

TESTIMONY OF
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BEFORE THE
Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee
Chicago, Illinois
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My name is Valerie Krejcie. I am a professional cartographer, map maker, with my own business. I received an MS in Cartography from the University of Wisconsin. I am also a board member of the League of Women Voters of Illinois. Recently, I attended the National Redistricting Seminar sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures.

I would like to address the mapping process and how we hope to improve how redistricting is done in Illinois. One of the first lessons we learn in cartography is that no ONE map will be the only solution to a mapping problem. With a broad range of variables to consider, there are an infinite number of maps that will fit a given goal. Compromise is the nature of the business. So, I am skeptical about drawing new district boundaries after the 2010 Census. You will never please the client, in this case the citizens of Illinois, by creating any one map. I caution everyone, that even with the much more sophisticated computer software now available, it is still highly unlikely anyone will be able to draw the perfect map that fulfills all requirements.

However, there is a much better, more democratic, fairer, and alternative way for how these maps get drawn. According to present law, the Illinois constitution states that the Legislative Districts and representative districts shall be compact, contiguous and substantially equal in population.

The Collins report recommended that we pursue “comprehensive redistricting reform” and spelled out a number of steps to insure reform. As part of the report additional principles were proposed that we have incorporated into our proposal after consultation with other experts.

In addition to the three criteria previously listed we have included: 1) that districts shall comply with all federal laws, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965. 2) District boundaries shall, to the extent practical, follow visible geographic features and municipal boundaries. And 3) specifically warned that the plan shall not be drawn to purposefully or significantly favor or discriminate against any political party or group. Party registration, voting history data and incumbency shall not be considered in the mapping process, except to evaluate compliance with the VRA or with discrimination against a political party or group.

It should be noted that compliance with one principle may impact another. A classic example of this is the 4th Congressional district here in Chicago, which was drawn to comply with the VRA law, but has the shape of an “ear muff”. Thus, it is contiguous, but not “compact”. We have not defined these terms numerically, but HOW the lines are drawn and IF it can be documented that

a good faith effort was applied, and applied uniformly throughout the state, then it is more likely the courts will look kindly on a particular map.

Other states include such principles as district competitiveness, partisan fairness, respect for political subdivisions and communities of interest. We have not included these in our proposal. Some of these issues will be addressed by moving the process from what turns ultimately to a “coin toss” that empowers one incumbent, political leader, to an independent, bi-partisan commission with substantial checks, transparency and opportunity for public input.

The option to produce more maps with the technology available and a timetable that allows for maps to be reviewed by the public will ultimately lead to more choice and participation by a greater numbers of citizens. The resulting maps will help to improve Illinois’ efforts to reform.

I thank you for inviting the League of Women Voters to speak at this hearing.