmers of America.

Second, the economic model around agriculture and needs are different from suburban and urban areas that can be difficult for an elected official to represent both.

Third, rural areas tend to a larger degree toward hunting and fishing, for recreation.

Finally, the practical difficulties of geography and distance mean these areas face similar challenges like internet access, which has been talked about a lot tonight.

Police and emergency response and road maintenance.

Districts representing agricultural areas may have to be geographically large to meet population requirements, they would hold more in common than with nearby cities facing more challenges.

Addition Nally, I encourage the commission to avoid splitting up school and library districts in rural communities.

It's most common for everyone to have attended that one high school and that one library.

That makes these places you get public services, but hubs of the community.

Thank you for your time and undertaking this important task.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Alex.

Number 11.

>> Good evening.

I'm a lifelong Jackson County resident.

I'm asking for senate district 16 to be redrawn because it currently does not reflect interconnected communities of interest in the area.

Myself, my family and friends spend a lot of time in the state and local parts road to trail bike and walking path in Jackson and Washtenaw Counties.

We have community activities between Jackson and Washtenaw County.

Jackson County and western Washtenaw are formed by a line of parks and waterways as well as art and cultural events with shared interest of both communities.

The communities of strong commonality connected by senate district will focus regional needs more effectively.

Thank you all for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.
Number 12.

>> Good evening.

My name is trees.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

I live in Chelsea, the rural part of Chelsea.

I'm a graduate of Vanderbilt High School and attended what was Jackson Community College.

I'm hoping you will keep it together.

We identify with the unique characteristics of the rural community and smaller towns.

It is especially important to the families who attend schools of choice on borders of Washtenaw and Jackson.

In our case, our youngest child attended Grass Lake School, a school of choice to participate in a program that the Jackson area career center, a program not available in Washtenaw County.

As an experienced youth leader, I would advise we keep the networks intact that have been formed among the youth in prams such as future farmers of America, 4H and scouting organizations.

Most of our recreational and public service work personally has been in the communities of the seventh district.

My father owned a business in Jackson.

I also own a business from the commonwealth center.

Due to COVID 19, I had to go back and give up my space there.

I look forward to resuming and reestablishing and expanding throughout the area.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.
Numbers 13-16.

We'll start with 13 when you approach the mic.

>> Thank you for your work, commissioners.

It would be nice, I suppose if we didn't have to redistrict.

Some people choose where they live based on representation.

Because of population changes and fairness of representation, clearly some changes had to be made.

Therefore, I would encourage you to follow strictly the constitution and establish districts that have regularly shaped, compact contiguous districts that follow to the greatest degree possible of political boundaries.

Besides the political entities dealing with state and federal governments, there are many entities in these districts, for instance, police departments, fire departments, school districts, water and wastewater districts that need to deal with state and federal governments.

There's no reason they have to deal with more than one district.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number 14.

>> Good evening, commissioners.

Commissioner Kellom.

Welcome to this county.

I live in spring arbor township.

There are things I would like to share, but two minutes is not a lot of time.

I'm going to focus on my community of interest, the Jackson County Western School district.

I have lived in spring arbor township for 27 years, paid a ton of tax money into our school district.

Our school district in the county is greatly respected and loved by the people in my area.

We have I-94 that runs directly through the heart of our school district.

With that being the case, to change house district 64, which serves our district so well, I believe it would be a great disservice to the school district, students.

My son is a junior at Western High School.

We love our school district.

We love our community.

The school district serves areas such as Sam Stone, part of Summit and to keep us the way we are, represented by one house district really does make a lot of sense.

We are going ask you to please keep our community together, keep our school district as it is.

It's working very, very well.

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We ask you to not use I-94 as a reason to split our school district in two.

Thank you very much for your time and thank you very much for serving.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number 15.

>> Good evening.

My name is --

I live in Windsor County.

My message is, when it comes to communities of interest, the commission respect the existing municipal lines.

I chose to live in Windsor Township because of the country atmosphere.

There's little connection to the Lansing capitol area.

I can see where delta township, an area eight miles north could be added to that, a much mf suburban, more developed but a main business area there.

I can see a case made for that.

However, Windsor Township and the other communities in Eaton County really are more rural in character.

For example, where I live, I have farms to the north and south of me then east and west are much more heavily wooded.

There's generational farms in the area.

I know from personal experience I know a lot of those families that have been there for years serve on the township or government or their name is generally familiar with the public because they have businesses raising sweet corn.

I would encourage the commission to listen to the people who are generally interested in fair and equitable districts.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number 16.

>> Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

I appreciate you all being here.

My name is Bruce Barlands.

I'm from Eaton County.

When you want to redistrict Michigan, think of the flavor of outstate Michigan.

I grew up on a farm and appreciate how tough rural life can be.

Please keep Michigan east seventh district rural, to the greatest extent possible likewise, other areas of the state are urban.

Urban communities have interest in their urban areas.

Urban areas of influence have different issues than rural areas of interest.

Not just think about us, this is about our children, our grandchildren, our great grandchildren and the future of Michigan and the United States of America.

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I want to thank you folks.

You have a huge thing on your plate.

Let's keep rural areas rural because that's what we are is rural.

Thank you much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

Number 17-20.

Just as a reminder, when you hear the fancy timer, you can conclude your last sentence.

You don't have to cut yourself off.

You can go ahead.

>> Okay.

My name is vanessa.

I'm out of spring port trip in the northwest part of Jackson County.

I am uncertain as to what to present tonight so I'm going to offer what I have as my communities of interest.

Recently retired out of the Lansing area.

I can confirm for those who have not yet retired, you will be busier in retirement than working.

My communities of interest revolve primarily around my family and my children, my grandchildren and also, they reside in Jackson and northern Hillsdale counties, by the way.

Also the communities include the public school system of which several of my children are directly involved as well as my grandchildren, seven grandchildren that all attend Jackson County Public Schools.

That takes me across the county when it comes to their extracurricular activities.

I volunteer in Jackson County.

I shop in Jackson County.

My community of faith is in eastern Jackson County.

My world pretty much revolves around the scope of this county.

Also, I live in a rural district so the farming community, I live on a farm and the farming community and the natural resources and the associated activities with that are really important to my communities of interest as well.

I don't have specific guidance related to the district lines.

I'm fairly satisfied with what I have right now.

I appreciate this.

I know you have been entrusted with a great responsibility.

I'm sure you recognize it as a privilege.

I look forward to you carrying it out in a fair manner that respects the confidence and trust the citizens of the state have put in with you.

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Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, vanessa.
We appreciate your comment.
18?

>> Good evening, commissioners.
My name is John Calhoun.
I reside at park lake in Jackson County.
Tonight, I'm representing the river raise council.
I'm the chairman of the board of directors.
We are area roughly the size of the state of Rhode Island, about 1175 square miles
comprised of pieces of Hillsdale, Jackson, Monroe, Washtenaw and parts of Monroe
County and Fulton County, Ohio.
As the chairman for the last probably five years we have seen dramatic improvement in
the quality of the river.
One of the things that most of you have been aware of is the giant algae bloom that
appears periodically on the eastern Erie base.
We have worked hand-in hand with farmers along the watershed and through their
farmer initiative, they have made great strides in reducing phosphorous content of
fertilizer application and done everything from building buffer zones, which prevent run
off into the streams and the feeder creeks that go into the river.
We are very, very proud of what we are doing.
My request is that through this redistricting process we have state representatives from
that area who are currently well aware of what we are doing working with us directly to
secure grants and to help the overall condition of the river and as a recreation
opportunity for the state of Michigan and its residents and protecting Lake Erie, we
appreciate your thoughts in the redistricting.
Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.
19?

>> Hi, my name is Barbara Dame from Jackson County.
I'm a Jackson district library board member.
I'm here to ask you keep the entire Jackson County district intact.
There are currently 13 library branches located throughout Jackson County.
These branches work together with a common goal to support our community.
All 13 branches provide adult services, community engagement and youth services.
The Jackson district library branches promote connection within the community to
ensure patrons have access to the resources needed for success.

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A few examples are adult literacy classes, book mobile delivers, home deliveries and expanded internet access.

JDL has built partnerships with community groups including schools, community nonprofits and cultural organizations.

Consider Jackson district library as a community of interest and keep all of Jackson County together when you begin your work of compacting districts.

Thank you for all you are doing.

I have a map that illustrates how Jackson library branches are distributed if I can bring this forward.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Barbara.

Number 20?

>> Hi, commissioners.

Thank you for being here.

Thanks for the tough job you have ahead of you.

My name is Jeff.

I live in the city of Jackson.

I think most of the heavy lifting on communities of interest has been done over the years.

What I mean are programs, offices and agencies have all been based on demographics to create service areas, already.

To divide these established and working service areas up, I think, would do a disservice to the people they serve.

For example, regional planning commission, the ageing agency, department of transportation and the governor's Corona virus reopening plan serves Jackson counties.

As you can see, this tri county region relies heavily on each other for everything from roads to health care.

I would strongly encourage the commission to look at the regional partnerships like the four named when drawing districts.

Thank you very much for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Numbers 21-24.

21, when you reach the mic, you can begin.

>> Good evening.

My name is Sue.

I have lived in Jackson County for 71 of my 74 years.

Why leave, come back and stay.

Recently two bikers described Jackson as rural.

I live two blocks outside the city limits.

That surprised me.

That's the reason why Jackson County is my community of interest.

Outside the city limits are 16 villages, 11 locally controlled school districts, some small. Three small units, 133 lakes, the watersheds of the grand, Kalamazoo and river raisin.

Over 100 miles of trails, excellent nature center and preserve, two large parks.

We have a small, centrally located city, good health care, adequate shopping, reasonable housing costs, a variety of great locally owned restaurants and shops.

Serving all people who are in crisis.

Along with the hospital and prison as two of the largest employers, we have a manufacturing base and family-owns farms.

As a biologist, I desire a knowledge of the need to protect lakes and watersheds, understands good agricultural practices and the challenges of small communities and operating small farms and industries.

Nearby counties along with our concerns and culture could Hillsdale, branch.

On the other hand, eastern Washtenaw, Calhoun and Kalamazoo counties with the larger populations, large universities and economic base and culture would, in my opinion, have very different concerns.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for taking time to address the commission. Number 22.

>> The protection of Michigan's greatest natural resources equal to the redistricting process undertaken by your esteemed body.

I respect you for taking on this constitutional work and frankly, I'm shocked I have the opportunity to help.

Michigan's water can be best protected by the voting districts, the upper grand river watershed.

The city of Jackson and the county contain the upper Grand River watershed.

The waters need the watchful eye of voters in a voting district.

I'm Marjorie.

I live in the urbanized sub basis of the grand river watershed outside the city.

Residents, like myself, volunteering with the watershed and other nature organizations in Ann Arbor and Detroit communicate regular with Huron watershed council and get water quality reports on E. Coli and other sewer discharge occurrences.

Jackson and the urbanized summit and grass lake charter trip, the western Washtenaw County all with municipal separate storm, sewer and water systems meet regularly in downtown Jackson with the watershed alliance.

How can it be fair Jackson is not in a district with these suburban or urbanized townships and another urban district.

Instead, the city is lumped with rural townships of tiny rural communities.

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We need to be connected by a representative who is an urban dweller.
Currently urban and Jackson is represented by four rural dwelling state and congressional officials.

They all have septic systems and yet they control urban budgeting.
Please consider drawing a rectangular senate district along I-94 that could join urban Jackson and all the townships with the more urban areas of western Washtenaw and Albion with its major river.

Jackson County house districts could be divided into one city township district and one rural township.

I ask you to remember, as you sharpen your pencils and draw lines, please don't flush Jackson.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number 23.

>> Good evening.

My name is Tim Golding.

Thank you for the sacrifice you all are making by serving on this committee, I appreciate it.

My family and I enjoy outdoor activities, hunting, fishing, camping and so forth.
We enjoy doing those things in Jackson County where we own properties, but we use other private and state-owned lands in Jackson.

Those are my community of interest.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number 24.

Numbers 25-28 can begin approaching the mic as we start with number 24.

>> Good evening, commissioners and madam chair.

I'm Matt Dame.

I reside in Jackson County, Michigan.

I'm a board member of the area agency on ageing referred to as the R2AAA.

There are 16 area agencies on ageing throughout Michigan created through the older Americans act of 1965.

We began in May of 1974 and is comprised of Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee counties.

The mission is to improve the lives of older adults and individuals with disabilities in the region by identifying concerns, by developing a comprehensive and coordinated effort in services in Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee counties, enabling older adults and individuals with disabilities to function as independently as possible in their own homes and communities.

By providing advocacy, information, planning, program development, contracting and the funding necessary to accomplish this purpose.

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For 47 years, since 1974, through federal legislation T counties of Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee have been by the federal government, the state of Michigan, each respective county and every municipality within Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee counties.

We take care of our most vulnerable with the resources we have from the federal government, the state of Michigan and generous donations of the community at large. I'm asking you to keep the R2AAA region intact to be as efficient as possible in the pursuit to help our seniors and disabled.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Chaung.

Number 25 please share your comments with the commission.

>> Thank you, commissioners, for doing this hard work.

My name is Tadd Wiser.

I'm from way on the other side of Washtenaw County and want to share a couple reasons of my community of interest.

I live in Ypsilanti Township.

Like Jackson is older industrial area surrounded by rural.

The coincidence I really wanted to share is a few months ago my wife set up a camping trip for us this week in Waterloo recreation area, not far from here, which made it very easy for me to attend tonight.

As I look at the map, the sugarloaf campground where we are staying is right on the line between Jackson County and Washtenaw County.

As far as I know, my wife may have slept in Jackson County last night and I slept in Washtenaw County.

This whole week we have been hanging out with both largely Washtenaw County and Jackson County residents at that campground and to me it reinforces the community of interest.

Thanks so much for the work you are doing.

Keep it up.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, tad.

26?

>> Thanks for coming to Jackson.

I have two suggestions.

My first is that the township surrounding Jackson would be put in the category with Jackson in the house of representative district with Jackson.

That would be Leoni and Summit.

There's no reason they should be out in the other districts which are a lot of agricultural districts.

Also, in each of those areas, there are African-American voters.

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The African-American voters would be able to have a better power block to vote for candidates they wish to have.

The second part of mine is that I would like to talk about the congressional district.

Jackson is in a district which is below, which is south and rural.

I think it would be better if Jackson could be paired up with Ann Arbor or Lansing because we would have similar interests.

Cities struggle with a lot of different problems.

Good water, ever poverty, hiring practices, policing, gun violence.

I think it would be just the right thing to do, to put cities of not exactly equal size, but with similar concerns together.

Another thing is that I am involved in a group working for racial equity.

I think if we were paired up with Washtenaw or Lansing, we would be able to vote for legislatures that cared about racial equity and we would be able to join forces and get and learn from each other how to do the best work in racial equity.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Julia.

Number 27.

>> Hi.

My name is Becky Cooke.

I live in Springford, Michigan in Jackson County.

Thank you for allowing me a few minutes to speak.

As I thought about what a community of interest might be, I tried to think of my work, my hobbies and the region.

I work in home health care.

I decided it wasn't a very specific community of interest since there are home health care workers all over the state.

One of my hobbies is watching and enjoying NASCAR.

This made me realize the Michigan international speedway located on the edge of Jackson in Irish hills has a strong impact on our region.

Michigan international speedway is the only NASCAR track in Michigan.

It brings visitors from all over the state and Midwest.

The races and events that happen at the speedway create a strong economic connection between Jackson and Lenawee and are the perfect example of a community of interest.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

Number 28, 29 and 32 can approach the mic if you are comfortable.

28?

>> My name is Marcy.

My community of interest is the firearm community, first time gun owners, young and old from across the country are pushing record number of gun sales for a second year in a row.

Gun sales surged 31%.

This is the largest figure since sales were recorded in 1998.

These buyers are white, black, Asian and Latino and come from all political beliefs.

They are driven by the need to feel safe, training in the safe handling of firearms is critical not only in our community of interest, but all communities.

Here in Jackson, we are not defined by just I-94, 127 runs north and south through the county.

127 and I-94 is an epicenter for where people work, shop and play.

I serve as leader of the well-armed women chapter here in Jackson County.

Our mission is to educate, equip and empower women in the safe handling of firearms.

We provide classroom education, instructor, certified instructors.

We lost the chapter.

More than 100 women showed up.

Our members have 70 active members that come from Jackson, Lenawee counties.

We own Michigan combat dynamics, a firearm training company.

Our students also come from Hillsdale, Lenawee and Eaton County.

They share a culture not present in other areas.

We are members of the Brooklyn Sportsman Club.

Also in Jackson County are several outdoor clubs.

We have attended events at training facilities in Hillsdale College who have an Olympic-quality program.

We are supported by gun ranges and stores in the area who sponsor our activities.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number 29.

>> Good evening, Commissioners.

My name is Ian Robinson.

I live in Ann Arbor and teach at the University of Michigan.

I'm president of the federation, FLCIO.

Our organization, our federation spans Washtenaw and Jackson counties.

Many of them, approximately 50 affiliates that are part of the federation also have jurisdictions that span both counties.

From our point of view, the point of view of workers and organizations that workers created to represent them, the combination of Washtenaw and Jackson counties make a lot of sense.

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It's also true that we work closely with the united ways in Jackson and Washtenaw counties and that labor service people that work with united way communicate with each other, share ideas and best practices.

There's a lot of interchange at the level of people who are working in the community serving people in need in both communities as well as the workers who belong to our unions.

Lastly, the most agate level, my understanding is approximately 11% of workers in Jackson County actually commute to work in Washtenaw County.

We have a lot of interchange at the level of people and how they are employed.

Those are the consideration that is make me think community of interest from a working person's point of view really would lead us to want to keep Washtenaw County and Jackson County together as much as possible.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Mr. Robinson.
30?

>> Hello commissioners.

My name is Elizabeth First.

I'm from Jackson, the city of Jackson, also Jackson County.

I want to thank you for being here, especially the commissioner who is a medical student, you must be making a great sacrifice.

I sent these through to e-mail.

My remarks are -- question one, currently the Michigan seventh district includes the counties.

Eaton is not con to the best of my knowledge as the bulk.

Can we perhaps, assume Eaton County will no longer be drawn into the seventh district.

My second question, Jackson County contains four facilities, Cooper, Cotton, Parnell and the reception center.

Numbers fluctuate at the facilities in the facilities combined there could be approximately 5,000 inmates who have been and are counted as residents of Jackson County and therefore in the seventh district.

In regard to prison, what are your plans to use and include these population numbers in redrawing the sent and for any district containing confined persons who may or may not be originally from the county, district or state, but they are counted.

The third point, I echo previous speakers about the waterloo recreation area defined as a community of interest.

The community of interest can be defined by many criteria including broad and cultural shared mutually by community.

According to the Detroit free press, there's no official MICRC there.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you so much.

31.

>> Hello commissioners.

Thank you for the work you do.

My name is Mike Cox.

I have been a resident of Jackson County 25 years.

I have worked the last 30 years as an electrical tradesman throughout Jackson and Washtenaw County.

I spent the majority of my career in Washtenaw County.

As anyone knows that drives I-94 in the late afternoon, there are a lot of residents that work in Jackson and live in Washtenaw County.

I believe we share the same interest.

I would like to see fair representation or the same representation as much as possible in both of these areas.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Mike.

Numbers 32-35.

Remember, even though you are sharing with us in person, please go to the public comment tool and share your comments in writing, including any specific area you are referring to as you speak to us.

32, you can begin.

>> Thank you.

Thank you, commissioners, for your dedication and what you are undertaking.

My community of interest strike me as I moved to Jackson County 50 years ago next week.

In the hospitality industry.

Immediately, during that time period, it was a devastating economic time, downturn for Jackson as far as machine shops and work force.

Fortunately, somebody brought the idea of the Michigan Speedway.

It failed the first two years, Roger Penske bought what was later MIS for \$2 million on the steps of the Tecumseh courthouse.

That spurred us, as I get older and develop more sophisticated lodging, this was an integral relationship with the Irish hills area.

We depend on our congressional district for representation not only for the tourism it brings, but how it affects everything else going out with that and around with that which is the roads, wetlands, bridges and all these things that were needed to have this relationship, even the airport.

We depend on Tecumseh airport, Jackson airport, both federally regulated agencies.

I ask you to keep this in mind and keep this in consideration.

We would like to have continued representation that keeps all three of these counties, communities interests as well as his or her own.

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Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.
33?

>> I'm a little bit taller.

My name is Terry McKennan.

I live here in Jackson County, Leoni Township.

For 25 years, I have worked in Washtenaw County.

Nobody can realistically say the city of Jackson, Leoni Township, Blackman township or summit township are rural areas.

They are not.

They are suburban and urban areas.

The issues they face there, communities of interest are very different from the rural counties that surround them.

I believe whole heartedly that rural counties have important issues that matter and they need advocates in the political process that will stand-up for their issues.

Those are not the same issues as the people who live in suburban and urban communities.

They also deserve representation.

That's what we are talking about today.

We are talking about representation.

We are talking about people who are being tasked and deserve to have representation, the entire time I have lived here in Jackson County, I have not had a representative who is fighting for the interests or issues that I care about.

That is because I have rural representatives.

I want to be represented, but even more than that, because of the extreme partisan gerrymandering that exists in Jackson County, I also rarely have an actual choice when I'm voting because of the extreme partisan gerrymandering that exists in my congressional dis trick or treat, state house district and senate district.

People do not run for office because they know they cannot win.

That means my voice has been taken away.

Not only do I not have somebody fighting for the issues that matter to me, I don't get a choice in the matter.

You guys have a next to impossible job and bless your hearts to try to draw up fair and reasonable districts in this state.

Please, please think about who are fighting for the issues that those people who live in those communities that are affected every single day, whose advocating for their issues and are they the same?

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I would really like to see something wonderful come out of what you do and I believe it could.

Please think about these people.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Terry, for using your voice today.
34?

>> Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

How you doing?

My name is Eric.

I live on a lake association outside the village.

What I first was going to do is ask you to consider how many lake associations are within the area of eastern Hillsdale, southern Jackson, western Washtenaw and northern Lenawee.

They were talking about the watershed.

It's very important for lake associations for the vitality of the lakes.

I know this is the Great Lakes state, but sometimes the representation is more about those Great Lakes.

Sometimes what we do on the lake associations is a minor thing.

With your redistricting, your redrawing, excuse me, it might become more important if a representative has those concerns in mind when it comes to the lakes, the smaller lakes association.

But, as I was listening to everybody here, community interest, in a way, is a selfish thing.

That's not a bad thing because we are a community of interests.

We have all these things at heart.

These people spoke from their heart.

I guess what I would ask you folks to consider is when you look at the map, I'm assuming you may or may not, how it voted democrat or republican.

I don't know how you could do it, God bless ya, that you look within the community and see what those groups, all these groups that are represented here, what they were telling you today.

What is their interest?

It won't be easy, but I hope you can do it.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.
Number 35.

>> Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

Thanks for the chance to speak.

My name is Chris Smith and I live in Washtenaw situated between two congressional districts, the seventh and the 12th, which is a district I lived in prior to moving in 2018.

Both districts were drawn by republican legislation for partisan.

The people that get elected to congress in both districts don't really need to pay attention to the voters they represent.

They only have to pay attention to the prevailing views of their own party.

I'm sure you know that's the very problem we Michigan voters want you to solve.

I urge you, if you can to split partisan voters as close to 50/50 as possible in all 13 districts and the state and house districts as well.

It will give minorities like the 7th and 12th their voices back.

I believe you will see fewer extremists getting into congress as well.

You have to take all voters into account rather than the needs of your own party.

Promoting moderation -- bring our state together so we can be a model for unity in a time when the divisions are exploited by the people at home and abroad.

As for communities of interest, I think I would like to echo the statement a gentleman made earlier to use local school districts as building blocks.

When I moved to my current house, I changed congressional district and state house districts.

I think it makes sense for people who live in a given school district to have one person to go talk to and bring their issues to in all the legislative bodies.

Thank you, again, for your time and the efforts on this very important issue before you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you, Chris.

Numbers 36-39?

36, when you approach the mic, you can begin speaking.

>> Good evening.

Thank you for your service.

It's a tough job and has to occur every ten years.

I live in the most gerrymandered congressional district in Michigan, the 11th district.

It starts out representing the western townships and cities in Wayne County, moves north to Oakland County, representing the western tier townships and cities.

Then, somebody threw a rope around Pontiac.

They just threw a missile or football over there and said, I think Rochester Hills should be connected to this district.

You ought to look at that map.

I don't know how that ever happened.

We don't feel in the western tier communities of Wayne County and Oakland County that we are being represented at all.

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Our representative lives way over there in Rochester Hills.

I think it's, you know, 20 or 30 miles from her district.

We would like to have you correct that.

In general, I think you need to observe county boundaries and township boundaries.

That will eliminate a lot of the gerrymandering.

That's all I have to say.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number 37?

>> Good evening, Commissioners.

I'm a resident of Waterloo Township in Jackson County.

As a former employee of the state economic agency, I had the opportunity to present businesses to choose Michigan for the new business or expansion location.

Once they selected Michigan, I was responsible to connect them to the resources available within 45-60 miles to find skilled talent.

It could be high schools and their career programs, community colleges and units of trade schools.

Most businesses make their location based on the available educated and skilled workers in the area.

I experienced firsthand what it takes to recruit and train workers for a new business coming into the community.

It goes far beyond a village to make it be successful, it takes villages.

It helps to work with communities to get a pooled talent.

There's a significant difference on how schools communicate with and educate their students with broad band internet access Tom paired to students further away from the school and do not have broad band.

The student's whose household cannot afford broad band or is not available struggle to obtain their homework posted online and turn in their assignments online as requested or required.

These students are forgotten, left to fall behind and may not have the skills to get the job in that area.

My point is to consider aligning communities with similar resources and representation that will harmoniously support economic and work force development projects within a region.

Representation must understand the needs of a region to help it thrive.

Thank you for your time and service to this commission.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

38?

>> I want to thank the committee for hearing us on this important topic tonight.

I'm from Waterloo Township.

Seems like you have heard that a lot tonight.

My community of interest is the rural area I live in, Waterloo Township, Jackson, Michigan.

It's low density, a lot of biking trails, campsites, lakes for boating and water skiing, that type of thing.

Half of the township is owned by the DNR.

I'm an athletic person and enjoy being outside.

My area currently holds outdoor athletic events like triathlons, 5K and 10K running events.

Low pollution that makes the stars pop at night and low traffic levels so there's no congestion and minimal noise.

It's quiet and I like it that way.

This is in contrast with the higher density areas such as cities.

Not implying they are bad things, just different.

Different people prefer different things.

People in the city enjoy the shopping and museums.

It is different with different expectations.

Since my 20s, I have become fond of rural areas for the reasons mentioned.

People in rural and high-density areas have different requirements that have different representation.

Representation that understands and values those preferences and represent them when making laws.

District lines should be drawn with this in mind.

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

>> My name is Frederick Trexler.

I'm a volunteer with community action agency in Jackson, Lenawee and Hillsdale counties.

I volunteer with assistance programs in those counties and we draw clients from neighboring counties.

I'm asking you to keep Jackson and Hillsdale counties as part of the seventh congressional district.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

At this time, we are excited to hear from the rest of you and we will.

We are going to take a short break for stretching and the restroom, if you don't mind.

We will continue on to hear your thoughts.

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Ten minutes.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: -- taking time to mingle and take care of yourself.

That is important.

Now we'll have numbers 40, 41, 42 and 43.

40, you can start.

>> Thank you, commission, madam Chairwoman, gentlemen.

Thank you for this very hard work you have taken on on our behalf.

I'm from Lodi township in western Washtenaw County.

We have a stable across the roads to the east, a working dairy farm a half mile down the road to the west.

When the wind is right, it's very -- so, that's the natural community I'm talking to.

I could whine about rural internet, but you have heard that tonight.

It's been very hard to work from home for the past year.

There's something else that some people have not mentioned.

That's the importance of that 94 corridor that runs west from Ann Arbor.

For us in western Washtenaw County, we don't have a lot in common with the city itself.

A lot of the services stop right at the border.

We tend to look west both for commerce, for recreation.

We have that Detroit to Chicago train line that runs through Ann Arbor and Jackson that serves as one way to identify a community of interest.

You have 94, of course, but right now at the state senate level, western Washtenaw doesn't have enough people to qualify for its own district so we have to join up with somebody else.

Currently, it's Livingston, which is north of us.

We don't go north.

When I was looking for a wood stove, I came to Jackson.

When I look for maintenance on a lawn tractor, I come west.

I don't try to go through Ann Arbor and the traffic around it.

The mic is cutting out, I'm sorry.

That's the point that I would like to bring out.

We look west instead of north.

Thank you very much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Number 41?

>> Thank you for organizing a very smoothly run hearing.

My name is David Foster.

I reside in the City of Jackson.

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I would like to address the concept of communities of interest as the basis for establishing election district lines and establish it from a point of experience.

The district lines on the basis of communities of interest in preference to municipal boundaries has a certain appeal.

Legislatures from an extended area with common interests such as manufacturing, agriculture or community can better focus on the needs of their place.

In the past, assembling the common threads was much more demanding than most people could grasp.

Today, powerful computers enable professionals and citizens in general to assemble maps and map layers that reveal generalized common themes.

We call these maps and data GIS or geographic information system.

Today, identifying communities of interest can easily be accomplished using a GIS.

In the 1970s, I found myself evaluating land use in upstate New York.

I learned that in the years following World War II, one township adjacent to a city was transformed from 100% agricultural to completely suburban in just three election cycles. Meanwhile, across the township line in the next county, the land remained almost exclusively in farming.

With the excellent data sets available today, it's easy to identify present land use and associated community interest.

However, it's important to note that such analysis address current land use only.

This fact supports the notion that using existing municipal boundaries is preferable to those municipalities into multiple districts.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

42?

>> Thank the commission for the opportunity to address them tonight.

My name is Rob Zimmerman in Washtenaw county.

In our almost 30 years in Michigan, we have had seven congressional reps, two houses. We have our own identity.

Provide choices for shopping and other services to take advantage as competition allows us.

The people have a distinct identity from the four cities and chose to live and stay in Pittsfield because of the characteristics.

Many townships throughout Michigan share a same perspective and don't wish to identify with the neighboring city or town.

We ask you don't split our communities but keep the existing municipalities as unified as possible.

We don't want the local elected leadership to deal with multiple layers and distinct elected representatives in other levels of state and federal government.

We want our elected reps working as a team.

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If we are going to pass legislation to move Michigan forward, it's nice to have reps working with senators and being able to move things up the food chain. Strongly consider mapping the 13 remaining congressional districts first, then the state senators underneath that because I know the math is tough because 13 doesn't evenly divide into 38.

110 doesn't divide evenly into 38.

The concept is we want the elected representatives to work together as best as possible to best serve all of us.

When we are having our elected reps work with too many people of other levels, the message gets diluted and we lose good opportunities to enhance.

Thank you so much.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

43?

>> Number 43, Richard Betty's number.

Thank you, commission.

My name is Dave Staal.

I appreciate you taking community voices.

I have grown up and lived in Washtenaw county my whole life, western and now live in the northwest corner of Washtenaw county.

It's very rural, more like Jackson county or Ann Arbor or the rest of Washtenaw county.

I feel strongly about living in a rural area where it is blessed with nature and I feel my representative needs to be in tune with that.

Please keep that in mind when making your decision.

God bless you and good luck with your decisions.

Thanks.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

For the purpose of the public watching us in here and the public record.

The 44th public comment decided not to comment.

We are moving on to numbers 45-48.

45, you can approach the mic and begin as well as 46, 47 and 48, you are free to stand in line.

Again, we welcome everyone to utilize the public comment tool and share your comments in writing and anything specific you are mentioning today.

45, you can begin.

>> Good evening.

I'm from Jackson county.

I would like to speak to you this evening about my community of interest.

My family and I live in an agricultural community.

Our neighbors, my family and I live the agricultural, country lifestyle from raising livestock, working with our horses, farming as a business, hunting in the spring or fall, everyone in my community has the same basic desire as well as same basic interests. Our community is stretched from village-to-village across township lines in multiple counties in all directions.

I buy hay for my cows and horses from my neighbor down the road and from a farm eight miles away.

My community drives tractors on the road in the spring and combines from field-to-field in the fall.

We have a day at school to drive your tractor to school day.

We work in the barn all hours of the night.

We get calls from our neighbors early in the morning, hey, did your cows get out.

Our community is diverse with people from all walks of life, rich with tradition and heritage, unified in a single purpose.

That purpose is to live in the country.

I would encourage the committee to keep the rural communities of interest in mind when designating district lines of state representatives, state senators and U.S. representatives.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

46, please.

>> Hello.

My name is Randall Hayward.

I am from the village in Jackson County.

I wish to speak of the rural communities.

As number 45 has gone over, it is a very interesting culture our rural communities have.

I believe these should be preserved and thought after when you draw up the districting maps so they are not lumped into the more metropolitan and suburban areas to preserve that type of culture.

I would implore you all to think of all that when you draw up your districting lines.

I thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Randall, thank you so much for sharing with us.

47?

>> Thank you chair for your time.

For me, the seventh district congressional district, 16 senate, 64th house suit me just fine the way they are.

We have a shared community of interest in these districts.

Multiple shared community interest.

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Region two area agency on ageing provides adult services to senior citizens and handicap adults and region two areas agency represents Hillsdale, Jackson and Lenawee county.

Serve all citizens interests relative to parks, roads, nonmotorized trails and the planning of such for Hillsdale, Jackson and Lenawee county.

We have 4H county divisions for 4H groups.

We have an active one in Jackson county, Hillsdale, Lenawee.

Michigan State University extension 4H program includes these counties plus western part of Washtenaw county.

These areas are agricultural and rural.

That's our shared community of interest.

Western Washtenaw county fits much better with Hillsdale and Lenawee county better than Washtenaw.

We have a shared interest in our library district, our school districts.

We have shared fire and ambulance fist rickets.

We have shared recreation opportunities between the three counties and western Washtenaw county.

Department of corrections has common interest in these areas, chamber of commerce, same thing.

Our election administrators have an easier job when the boundaries are kept consistent with counties, townships that are not divided.

I would like to keep all Jackson in district one.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Sorry to interrupt.

Your two minutes has --

>> Thank you.

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

48, 49, 50 and 51, you can approach the mic.

We apologize if the timer isn't loud enough.

Please don't take it personal if I have to cut you off.

It is nothing personal.

There's no 48?

Okay.

So we'll continue with 49.

If 48 returns, please let us know.

>> Thank you.

My name is Warren.

I'm asking for your to create a very compact district particularly the state level.

Center around the urban townships or Blackmon, summit and Jackson.

I live in summit township, I have streetlights, curbs, gutters, all that.

There are large parts of the township, both of them which have Holsteins and are very rural.

One of the things you have to do when drawing the districts that cities in Michigan have not been able to annex in 50 years.

You have developed a very urban township character and a very rural township character.

To some degree, to make districts that make sense, you are going to have to split some of these urban townships.

I would like to see you create a congressional district that runs along the entire southern quarter of the state of Michigan, which is largely rural, largely involved in farmer and has representation which seems to indicate they follow the advice and needs of that section. Our urban areas, Blackmon, sum mite are serves in areas closer aligned with Lansing and the more dense areas to the north of this area.

So, I would not be mad if you had to split the county, along urban/rural areas.

Many people live in urban area of Jackson area, several of them are here.

Many of us in the urban area would like to be in a more dense, represented district with a representative that, let's just say, represents our points of view and interest more.

Is that the end of it?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Yes.

>> Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

50?

>> Good evening.

My name is Hank.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to you.

I was speaking of community of interest.

My community of interest is agriculture.

I am a farmer, southern Jackson County.

I still work the ground that my forefathers homesteaded in 1837.

We are 16 years away from celebrating 200 years of continuous ownership.

As I speak, my community of interest is agriculture.

Like I say, three miles from the county lines of Jackson, Lenawee and Hillsdale county where they intersect.

When I grew up, as a young individual participating in youth if fairs of Jackson, Hillsdale and Lenawee county.

My kids and grandchildren continue to do the same.

I found it interesting the individual from Washtenaw county that has to come to Jackson for lawn Mauer parts.

I would ask him to try to find a location for your combine parts.

I can travel five miles and hit a half dozen lawn Mower dealers to find a dealer that handles a combine, I have to go to Hillsdale county, Jackson county or well north of Lansing.

So, again, I may sound a little bit selfish in regard to trying to keep the rural areas of Jackson, Washtenaw or I should say the western portion of Washtenaw and primarily Lenawee and Hillsdale county together where not only hopefully my kids that are farming with me will see 200 years of celebration where my family homesteaded. Again, my grandchildren, they are active in youth involvement as well in Jackson, Lenawee and Hillsdale County.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much 51?

>> Good evening.

Thank you so much for your efforts for our communities and our state.

I can imagine the workload you have ahead of you.

I thank you.

My name is Merriam Grey.

I live in Horton, not far from here.

In preparing for today, I thought of how I live, my lifestyle, how I travel, my choice of a healthy living lifestyle and where I travel.

I do business primarily in Jackson and Hillsdale county.

Both counties offer extensive access to quality fresh goods and I appreciate that and how that helps my family stay healthy.

I prefer the offerings of the rural Jackson and Hillsdale lifestyle, I have often said, growing up, what I appreciated is that I could live a country lifestyle, but I had access to everything city that I would need or want.

If I wanted more, it was within easy distance of Ann Arbor, Chicago or Detroit.

I felt that was a healthy way to grow up and now, as grandma, I think it's a great way to raise my family.

I like to see these two areas stay together and be represented by the same representatives.

I feel that would be healthiest for this community.

Thank you very much for your time tonight.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

52, 53, 54 and 55, you can approach.

>> Good evening.

First of all, I would like to say thank you for taking on a task that most people wouldn't want.

It's a job you know you are not going to make everyone happy.

I would like to say thanks for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Bob Gray.

I love just near Horton.

I started a small construction business in 1972.

I'm still in operation all those years.

Most of the work I have done is in the surrounding rural communities, but I have also spent a considerable amount of time in some of the larger cities in Michigan.

In the process I see a big difference in the needs and requirements of the two different kinds of communities.

I don't want to belabor you with all the things that have been said several times.

I would like to say, I hope you can draw these redistricting lines in a fashion that would best represent both types of communities.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

53?

>> Good evening.

My name is Jeff.

I am a teacher at Jackson High School down the road here.

I am a resident of Ann Arbor, Michigan and the current president of the Jackson Education Association.

I want to start out by thanking you for offering your time to be part of this commission and being here today.

As you have already heard several times, Jackson County's current map could be called surreal.

It makes me think of children looking for shapes and clouds.

The cause is for from innocent and the effect is harmful.

It is like my home of Ann Arbor, suburban area surrounded by a rural one.

The current maps do not reflect the reality of the communities that serve.

At the end of the day, regardless of political persuasion, voting history and where you live, we are best represented when we are represented in fair and competitive contests to be with those in their district as possible rather than a partisan base.

I encourage my 18-year-old seniors to register and vote for the first time.

Many can't vote yet.

When they do, I want them to be confident their vote counts and makes a difference for them, their families communities.

I very much hope you can make that reality across the state.

Again, I thank you for your service and this task and I wish you the best of luck.

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

54?

>> Excuse me, I was 53?

>> CHAIR KELLOM: 53.

>> Hello and thank you very much for your service.

My name is Kathy Johnson.

I live in Eaton Rapids in Eaton County.

It is a rural city with several rural cities within 15 minutes of each other.

I love where I live because I'm surrounded by my community interest.

Our city is unique in that it is built on an island and surrounded by the grand river.

We have lots of kayaking and fishing, foot trails that are dense, wooded areas as well as plenty of farmlands.

These are all important community interests to me.

That's why I moved there.

Life within small communities allows us to know our legislatures, businessmen and women as well as other local community leaders.

We have a team.

We develop local community interests that are important to us.

I ask that you would please keep in mind that it is very important that those who represent community interests are actually a part of their community.

The seventh district is mainly rural and the community of interest truly represent that.

Please protect our rural community interests.

I sincerely encourage you to please keep rural districts intact.

Thank you very, very much for your dedication to this very important task and also, I want to commend you, this meeting was ran really nicely and I appreciate it.

I appreciate being able to speak.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

54?

>> Hello.

My name is Russ Jennings.

I live in Jackson County's Leoni Township.

Thank you for the community input they let us do today.

Leoni Township is geographically the second largest township in the state of Michigan.

It is mostly rural with several lakes, parks and recently added motorized trails connecting many areas of the township, Jackson county and surrounding locations.

Leoni township shares police and fire services with neighboring township Blackman Township.

We are both in the 65th house district.

Interstate 94 runs east and west through both townships directly through the middle, along with Jackson county.

Runs right through the center.

Blackmon county shares U.S. 127.

My concern with suggested redistricting to avoid boundary lines to create possible new district will require the commission to use landmarks such as interstates, rivers, et cetera to draw lines.

The geographical size and the nearly 14,000 people that live in Leoni township use such landmarks such as 94 to be considered as possible redistricting boundary could divide my township in two multiple districts disrupting our unique community bond. I also feel it may create a burden and expense to the townships when it comes to elections.

I ask the commission to please consider these issues and make an attempt to keep our communities whole and possibly keep Leoni Blackman township, the 65th house district and the 16th center.

Thank you for being here tonight.

When you leave here, please enjoy downtown for dinner or something and maybe a podium would be helpful.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for sharing with us.
55?

>> Thank you.

Thank you, thank you.

Good evening, commissioners.

I am so glad to see you all.

I work very hard the last couple years with voters, not politicians, to be able to bring the community together to register to be in the seats you are in right now.

I'm glad to see the mix that sits before me today.

As the guy before me said he wants to see the Leoni township stay whole, he probably never walked it.

I ran for county commissioner three times and I had to walk and the community in this district is so zigzagged that I walked and knocked on over 7,000 doors myself.

The area was so split up, I had to jump from this side of town to that side of town to this side of town to get to my neighbors to knock on doors.

It needs to be redrawn.

It really needs to be drawn correctly with inequities in mind of people that live in the area.

My communities of concern vary.

The job I do from day-to-day, I'm out in the community.

I see the needs of the people.

I work every day making sure that community basic needs are met and I see that our kids needs are not met.

I see our senior citizens needs are not met.

I know the representatives that represent Jackson and Leoni, Hillsdale, some parts of Washtenaw, they don't come into our communities.

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They don't see the need or meet the need of community people I work with every day.

They don't know who these people are.

They have never knocked their doors.

They have never done anything to those people.

I hope and I pray that when you do this redistricting and drawing of this community that you think of everybody.

Everybody.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

What number were you?

I'm sorry.

Okay.

55?

Okay.

Okay.

Thank you.

56, 57, 58, 59, you can approach.

We'll start with 56.

>> Hello, commissioners.

Good evening.

My name is Kathleen Perez.

I'm here to speak about Jackson County's unique importance in this state as a manufacturing hub.

My husband's grandfather began his screw machine business in 1919 and have presently been in traditional manufacturing for over 100 years.

Today they produce precision machine components and primarily serve the transportation industry.

Our family has grown and now extends into the fourth generation who work at the five plants in the surrounding townships which extend within a 30-mile radius.

We have approximately 300 employees working for the various companies in the nearby townships.

Mass production requires multiple processes from various companies in the surrounding area.

I counted 27 companies that we use daily which are an important link to the creation of driving American jobs.

JAMA, which is Jackson area manufacturing association is important to our surrounding business and educational community.

We are very co-dependent of each other.

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Today, there are over 250 companies registered as a manufacturer in the Jackson county association.

This association provides youth summer camps where the kids learn hands-on skills from K-12.

This pipeline impacts hundreds of kids each year through programs where inventing, creating, using math and science skills are developed and lead to career paths for young minds.

This continues on to a college level where students can earn a high school diploma, associate degree while learning in-demand manufacturing.

Thank you so much.

Manufacturing is a valuable asset to Jackson County.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Kathleen.

57, please.

>> Good evening, commissioners.

My name is Jonathan Bird.

I live near Battle Creek, Michigan.

I lived in Calhoun County all my life.

I want to encourage you to consider drawing a fair state house district which includes both Battle Creek and Albion.

My family and I spend more time in Battle Creek working and taking care of the needs of my young family.

I serve on the Kellogg community board as a trustee since 2007.

We are proud to have campuses in Battle Creek and Albion.

We share a variety of similarities that make them jointly communities of interest.

They are both long-time industrial towns.

They have institutions of higher education.

They both have significant minority populations including partner branches of the NAACP.

Both have significant catholic parishes within the diocese of Kalamazoo and both communities have eastern orthodox parishes.

They have significant populations of union members, Amtrak stations and connected by the Kalamazoo river and included in the same watershed.

Both are clearly connected by Michigan avenue or M-96 and I-94.

Please be sure to consider these similarities as you consider communities of interest in Calhoun County.

I would like to thank the commission and look forward to sharing more thoughts to you.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

58?

>> Hi, good evening.

Thank you in advance for all the hard work you are going to do.

I don't envy your task.

I ask that your goal be that no Michigan voter feel like their vote doesn't count.

No candidate for any elected office feels they have their election in the bag.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

59?

>> 59, that's me.

I have been born -- have been born.

I live all over Michigan, Cass County, owned homes in Jackson and Redford, Michigan.

I am currently living in Summit Township.

I have seen this state.

I have worked in every county, except the U.P., but I vacation up there.

Don't allow the desire of somebody's work location and their home location to want to be in the same district.

It's not your neighbors fault that you choose to work somewhere different than where you live.

I would like you to use the building blocks of school districts as a real strong place to start.

I realize that puts things -- I graduated from northwest high school.

I know they ran from extremely rural, huge farms to Blackmon township, city dwellers.

If you use just the school districts, it ignores the rural to urban dynamic.

It is nonetheless a good building block.

Lastly, you are never going to make everybody happy.

I apologize to you for the abuse you are going to receive down the line.

The overriding principle of simpler being better, school district lines are a real good place to start.

Somebody earlier mentioned at some level disregarding prison populations as an indicator of size of an area.

I think that's valid.

I don't want to disregard the prison populations with a sweep of the hand, but as far as counting the people inside that prison aren't necessarily representative of the people in the surrounding communities.

That's a really hard jump to make.

Good enough.

Good luck.

Thank you so much.

Oh, I know what it was.

These guys are doing an incredible job.

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You are in a concrete block with small speakers and you can hear every word and your head is not being blown off.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for acknowledging them and for all the hard work that goes into planning this hearing for you all so you can best share and communicate with us.

We are glad you notice.

Number 59?

Sorry.

Okay.

58?

>> My name is Bruce.

I have lived in the city of Jackson for more than 80 years.

For the first time tonight, I found out that I lived in a donut hole.

[Laughter]

>> The city of Jackson is, indeed, in the center of Jackson County.

It is surrounded by three residential or bedroom townships.

Those are surrounded by 16 townships of either residential or rural nature.

There is no court in the county of Jackson.

There is nothing of that nature anywhere but in the city of Jackson.

So everyone in Jackson County who goes to court, probate, district, circuit comes to Jackson.

There is a central library system with branch libraries but anyone in the County can get the book he or she wants transferred to the central library.

The County Building is in downtown Jackson across the street from City Hall.

This is a community of interest in every sense a united community in Jackson County.

I don't know why people from Washtenaw County or someplace else want to get together with us.

People here live in Jackson County because of the cost of living because they don't want to go to Washtenaw County.

In fact, river systems and recreational activities lean west, not east.

The river goes east.

The Grand Rapids River runs all over the place in Jackson County then goes west.

The Kalamazoo River runs through Jackson County.

Both of those rivers originate south in the counties of Lenawee and Hillsdale.

In fact, Lenawee and Hillsdale are region two of a planning community in the state.

In fact, they are connected because people who are counselors and so forth often work here part of the week and either Hillsdale or Lenawee counties the other part of the week.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Bruce?

Unfortunately your two minutes have ended.

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We would love to hear the rest you have to say using the public comment tool available to you.

>> That's appreciated.

Essentially my point is Jackson County is, itself, a community of interest.

It, perhaps, is a community of several interests but, in fact, it is a common community with ordinary established boundary lines.

The idea that, for instance, I-94 running through Mr. Jennings township connects urban communities makes no sense at all because Mr. Jennings community is part of a community of interest called Jackson county.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for addressing the commission.

60?

>> Good evening.

My name is -- I'm an organizer with rising voices an Asian-American advocacy group. In the last couple decades Asian-Americans made their homes in the state of Michigan. We are rapidly increasing population that is tremendously gerrymandered results in limited organizations with refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants searching for a better life.

A couple hours from here in Battle Creek, there are many living and contributing to this great state.

Many of us are persecuted Christian minority from Burma to escape religious persecution.

As one of the few or any member of the Asian Pacific islander here, draw a map to keep these communities together and consider the burdens not only in Battle Creek, but grand rapids and Lansing as a community of interest.

Furthermore, many citizens are eager to participate and continue to improve this great state.

We can only do so if we remain in the same district needing representation and needed resources.

I'll end by saying we should consider Black, indigenous who improve this great state.

Thank you for your time.

In our language, we have a saying that means God bless you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much for sharing with the commission.

61?

>> Thank you and going.

My name is Elise and I live in the city of Jackson.

Thank you all for taking this duty so seriously and attending to hear our comments.

I would like to make a comment on my community of interest.

Because I have heard and read enough bias sounding comments already, I would like to remind us a fair definition of a community of interest is not supposed to be

determined by mere political values, but represent a community where we reside and spend a great deal of time because of our common background or various interests. I understand that some people who do not live in a city themselves feel they would like to exclude the city of Jackson from the current districts because we have different interests.

They want to lump us in with other cities we rarely visit because they judge us by race or income.

The city of Jackson works together and many people who live here love the dynamic of our county.

In fact, the Jackson County Fairgrounds that often feature rural exhibits is a focal point of our city and shows how far we have come in embracing diversity.

Now is not the time to build walls and divide.

We have come so far in finally recognizing and protecting each other as equals.

I feel the combination of rural and urban areas provide with nonpartisan minds the constitution requires you to draw.

Because I believe that way, I am a participant in church outreach efforts.

Our church is a second family to all races and economic backgrounds that represent the community.

I live downtown.

We drive north of the town to little country church.

We have people that live in the city such as myself, others that are outside the city and quite a few that are rural.

My community of interest is the group I associate with on a weekly basis from all the surrounding areas who don't look at the color of skin or the house we live in or the income we make but recognize ourselves as people created equally.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you.

62?

62 is coming.

We are patient.

>> Thank you all for your time.

Thank you for your service each and every one of you.

My name is Joseph Lange.

My area of interest is the whole county, Jackson County.

I grew up here and I work here and I go to church here.

I'm actually Jackson County resident in the sixth ward, assistant pastor, designer, father of two little ones and an American citizen.

I'm watching this process closely as are many of us.

I feel like right now would not be a good time in the history of our country to make this process more confusing and more difficult to understand for many people.

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I would like to propose an idea with a focus on fairness because I believe that if you, as a group, don't unanimously agree, some are going to view it as illegitimate.

I propose you not make changes unless you have a unanimous agreement on any redistricting line.

This way, you may stay away from bias and the perception of being unfair.

Remember, fair, no change is not a bad thing.

Whatever you do, again, I ask that it be in agreement.

That's just a simple request there.

If there's not a unanimous agreement, then we could go on the way we are right now, keeping Jackson County the way it is.

Thank you for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Joseph.

63 through 66 can approach.

We'll start with 63 when you reach the mic.

>> Thank you.

I'm John King from here in the City of Jackson.

I live about a mile south of here.

I want to express my distrust with this new system and even with this commission.

The first organizing committee is not politicians here in the city of Jackson.

The democrat -- was leading it.

He mentioned that in the 2016 election Donald Trump one because of gerrymandering, which isn't true at all.

It was maybe very ignorant or dishonest or both.

I know, you know, with this commission voting against the pledge of allegiance, we talk about a community of interest in a majority votes against this community interest of doing the pledge of allegiance where it says pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands.

That republic exists because the United States constitution.

That, before anything else is why you are all here.

I heard a few excuses that, oh, you know, this isn't about the United States or this or that.

It's the United States constitution that redistricting is done.

There's been a lot of politics in here.

You know, I follow politics and with a lot of individuals here.

They have been pushing their politics where it has to do more with congressional districts where more people say Jackson, the city of Jackson and the city of Ann Arbor have common interests.

Well, Ann Arbor has a much higher income level, education level and a lot of differences.

There is one common interest, they are both tilting democratic.

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I hope that this commission can surprise me and actually be nonpartisan.

At this point, I'm very skeptical that could happen.

Thank you for the time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for your time.

64?

>> Going to lift this up a bit.

All right.

Good evening, commissioners, staff members, volunteers and everyone tuning into this process tonight.

My name is Quentin Turner, a lifelong Michigander representing common cause of Michigan.

It endeavors to create an open and honest and accountable government that serves the interest of the people.

We have been working in coalition with other organizations including voters, not politicians, Michigan voices, the league of women voters, NAACP, the Michigan education fund, ACLU Michigan, engage Michigan and the Michigan nonprofit association to closely follow the first independent redistricting process to inform and education members across the state.

While we are excited for what an independent process will mean for Michigan's democracy, we are concerned about the map drawing process using existing lines. Instead, we urge the commission to start fresh after taking testimony from communities across the state.

Starting fresh is the only way to honor the intent of the voters, communities who have been sidelined in redistricting and ensure fair districts for the next decade.

Using Michigan's current gerrymandering as a starting point undermines the intent of the voters who voted overwhelmingly in favor of the constitutional amendment of the redistricting commission.

As you know, the existing lines were drawn behind closed doors by politicians looking to entrench political advantage.

It is seen in Kalamazoo.

It is 6% over the medium population of house districts in the state.

In 2010 legislatures packed Kalamazoo's majority black neighborhoods into the 60th house district diluting their votes and less representation for those communities as opposed to surrounding areas.

If we use the 2010 maps as a starting point, it is underrepresenting.

Michigan deserves better.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight and the public input, transparency and accountability.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Quentin, we thank you.

65?

>> Good evening, Commissions.

My name is Alicia Williams.

I am the Jackson County NAACP president.

I was raised in Washtenaw County.

I lived in Leoni township for over 30 years.

I now live inside the city of Jackson, on the south side of Jackson.

I don't have to live in the city of Jackson, I choose to live there because of what that community offers.

I choose to live where my voice can be heard and where my voice represents those that are underserved.

I choose to stand-up for a community that is unrepresented where civil rights and civil liberties are taken and may be taken for granted.

Redistricting, following a census will determine political representation for decades to come.

We must ensure that our communities and our voices are heard and those needs are met.

Gerrymandering will determine how our local school boards, city councils, state legislative and congressional districts are drawn.

How can our communities participate in a fair democracy?

How can we ensure that the interests are being heard and that the represented elective officials are listening to our voices?

How can we ensure that the voting strength of our communities will not be weakened?

We need to align similar communities with the much-needed resources that are equal and fair for all.

District maps must be equal and fair.

The elected representatives have to reach out and speak to the people that they are representing.

The voices that are heard must echo the voices that they affect.

I call on each and every one of you to choose fair and equitable districting.

Choose equality for all of us.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLUM: Thank you miss Williams.

Number 66.

Number 67.

We'll start with 66.

My apologies.

>> Thank you.

Hello.

First, I wanted to say thank you for signing up for this difficult task.

I was born and raised in Jackson, the city of Jackson.

This is such a special city and county, so I appreciate you coming here because we all get lost in the bigger cities.

I would like to discuss my community of concern, which are communities of color and their political representation.

Put a focus on fair representation and stop gerrymandering.

I would like to discuss the importance of having our voice heard in the seventh district congressional seat, Jackson, Charlotte, Adrian.

They are mostly rural.

Then you have Jackson in the center, that is mostly urban.

Our voices often get snuffed out.

I would like to see us in a more urban district to allow fair voting.

Thank you and good luck.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you so much.

67, 68, 69 and 70 you can approach the mic.

When 67 gets to the microphone, we can begin.

>> Good evening.

My name is Stephanie Finnegan.

I live in Concord Township in Jackson County.

I'm here this evening to share why it is necessary to maintain the seventh district as close to it is as possible.

There's a web of beneficial relationships between the vast homeschool network in Jackson County, Branch County, Hillsdale County and Lenawee County.

The family that live in these rural communities are very intertwined with the 4H and county fairs across county lines.

Our students are also participating in multiple home school co-ops, extracurricular activities such as dance, voice, theater, Martial Arts and the variety of athletics like softball and soccer.

Sorry.

My glasses are failing.

I'm sure you can see how important it is for the socialization of children as these are some of the most memorable and defining parts of childhood.

We need to keep our congressional district as it is because we need representation in government that represents all the rural areas, farmer, rancher, the self-employed and the home-schooling family.

Thank you.

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

68?

>> Hello.

Thank you, commissioners.

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My name is Heather MacDougall.

I have lived in Jackson County most of my life.

I would like to thank you all very much for your time and dedication to this monumental task.

I know it can't be easy and is obviously taking a lot of your time.

I'm here to ask you to keep Jackson, Lenawee and branch counties connected.

These are hubs for manufacturers.

Manufacturing is making a comeback in Michigan right now.

It is essential for continued job growth that they receive governmental representation.

Jackson County is home to American Tool, Elm Plate and Steel.

Hillsdale is home to southern Michigan Turning, Jonesville Tool, Lenawee Tool and Automation.

Branch County has Austin Machine and Tool.

This is a tiny sample of the manufacturers and union jobs in our counties.

My husband worked in manufacturing since 1993 and through manufacturing he has supported our family, clothed and fed our family, kept a roof over our heads, all due to a good job.

Please don't let these jobs lose their representation because then they will move to other places where they will be represented by the government.

Again, I'm asking you to please continue to have Lenawee, Jackson, Hillsdale and branch counties served by the same representation in our government.

Thank you very much for your time.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for addressing the commission.
69?

>> First of all, thank you for your commitment to our democracy.
I appreciate your efforts.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak tonight.

My name is Scott Leach.

I'm a proud Michigander.

My simple request is the end result of this process is a true representation of the people of Michigan.

The number of representatives sent to Lansing and Washington, D.C. proportion Nally represent the whole of our citizenship.

For far too long, gerrymandering has been used as a political weapon to bypass the true will of the people.

Look no further than the disproportionate representation in the house, state and senate.

The people have entrusted you with the chance to create districts that will, in the end, reflect our citizens interests.

The reality is, you will not be able to avoid gerrymandering to create these districts.

I only ask that you use the gerrymandering process or the use of the gerrymandering process will result in a product that will truly represent the voices of our great state. Thank you for your service to all Michiganders.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Scott.

Our final in-person public comment, number 70.

>> Hello.

Let me just acknowledge that I hate doing things like this so much, but it's very important.

I live in the city of Jackson.

I often think the best experts are the ones with lived experience so I don't know if any of you have lived in this community so I'll share a bit of my experience to help you understand my perspective.

I graduated from northwest high school which is a very rural community.

I remember going to northwest and not a lot of people look like me or talk like me or understood the way I thought and believed.

That was okay because I had a great experience.

I remember being the rose queen of Jackson where I represented our community and I went to a lot of different places and spoke about a lot of important things.

I remember, specifically, when I went to communities like Hanover, Horton and other rural communities.

People would give me odd looks because I didn't look like a lot of people in those communities.

That's okay because I learned a lot in that experience.

I remember getting my masters at spring arbor university.

I remember getting weird looks because a lot of people really didn't look like me.

I know we try to present talking about race in different things because it makes everyone uncomfortable but I don't care about that, people being uncomfortable.

I care about what's right.

Sometimes we need to be uncomfortable to talk about what's right.

I want to talk about equity.

Equity is not always fair.

For some reason we think doing the right thing is fair, equity is fair.

It's not always.

Equity is doing the right thing for everyone.

I'm grateful for my lived experience because z it's taught me to love and appreciate everyone.

Some people are different.

We have different lifestyles, obligations, beliefs.

That's okay.

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We need in Jackson representation who care about people in Jackson, people of color, people who are in poverty, people who have been underrepresented for so long and their voices have not been heard.

We need to redistrict.

We need to redo these lines.

It's not okay.

Hopefully my lived experience and people who speak like me understand the fact that we need to be around people and have resources that can help with our needs.

I ask as you move forward and make your decision, which sounds like a really hard job, you consider equity.

It stands on the foundation of diversity and inclusion, but it's not always fair.

Equity is the right thing.

That's what we need in the city of Jackson, equitable representation.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you for addressing the commission.

That concludes, again, our in-person public comment.

We'll move on to our remote public comment.

We have two people that are present for the virtual public comment.

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

I will call your name and our staff will unmute you.

If you are on a computer, you will be prompted by the zoom app to unmute your microphone and speak.

If you are on the phone, a voice will say the host would like to speak.

Press star 6 to unmute.

I will call on you by name or last four digits of phone number.

In this case, I will call you by name.

Please note if you experience technical or audio issues or we do not hear from you for 3-5 seconds, we will move on to the next person in line and return to you after they are done speaking.

If your audio does not work, you can e-mail Redistricting@Michigan.Gov and we will help you troubleshoot to participate during the next public comment period.

First in line to provide public comment is Regen Stahl.

Please allow a moment for staff to unmute you.

>> Thank you, commissioners.

My name is Regen Stahl.

I'm here to ask for equitable lines to keep communities of interest together.

I would like to add it includes racial background, common history, culture or language and socioeconomic status, not just hobbies.

We support the commission drawing branch Hillsdale and St. Joseph together.

My reasoning includes we share our Tri County Health Department.

Our unifying location as state border counties and economic interests primarily are farming communities.

Thank you very much for your time and good luck with your decisions.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Regen.

We'll have number five, who is Douglas Helderman.

Please forgive me if I mispronounce your name.

Please allow a moment for staff to unmute you.

>> Okay.

Yes.

You said my name well.

Can you hear me?

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

>> I'm Doug, a commissioner in Livingston County.

I know most of the people here have spoken from -- most of the people have spoke from Jackson County and places south.

Anyway, we know if you have gerrymandered, if you have folks from the city in many directions to break up counties like Livingston in three or four house districts.

We have two exclusive to the county.

We would like that to continue.

I would make a suggestion that you use several benchmarks to measure your proposed plans.

I'm sure you will have a ranking tool.

I would ask that you would rank the present districting and come up with a number and then adjust your new plan against that.

Any number that gets a smaller number than that number ought to be rejected because it will not be better than what we have.

The idea is getting something better.

Also, I would suggest that you do a pilot ideal plan that takes each of these districts and makes them equal by population keeping political units so you would only have one broken political unit in any district and that you make them as square as possible without regard to any of the other legal, you know, federal laws or whatever and use that as a pilot plan to -- use that as a pilot plan to judge your other plans against and if they are less than that ideal plan, they should also be rejected.

I am also very disappointed that you, as a group, refused to recite the pledge of allegiance.

To me, that was one decision that you lost a lot of trust of millions of Michiganders.

We don't know you, first of all.

We would like to know you better.

We would like to trust you.

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The redistricting process set forth in Michigan's amend.

To the constitution --

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Your two minutes has ended.

>> Thank you very much, I didn't see a clock.

Thank you for your time and work.

We wish the best for our state.

Thank you.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you.

Well, that concludes our virtual comment and thusly our comments from this evening from in-person as well as people that joined in virtually.

We thank you all for sticking around with us.

I am going to pass this time over to Sue Hammersmith who will provide acknowledgments.

>> MS. SUANN HAMMERSMITH: We want to thank you for cleaning microphones and helping people check in.

Thank you for being a part of this.

We appreciate the local people who did that.

Also, I want to thank everybody who provided public comment.

Thank you so much for your comments.

The commissioner will consider those things that have been said tonight.

I want to strongly encourage anybody who made comment to go to the portal that you can access through Michigan .gov/MICRC and put your comments that.

Especially if you are talking about a specific area on the map, help the commissioners understand exactly what you are talking about.

Then, I hope some of you listening virtually who couldn't be here tonight or others would like to come to the next public hearing, we will be in Kalamazoo at the wing center

Thursday, May 13th starting at 6:00 p.m.

As always, we appreciate your virtual comments.

Thank you so much.

Thanks to everybody who came out and shared their opinions with us.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Thank you, Sue.

Now, commissioners, I don't know who wants to give a motion to adjourn.

>> I'll do it

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Who is that?

>> I'll make a motion to adjourn.

>> CHAIR KELLOM: Can I have a second?

Juanita has seconded.

Thank you.

All in favor, aye.

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All opposed stick around and help clean up the chairs.
Thank you for attending and joining us this evening.
Be safe and travel well.