

Committee for a Unified Back of the Yards

Offered Testimony – Senate Redistricting Committee Hearing, May 21, 2011

The Committee for a Unified Back of the Yards is a group comprised of residents, religious institutions, social service agencies, local schools, parks, and the business community. The mission of our committee is to advocate for an intact and unified Back of the Yards during the redistricting process.

As a preliminary matter, we would like to incorporate our committee's testimony and exhibits offered to the senate redistricting committee on April 19, 2011 in Cicero. We would also like to thank the Senate Redistricting Committee – especially Senator Raoul and, our senator, Mattie Hunter, for valuing transparency and public input and for their leadership in ensuring that the Senate hold public hearings after the release of drafts maps.

Our committee has reviewed the proposed senate map and it does not keep our neighborhood intact; therefore we cannot support it in its current form. We point your attention to Exhibit A and Exhibit B. Exhibit A shows the boundaries of our neighborhood as compiled and agreed to by our committee members. The borders are 39th St. on the north, 52nd Street on the south, Halsted on the east, and Western on the west. Exhibit B shows a close-up of our neighborhood with the current senate district boundaries. As you can see, our neighborhood is practically cut in half and that is not acceptable.

Back of the Yards is a community of interest. An important principle in the redistricting process is the following: "A community of interest should be kept together within the same district to the extent possible." LULAC v. Perry, a 2006 United States Supreme Court case, stands for the proposition that line drawers should be careful not to divide populations or communities that have common needs and interests.

We are one community. Our community, as identified by Exhibit A, shares racial, ethnic, language, cultural, and socioeconomic identities.

We have one vision. Our community is connected by a shared commitment to advance immigrant rights, create peace, accompany our youth, promote economic development, and improve living conditions and our local schools.

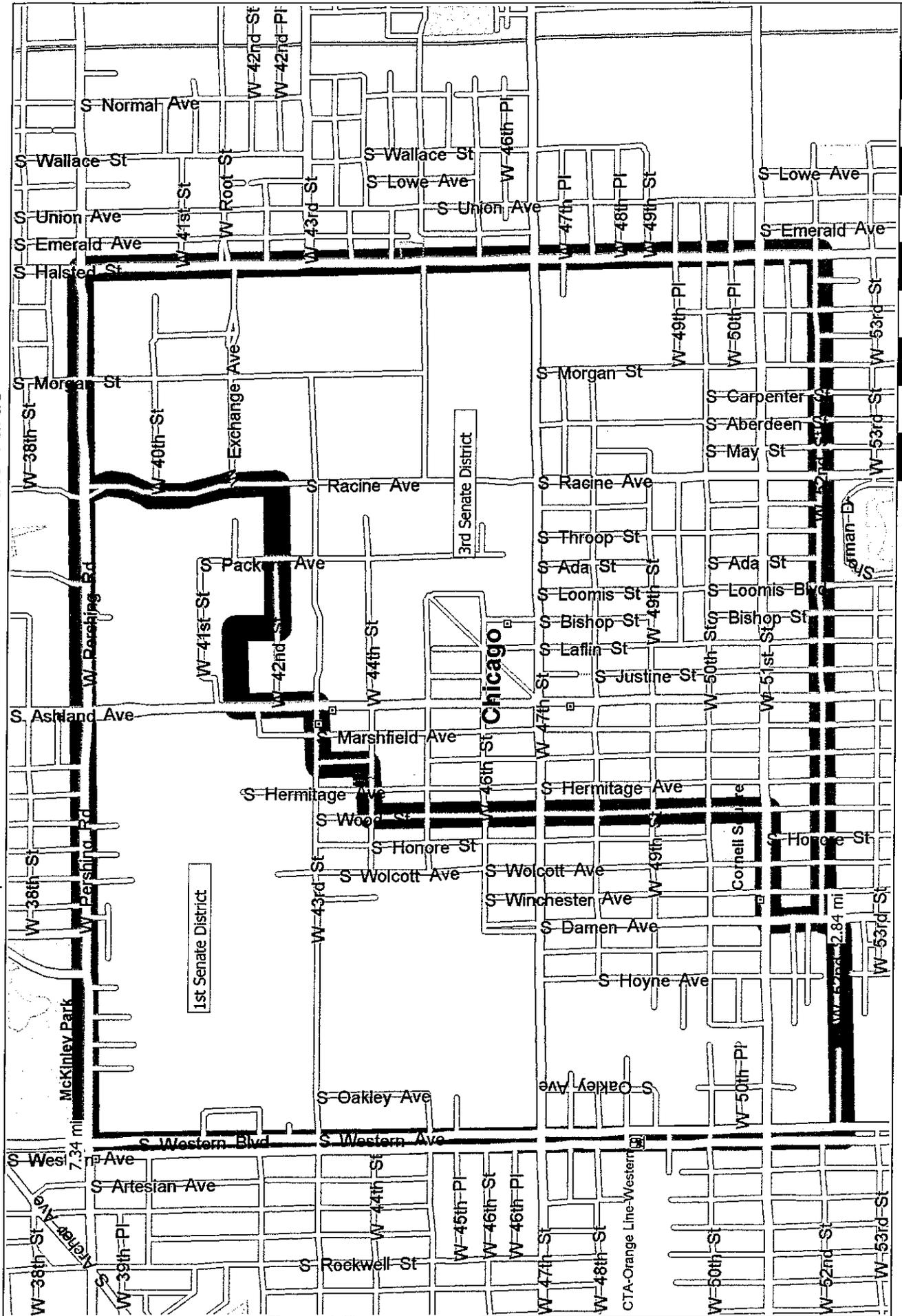
We are one voice. We are asking you to keep us united so that our voice is not diluted, fractured, or silenced. There are a lot of good people doing a lot of good things in our neighborhood. We are increasingly coming together to address the struggles in our neighborhood, but it is a challenge. It becomes more of a challenge when our community is divided politically. We are now asking you to allow us to be one voice in the eyes of the state legislature.

We offer Exhibits C through K into the record. These exhibits are letters of support from the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council, Peace and Education Coalition, United Southwest Chamber of Commerce, Precious Blood Ministries, Holy Cross/IHM Parish, St. Michael's Parish,

Union Impact Center, Mothers for Peace, and Neighborhood Housing Services. In addition, we have previously submitted signed petitions from residents of our neighborhood.

In conclusion, we thank the redistricting committee for maintaining larger ethnic communities intact in the proposed maps. However, the map fails to keep our community intact. If you take a close look at our map, Exhibit A, we are really only talking about “blocks.” We are not asking for a new district—we are talking about “blocks.” In the eyes of the stenographers, the change that we are proposing many seems insignificant, but to us it means the world. Therefore, we respectfully request the redistricting committee to reconsider the district boundaries in our neighborhood and keep the Back of the Yards intact.

Proposed Senate Districts for Back of the Yards



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St. Michael The Archangel Parish

4821 South Damen Avenue sma48@ameritech.net
Chicago, Illinois 60609
Tel. (773) 523-1248
Fax (773) 523-0955

18 May 2011

Dear Redistricting Committee,

I write this letter on behalf of our community in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on the near southwest side of Chicago. I am the Pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church. For many years, we have been active in serving the outreach needs of a very poor community. Our community is concerned about the divided voice we currently have at all legislative levels.

Back of the Yards, a community that encompasses a 2-mile by 1.5-mile area, is currently split into 13 political districts in the congressional, state legislative, and aldermanic levels. The community shares racial, ethnic, language, cultural, and socio-economic identities. Having 13 districts in one community has made it difficult for residents to obtain basic government services, develop relationships with their legislators, create political empowerment, advocate for the needs of our youth, poor and immigrants, and promote economic development.

Example: The neighborhood is currently divided between state districts, both for the house and the senate. While we have a positive relationship with the State Representatives and State Senators, it is challenging for them to represent us along with the rest of their constituency.

Example: The broader neighborhood is divided between several congressional districts. One, in particular, does not effectively represent the voice of people suffering from low-income, immigration, and violence issues in the Back of the Yards.

We call on the Redistricting Committee and the General Assembly to do the following:

- Keep the Back of the Yards unified and intact when mapping the congressional and state legislative districts.
- Present potential redistricting maps to the public at least two weeks before a vote so that communities can provide input.
- Ensure fair representation by protecting voting rights under the Federal Voting Rights Act and the new Illinois Voting Rights Act including influence, coalition, and crossover districts.
- Recognize and respect communities of interest by keeping them together and not fracturing or diluting their voice and vote.



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Our community is connected by a shared commitment to advance immigrant rights, create peace, accompany our youth, promote economic development, and improve our local schools. We share a common vision of justice and hope; we now ask that you give us the opportunity to speak with one voice.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Cima

Rev. Thomas E. Cima,
Pastor, St. Michael the Archangel

Dear Redistricting Committee,

I write this letter on behalf of the BYNC and the community we represent. Our organization has been chartered since 1939 and we have represented this community on a myriad of issues. Few however, have been as important as the redistricting issues of the community. I strongly believe that the Back of the Yards community as represented by the map which shows the South border being 52nd street, North border 43rd, West border Western Avenue and the East border Halsted is best served by the legislature with one representative. Therefore, I respectfully request that this community be kept intact and allowed to exercise its political initiatives.

We call on the Redistricting Committee and the General Assembly to do the following:

- Keep the Back of the Yards unified and intact when mapping the congressional and state legislative districts.
- Present potential redistricting maps to the public at least two weeks before a vote so that communities can provide input.
- Ensure fair representation by protecting voting rights under the Federal Voting Rights Act and the new Illinois Voting Rights Act including influence, coalition, and crossover districts.
- Recognize and respect communities of interest by keeping them together and not fracturing or diluting their voice and vote.

Our community is connected by a shared commitment to advance immigrant rights, create peace, accompany our youth, promote economic development, and improve our local schools. We share a common vision of justice and hope; we now ask that you give us the opportunity to speak with one voice.

Sincerely,



Craig Chico
President & CEO



"A LIGHT HOUSE TO A NEW LIFE"

Dear Redistricting Committee,

I write this letter on behalf of our community in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on the near southwest side of Chicago. UNION Impact Center has implemented Guitar Lessons, Martial Art, Soccer, Women's Aerobics, Women's Reflection, Youth Leadership Program, Block Club Training, and Street Alternative programs. These particular programs are designed to allow parents and students to express creativity and physical fitness as well as provide mentorship for the youth and education for the parents.

UNION serves the Back of the Yards community which is populated predominately by Latinos. High gang violence and crime makes attendance to our programs by community members a safe, nurturing, and cultivating environment for both youth and adults. It also allows for those in gangs, a place to learn how to escape the lifestyle and discover the expectations of our Lord. We address the hardness of hearts and the renewing of minds. Our community is concerned about the divided voice we currently have at all legislative levels.

Back of the Yards, a community that encompasses a 2-mile by 1.5-mile area, is currently split into 13 political districts in the congressional, state legislative, and aldermanic levels. The community shares racial, ethnic, language, cultural, and socio-economic identities. Having 13 districts in one community has made it difficult for residents to obtain basic government services, develop relationships with their legislators, create political empowerment, advocate for the needs of our youth, poor and immigrants, and promote economic development.

The neighborhood is currently divided between state districts, both for the house and the senate. While we have a positive relationship with the State Representatives and State Senators, it is challenging for them to represent us along with the rest of their constituency.

The broader neighborhood is divided between several congressional districts. One, in particular, does not effectively represent the voice of people suffering from low-income, immigration, and violence issues in the Back of the Yards.

We call on the Redistricting Committee and the General Assembly to do the following:

- Keep the Back of the Yards unified and intact when mapping the congressional and state legislative districts.
- Present potential redistricting maps to the public at least two weeks before a vote so that communities can provide input.
- Ensure fair representation by protecting voting rights under the Federal Voting Rights Act and the new Illinois Voting Rights Act including influence, coalition, and crossover districts.
- Recognize and respect communities of interest by keeping them together and not fracturing or diluting their voice and vote.

Our community is connected by a shared commitment to advance immigrant rights, create peace, accompany our youth, promote economic development, and improve our local schools. We share a common vision of justice and hope; we now ask that you give us the opportunity to speak with one voice.

Sincerely Yours In Christ,

Rafael Yañez

President & CEO

U.N.I.O.N. Impact Center

773 600 1601 (e) 773 751 5042 (f)

yañez@unioimpactcenter.org

U.N.I.O.N. Impact Center 4821 South Hermitage Avenue Chicago IL 60609

Exhibit F.



**UNITED SOUTHWEST
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Dear Redistricting Committee,

I write this letter on behalf of our community in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on the near southwest side of Chicago. The United Southwest Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary organization of business and professional people dedicated to improving the growth and success of the southwest business community. The chamber represents local businesses, professionals and individuals looking to start a new business. We are concerned about the current divided voice we currently have in Back of the Yards at all legislative levels.

Back of the Yards, a community that encompasses a 2-mile by 1.5-mile area, is currently split into 13 political districts in the congressional, state legislative, and aldermanic levels. The community shares racial, ethnic, language, cultural, and socio-economic identities. Having 13 districts in one community has made it difficult for residents to obtain basic government services, develop relationships with their legislators, create political empowerment, advocate for the needs of our youth, poor and immigrants, and promote economic development.

The neighborhood is currently divided between state districts, both for the house and the senate. While we have a positive relationship with the State Representatives and State Senators, it is challenging for them to represent us along with the rest of their constituency.

We support the Committee for a Unified Back of the Yards' call on the Redistricting Committee and the General Assembly to do the following:

- Keep the Back of the Yards unified and intact when mapping the congressional and state legislative districts.
- Present potential redistricting maps to the public at least two weeks before a vote so that communities can provide input.
- Ensure fair representation by protecting voting rights under the Federal Voting Rights Act and the new Illinois Voting Rights Act including influence, coalition, and crossover districts.
- Recognize and respect communities of interest by keeping them together and not fracturing or diluting their voice and vote.

Sincerely,

Reymundo Aguayo,
President
United Southwest Chamber of Commerce

Exhibit I



Peace and Education Coalition

OF THE BACK OF THE YARDS NEW CITY, CHICAGO

April 20, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

The Peace and Education Coalition of Back of the Yards, New City (PEC) has been a driving force behind positive change in the Back of the Yards community for the past 14 years. One of the most difficult issues we have not been able to resolve is the division created in the neighborhood because of the current unfair and unjust districting of our community on a national, state and local level.

For example, the neighborhood is currently divided between congressional districts. The neighborhood is divided between congressmen – one, in particular, who does not effectively represent the voice of people suffering from low-income, immigration and violence issues in the Back of the Yards.

The neighborhood is also currently divided between state districts, both for the house and the senate. While we enjoy a relationship with the State Representatives and State Senators, they are stretched between the breadth of their districts to try and collaborate on common concerns. The time consuming effort challenges planning for the Back of the Yards neighborhood.

And finally, the neighborhood is currently divided into 5 wards by the city of Chicago. The neighborhood strives to speak with a unified voice; however, because our community is so divided we only make up a small portion of each ward and often are an afterthought in the aldermen's mind.

In order to make the changes necessary to reduce violence and improve the quality of life for all of our neighborhood residents the community needs to be unified.

We call on the Senate Redistricting Committee and the General Assembly to do the following:

- Keep the Back of the Yards unified and intact when mapping the congressional and state legislative districts. A map of our community is offered into the record.
- Present potential redistricting maps to the public at least two weeks before a vote so that communities can provide input.
- Ensure fair representation by protecting voting rights under the Federal Voting Rights Act and the new Illinois Voting Rights Act including influence, coalition and crossover districts.
- Recognize and respect communities of interest by keeping them together and not fracturing or diluting their voice and their vote.



Peace and Education Coalition

OF THE BACK OF THE YARDS NEW CITY, CHICAGO

Our community deserves to be treated with respect and we implore you to allow us to speak with

ONE VOICE!

Sincerely,

Paul J. Lopez
President
Peace and Education Coalition

Mothers for Peace
5114 S. Elizabeth St.
Chicago, IL 60609

May 18, 2011

Dear Redistricting Committee,

I write this letter on behalf of our community in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on the near southwest side of Chicago. Mothers for Peace is an organization that recognizes the responsibility and place that mothers and grandmothers have in the lives of our children. I taking our responsibility serious, we seek to support and encourage our youth and our community to work toward a safe environment for all our neighbors. We, along with others, are concerned about the divided voice we currently have at all legislative levels.

Back of the Yards, a community that encompasses a 2-mile by 1.5-mile area, is currently split into 13 political districts in the congressional, state legislative, and aldermanic levels. Having 13 districts in one community has made it difficult for residents to obtain basic government services, develop relationships with their legislators, create political empowerment, advocate for the needs of our youth, poor and immigrants, and promote economic development.

The neighborhood is currently divided between state districts, both for the house and the senate. While we have a positive relationship with the State Representatives and State Senators, it is challenging for them to adequately represent us along with the rest of their constituency.

The broader neighborhood is divided between several congressional districts. One, in particular, does not effectively represent the voice of people suffering from low-income, immigration, and violence issues in the Back of the Yards.

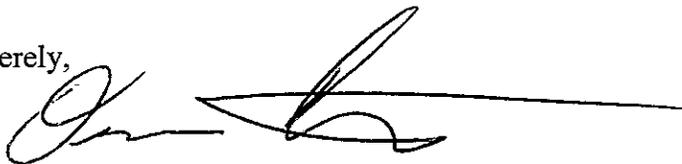
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- Recognize and respect communities of interest by keeping them together and not fracturing or diluting their voice and vote.

Exhibit H

Our community is connected by a shared commitment to advance immigrant rights, create peace, accompany our youth, promote economic development, and improve our local schools. We share a common vision of justice and hope; we now ask that you give us the opportunity to speak with one voice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Oscar Contreras', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Oscar Contreras



Precious Blood

Ministry of Reconciliation

PO Box 09379, Chicago, IL 60609-0379

May 18, 2011

Dear Redistricting Committee,

I write this letter on behalf of our community in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on the near southwest side of Chicago. Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation is a non-for-profit restorative project on the southwest side of Chicago whose mission is to reach out to those who are experiencing conflict and impacted by violence. We work with marginalized youth and their families and strive to offer voice to those who have little voice. We value collaboration with our neighbors and envision a neighborhood where we are united around the welfare of our children and neighbors. Our community is concerned about the divided voice we currently have at all legislative levels.

Back of the Yards, a community that encompasses a 2-mile by 1.5-mile area, is currently split into 13 political districts in the congressional, state legislative, and aldermanic levels. Having 13 districts in one community has made it difficult for residents to obtain basic government services, develop relationships with their legislators, create political empowerment, advocate for the needs of our youth, poor and immigrants, and promote economic development.

The neighborhood is currently divided between state districts, both for the house and the senate. While we have a positive relationship with the State Representatives and State Senators, it is challenging for them to adequately represent us along with the rest of their constituency.

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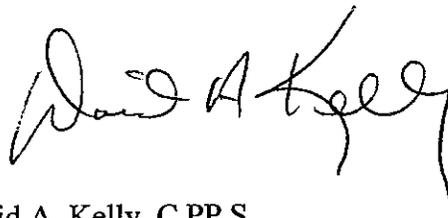
- Keep the Back of the Yards unified and intact when mapping the congressional and state legislative districts.
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- Ensure fair representation by protecting voting rights under the Federal Voting Rights Act and the new Illinois Voting Rights Act including influence, coalition, and crossover districts.
- Recognize and respect communities of interest by keeping them together and not fracturing or diluting their voice and vote.

The Precious Blood Center is located at 5114 S Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL
Tel: 773/579-0781; Fax: 773/579-0782

F. I. V. T

Our community is connected by a shared commitment to advance immigrant rights, create peace, accompany our youth, promote economic development, and improve our local schools. We share a common vision of justice and hope; we now ask that you give us the opportunity to speak with one voice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David A. Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping tail on the "y".

Fr. David A. Kelly, C.P.P.S.
Executive director

HOLY CROSS/IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY PARISH

4541 S. Wood Street
Chicago, Illinois 60609
(773) 376-3900 • FAX (773) 376-8929
www.hcihm.org

April 20, 2011

Dear redistricting committee:

I write this letter on behalf of our parish community in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on the near southwest side of Chicago. I am a pastor for the last twelve years in the neighborhood and a resident for the last 21 years. Our community is concerned about the divided voice we currently have at all legislative levels.

The broader neighborhood is divided between congressional districts. One of the two does not effectively represent the voice of people suffering from low-income, immigration and violence issues in the Back of the Yards.

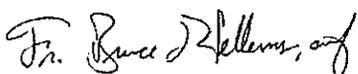
The neighborhood is also divided between state districts, both for the house and the senate. While we have a positive relationship with the State Representatives and State Senators, it is challenging for them to represent us along with the rest of their constituency.

Affecting us most, perhaps, is that our parish neighborhood is divided between the following City WARDS: 16, 3, 12, and 20. All of our Alderman have been attentive as best they can, but the division creates a hardship for the neighborhood to obtain services and plan accordingly. To highlight some of the difficulty I can point to two recent examples of stress for the neighborhood: 1) The resolution of vendors on our streets. In the Back of the Yards, overall, the neighbors have supported the vendors, given the vending of food which is not prepared over a fire on the street - but some Alderman have fought this for while others have supported the vendors. This continues to be a difficult issue as the Police also are divided on how to respond to various Alderman. 2) The current building of a High School is a miracle for our neighborhood. At least one Alderman did not support the High School because it took funds from that WARD to support the effort in this WARD. (My understanding is that WARDS share resources when needed, but this could be an unspoken rule.) Still, the division of Aldermanic voice was clear.

Hear in the heart of the Back of the Yards, I sit here in the 20th WARD writing this letter at Holy Cross. Our chapel, a couple of blocks away to the east sits in the 3rd WARD. The Park, where our youth hang out, is one block north in the 12th WARD. The business community, one block to the south, sits in the 16th WARD. I understood years ago these WARDS need the population of the Back of the Yards so they can fulfill their Federal grant numbers, and I was told that anything we needed could be addressed directly by City Hall. But in ten years, I have learned the value of the voice of an Alderman, and I believe we need ONE voice.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Fr. Bruce Wellems, CMF
Pastor

Chicago: South 4/20/2011

Exhibit J

Dear Redistricting Committee,

I write this letter on behalf of our community in the Back of the Yards neighborhood on the near southwest side of Chicago. I represent Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago and am the Neighborhood Director and we deal with all housing issues here in the Back of the Yards community. Our community is concerned about the divided voice we currently have at all legislative levels.

Back of the Yards, a community that encompasses a 2-mile by 1.5-mile area is currently split into 13 political districts in the congressional, state legislative and aldermanic levels. The community shares racial, ethnic, language, cultural, and socio-economic identities. Having 13 districts in one community has made it difficult for residents to obtain basic government services, develop relationships with their legislators, create political empowerment, advocate for the needs of our youth, poor and immigrants, address foreclosure issues affecting the community and promote economic development.

The neighborhood is currently divided between state districts, both for the house and the senate. While we have a positive relationship with the State Representatives and State Senators, it is challenging for them to represent us along with the rest of their constituency.

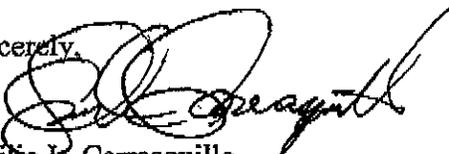
The broader neighborhood is divided between several congressional districts. One, in particular, does not effectively represent the voice of people suffering from low-income, immigration, and violence issues in the Back of the Yards.

We call on the Redistricting Committee and the General Assembly to do the following:

- Keep the Back of the Yards unified and intact when mapping the congressional and state legislative districts.
- Present potential redistricting maps to the public at least two weeks before a vote so that communities can provide input.
- Ensure fair representation by protecting voting rights under the Federal Voting Rights Act and the new Illinois Voting Rights Act including influence, coalition, and crossover districts.
- Recognize and respect communities of interest by keeping them together and not fracturing or diluting their voice and vote.

Our community is connected by a shared commitment to advance immigrant rights, create peace, accompany our youth, promote economic development, and improve our local schools. We share a common vision of justice and hope; we now ask that you give us the opportunity to speak with one voice.

Sincerely,



Emilio L. Carrasquillo
Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago
Back of the Yards Office and HomeOwnership Center

7 10 11 12