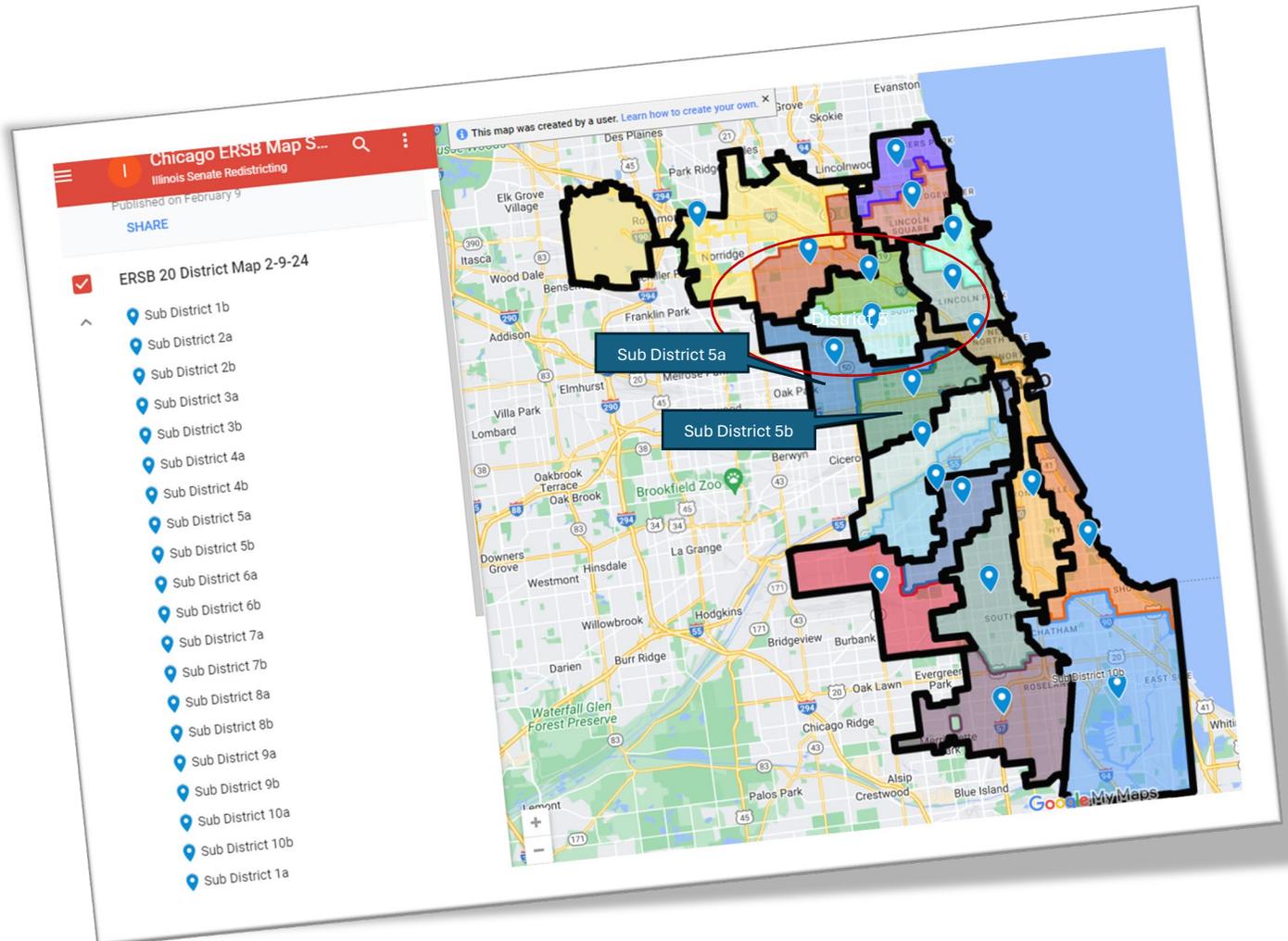




Illinois African Americans For Equitable Redistricting

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

The picture of the Illinois Legislature's proposed mapping plan for the electoral districts for Chicago's Elected Representative School Board is clear. The underlying implementation plan is bad for democracy.



We oppose Senate Bill 3757, the Chicago Board of Education District Act, which divides the City of Chicago into 10 districts and 20 subdistricts for the purposes of identifying persons who will serve on the Chicago Board of Education.

1. **The Illinois Senate reversed itself from the proposal they passed in November 2023**, in which every eligible voter in Chicago could vote for their candidate of choice, and every eligible prospective candidate could run for election, regardless of where they live.

2. **SB 3757 prevents any candidate who happens to live in the same subdistrict as an appointed board member from running for the School Board.** This, despite the fact that in 2024, Board members will be representing the 10 districts and not the 20 subdistricts.
3. **Candidates won't be able to run to represent the areas represented by the 20 subdistricts until 2026.** Creating 20 subdistricts now, versus in 2026, effectively serves no other purpose than to limit future competition for appointed board members. Even President Biden, a sitting President, has Primary challengers.
4. **SB3757 limits ballot access and voter choice.** Every eligible Chicago voter can vote. However, up to half the people who want to run for the ERSB this year will not be eligible to run if they happen to live in the same subdistrict as an appointee.

For example, the Austin community (located in Subdistrict 5a) and North Lawndale community (located in Subdistrict 5b) are in the same district, District 5. If a Mayoral appointee to the Chicago Board of Education lives in North Lawndale, then no prospective candidate who lives in North Lawndale (Subdistrict 5b), East Garfield (Subdistrict 5b) or West Garfield (Subdistrict 5b) can run for the Chicago Board of Education in 2024. They would have to wait until 2026 to run.

People who live in Austin (located in Subdistrict 5a) can vote for candidates who live in their community.

Voters who live in North Lawndale, East Garfield and West Garfield can vote for candidates from Austin but not from their own communities. They have to wait until 2026 to have the ability to vote for their neighbors who may want to run for the Board of Education.

Scenarios like these will play out in every one of the 10 districts drawn.

5. **We are not attorneys or Constitutional scholars. However, this proposal seems to be a violation of the First Amendment of the Constitution, which guarantees 1 man, 1 vote.** Even though there are 10 districts, and every voter in those districts can vote, not every voter will be on equal footing. Voters from half the subdistricts will have the opportunity to elect people who live in their own subdistricts. The other half will have their community-based representative selected for them, while their votes influence elections in communities in which they don't live.
6. **The proposal creates two classes of Board members.** Eleven members of the Chicago Board of Education, including the Board President, will be appointed by the Mayor in 2024. The remaining 10 members will be elected by the voters. A majority of the Board members will be beholden to the Mayor, with 10 being beholden to the Electorate. Having all District representatives elected will put all Board members on equal footing.
7. **"The math ain't mathin'".** When assessing the underlying data for the proposed map, we see a district in which the Asian community makes up .62 percent (62 100ths of 1 percent) of the population of District 9 of the proposed 10-district map. When adjusting for voting age, the data indicate that 66 percent of the voting age population for District 9 is Asian.
8. **This proposal is much too difficult to understand after a single reading.** The process of creating Chicago's ERSB was extremely complicated. Law makers had to develop a governance structure, draw a map, establish rules surrounding the election and ethics; optimize opportunities for minority groups to elect candidates of choice without infringing on voting rights of White voters and stay within the confines of the Constitution.

The Legislature unnecessarily convoluted the process by creating 10 districts on top of the 20 districts created last year; converting the 20 former districts to subdistricts of the 10 newly-created districts; providing for elections in 10 districts in 2024; allowing 10 of the 20 subdistricts to elect a district representative from their own subdistrict while appointing a representative from the remaining 10 subdistricts; denying opportunity for prospective ERSB candidates in 10 subdistricts to run in 2024 while limiting candidate choice in those same districts.

Our own experience has shown that proposals that are too difficult to understand after a single reading typically stifle community engagement, breed distrust, and/or don't work in the best interests of the people. (Think about the proposals you heard in the past concerning Magnet/Selective School Enrollment, TIFs and the use of park land for Olympic venues)

Call to Action

Call your State Senator and tell them to amend SB3757 to allow for the election of all 20 members of the Chicago Board of Education in 2024.

IAAFER Leadership Team

Valerie F. Leonard, Co-Founder, IAAFER

Karl Brinson, Chicago Westside NAACP

Natasha Dunn, Founder and Executive Director, Black Community Collaborative

Lafayette Ford, Retired Educator

Nicole Johnson, Independent Journalist and Educator

Gerald Morrow, Former Principal, Dunbar High School

Dwayne Truss, Founder of PACE and Former Member, Chicago Board of Education

Craig Wimberly, President, Coalition of African American Leaders (COAL)