

Hello my name is Lars Dahl and I am a resident of the City of Albany. I will be speaking today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Albany County.

Albany County has had a fraught relationship with redistricting. For the past three decades, maps have been thrown out and rejected by the court system costing taxpayers millions and silencing the voices of Albany County residents. In particular, the public is extremely displeased with how previous commissions have drawn districts that dilute the influence of minority communities and how incumbents drew maps to protect themselves instead of drawing districts that best reflect the distinctive communities of our county.

To that end, the League is proud to have successfully advocated for the creation of a new independent redistricting commission that would draw the lines for our county. We expect that this commission will avoid the pitfalls of previous commissions, and work to draw fair maps that reflect our county and its citizens.

In order to achieve the goal of fair maps, we request the following three things:

1) We ask that the commission adopt a map that protects the power of nonwhite voters to elect candidates of their preference.

The nonwhite voters of the county have struggled with representation in the county legislature. Given that the county is around 10% less white than the last redistricting cycle, there should be at least the same number of majority minority districts - ideally more.

2) We also ask that the commission prioritizes communities of interest

Keeping like minded communities together is an essential part of drawing fair maps. Communities can be defined as city, town or village lines, neighborhoods, or any other places where residents form a strong bond with each other.

3) Lastly, we ask the commission be more transparent

We appreciate the commission having a website and streaming the hearings but there is room for improvement. For example, if the commission won't publish recordings of its meetings, then the commissioners should post meeting minutes for more than just one meeting on the website. Other things the commission should do to be more transparent include giving more information about the timeline of the commission and publicizing the work of the commission so more residents can participate.

Separate from my testimony from the League of Women Voters, I would also like to direct the Commissioners' attention to a map that I drew and submitted to the commission yesterday.

Please note that the map reflects my individual opinion alone. Thank you for your time and I am more than happy to take any questions about the testimony from the League or about my map.