

PUBLIC HEARING
“ACRC Final Draft with MMD Plan D”
Albany County Redistricting Commission
June 30, 2022

Statement of Richard C [REDACTED]

My name is Richard C [REDACTED]. I currently reside at [REDACTED] Chestnut Street in the City of Albany which is in the current 5th Albany County Legislative District. I am also a previous member of the Albany Common Council representing the 6th Ward. My comments on “ACRC Final Draft with MMD Plan D” are specifically related to the impact on the current 5th Legislative District and impacted neighborhoods.

As a 24-year member of the Common Council prior to retiring at the end of 2021, I experienced two Common Council reapportionment processes after the 2000 and 2010 US Census findings. In each case, the Commission overseeing reapportionment of the Common Council in accordance with those respective Census reports took into consideration then existing Ward lines and neighborhood boundaries in adopting a final plan in accordance with required population and demographic requirements. This process provided a level of continuity in representation rather than upending ward lines in a way that disrupted established relationships. As a result of the current lines, the Common Council that was elected in 2021 is the most diverse in the history of the City of Albany. Earlier this year, the Common Council appointed a new Commission to oversee the reapportionment process in accordance with the findings of the 2020 Census and as required by the Albany City Charter.

The proposed map that’s the subject of this hearing, essentially shatters the current 5th County Legislative District, splitting the Center Square, Hudson/Park, Park South and Washington Park neighborhoods into four new legislative districts that extend into the Pine Hills, West Hill, Arbor Hill, Mansion and South End neighborhoods. These four neighborhoods, on both the County and City levels, have traditionally shared the same unit of representation, represent similar communities of interest, are bound together by Lark Street as a uniting mixed-use commercial corridor and have a strong working relationship with each other. The fact that the County and City lines are fairly coterminous has enhanced the working relationships between neighborhood and legislative representations. The proposed County Legislative District map creates an unnecessary division that undercuts this working relationship and will cause confusion among residents as far as representation is concerned.

As an added observation, from someone who's been pretty involved in city politics since 1986, our four neighborhoods have been the heart of progressive politics in the City of Albany that challenged existing political orders and opened new opportunities for civic involvement and responsive government. We have also, and continue to be, the home of a large LGBTQ voting population that made those past victories possible and has been able to amplify the voice of LGBTQ people in our local political system.

This plan dilutes the political voice of the LGBTQ community. I don’t know if that is intentional, but that is the impact of the proposal in how it divides the existing 5th LD. This comes at a time

when the LGBTQ community is facing new challenges nationally, and even locally, and needs to have a strong political voice. This plan sends the wrong message.

A prior map contained in an earlier redistricting draft essentially maintained the 5th LD as currently constituted with adjustments for population shifts. There's no reason that map of the 5th LD cannot be adopted, and I would urge the Commission to do so.

In considering your final draft, I'd urge you to keep in mind the value of continuity in terms of representation, maintaining communities of interest and the impact on the political voice of the LGBTQ community which this plan would dilute.

Please reject the proposal to dismantle the 5th LD as currently constituted and adopt a plan which essentially maintains the existing boundaries of the 5th LD with adjustments necessary to reflect population shifts, and which does not dilute the political voice of the LGBTQ community.