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STATE OF ILLINOIS
SENATE REDISTRICTING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
EAST CENTRAL and SOUTHEASTERN COUNTIES

Friday, April 9, 2021
3:10 p.m.

Via Zoom videoconference

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PRESENT:

(Via Zoom videoconference)

ILLINOIS REDISTRICTING SUBCOMMITTEE:

SENATOR SCOTT M. BENNETT, Sub-Chair
SENATOR DORIS TURNER, Sub-Vice-Chair
SENATOR DAVID KOEHLER, Sub-Vice-Chair
SENATOR JASON A. BARICKMAN, Sub-Minority
Spokesperson
SENATOR DARREN BAILY, Member
SENATOR CHAPIN ROSE, Member

WITNESSES:

GLORIA YEN (Director, New American Welcome
Center at the University YMCA)
SCOTT EISENHAUER (Administrator for the Village
of Rantoul)
REEMA KAMRAN (Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition)
AMMAR BHUTTO (Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition)
MILENA SUKOVIC

ALSO PRESENT:

SENATE STAFF
MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Again, sorry to make
2 everybody wait. That was not my intent
3 especially on a beautiful Friday afternoon. So
4 we'll go ahead and gavel in. This meeting of
5 the Senate Redistricting Subcommittee on East
6 Central and Southeastern Illinois is called to
7 order.

8 Will the clerk please take the
9 roll.

10 THE CLERK: Senator Rose.

11 SENATOR ROSE: Here.

12 THE CLERK: Senator Baily.

13 SENATOR BAILY: Good afternoon. I'm here.

14 THE CLERK: Senator Barickman.

15 SENATOR BARICKMAN: Here.

16 THE CLERK: Senator Koehler.

17 SENATOR KOEHLER: Here.

18 THE CLERK: Senator Doris Turner.

19 SENATOR TURNER: Here.

20 THE CLERK: Senator Bennett.

21 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: I am here.

22 There being a quorum present, the
23 following entities are seeking leave to
24 photograph or videotape the proceeding:

1 BlueRoomStream media.

2 Is there leave?

3 Leave is granted.

4 Senator Turner for a motion.

5 SENATOR TURNER: I move that this hearing
6 be transcribed by the court reporter so that the
7 committee can have a full transcript of this
8 hearing, which the redistricting committee can
9 approve once members and staff have had an
10 opportunity to review the transcript and make
11 any needed corrections.

12 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Senator Turner moves to
13 allow the court reporter to transcribe today's
14 hearing.

15 Is there leave?

16 Leave being granted, the court
17 reporter -- I'm sorry. Thank you. Leave being
18 granted, the court reporter will be allowed to
19 transcribe the hearing.

20 As the redistricting committee
21 receives any written only testimony, that
22 testimony will be made part of the committee
23 record and posted on the redistricting
24 committee's ILGA website.

1 Today's subcommittee covers the
2 following counties along the Indiana border:
3 From Ford and Iroquois Counties in the north to
4 Wayne, Edwards and Wabash in the south. It
5 includes districts that are currently
6 represented by Senators Barickman, Baily,
7 Turner, Rose and myself.

8 And I will start today's hearing
9 with an opening statement. I know Vice-Chairs
10 Turner and Koehler have some comments they were
11 wishing to make as well, and then, of course, if
12 Senator Barickman has any opening remarks, we'll
13 go to those, and then we'll turn to our
14 witnesses and testimony today.

15 Good afternoon and welcome to the
16 East Central and Southeastern Illinois
17 Redistricting Committee. This is one of
18 numerous public hearings the Senate
19 Redistricting Committee is holding across
20 Illinois to gather input from communities of
21 interest as we work to create a fair map that
22 reflects the geographic and racial diversity of
23 our state.

24 It's the constitutional duty of

1 the legislature to undergo this process every 10
2 years to make sure our communities receive fair
3 and equal representation. Illinois is a --
4 Illinois is a constantly changing state, and
5 it's important we take time to understand those
6 changes to make sure that no one is overlooked.
7 For those unable to provide testimony themselves
8 today, I encourage you to visit our website,
9 www.ilsenateredistricting.com, where you can
10 submit comments, concerns and find more detailed
11 information about the redistricting process.

12 We're focusing on encouraging as
13 much public participation as possible, and on
14 that site, you can even draft and submit your
15 own proposed legislative boundary maps which
16 will be reviewed as part of that public record.

17 We are all well aware of the
18 challenges that the pandemic has presented in
19 the last year, and even this process hasn't been
20 spared. Because of the pandemic, the U.S.
21 Census Bureau has said it will not get
22 redistricting data to the states until late
23 August or September, way past our June 30th
24 constitutional deadline to complete this

1 process.

2 Despite this clear deadline, some
3 have argued that we should abandon our
4 constitutional duty and put off the process
5 until census data is finally released. While we
6 don't know yet what information will be used to
7 draft the maps, we do know what will happen if
8 we blow the deadline in the Constitution.

9 If the general assembly misses
10 the June 30th deadline, mapmaking will be turned
11 over to a commission of political insiders, and
12 the public will be cut out of the process
13 entirely. This is not an independent
14 commission, as some have incorrectly stated.
15 It's a commission of political appointees named
16 by legislative leaders.

17 As a person who has advocated to
18 give the public more say in this process, I have
19 a real problem with that outcome, and I imagine
20 the people we represent will take issue with
21 that, too. So I would like to thank those who
22 took time out of their day to be with us here,
23 and I look forward to your testimony.

24 And now I'd like to turn it over

1 to Vice-Chair Turner for a few remarks.

2 Senator.

3 SENATOR TURNER: Thank you, Senator
4 Bennett. Good afternoon, everyone.

5 I will be brief because this is
6 the communities' opportunity to be heard. I'm
7 excited for this opportunity to allow
8 individuals from, not only this area of
9 Illinois, but the entire state, to participate
10 and have their voice heard during this
11 redistricting process.

12 While we undergo the
13 redistricting process every 10 years, I am proud
14 to say that this is the most transparent
15 redistricting process in our state's history.
16 We are holding hearings to ensure the voices of
17 all 102 counties are heard, and everyone who
18 wants to definitely has an opportunity to have a
19 say in this process.

20 We have worked extremely hard to
21 invite a wide array of stakeholders and have
22 also provided, as Senator Bennett spoke about
23 earlier, an online portal for additional
24 comments. I cannot say loudly enough that we

1 are at the beginning of this process, a process
2 that belongs to the voters. We want to hear
3 from you, and this is definitely your
4 opportunity.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Thank you, Senator
7 Turner.

8 Senator Koehler, any remarks?

9 SENATOR KOEHLER: Yes. Thank you,
10 Chairman Bennett. And to you, Senator Turner,
11 you've both clearly laid out why it's so
12 important to hold these hearings and to gather
13 perspectives really from all across this state.

14 I'm just here to learn and
15 listen, and I also want to express my
16 appreciation for all those who are here today,
17 especially those who are here to testify.

18 So thank you for being here.

19 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Thank you, Senator
20 Koehler.

21 Senator Barickman, would you like
22 to make any remarks at this time?

23 SENATOR BARICKMAN: Sure. Thank you.
24 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 This, in fact, I believe, is our
2 13th redistricting hearing over the past three
3 weeks. I think there's been -- participation
4 has been significantly limited. Of those who've
5 testified, we've continually heard that the
6 process lacks transparency, that there's a clear
7 absence of public engagement, that there are
8 significant concerns about the Democrats' use of
9 ACS data and that there's broad-based support of
10 using an independent commission.

11 There's been some discussion of
12 the significance of a June 30th deadline. I
13 note that my friend, the chairman, referenced
14 that here. To be clear, the Illinois
15 Constitution requires maps by October 5th. It
16 is misleading to suggest otherwise. The June
17 30th date is the last date for Illinois
18 politicians to draw their own maps and pick
19 their own voters, something voters in this state
20 clearly don't want occurring anyway.

21 We strongly believe that this
22 committee should embrace the use of the actual
23 census data. The census bureau has publicly
24 stated its intent to provide the data to the

1 states this August. We should plan to accept
2 that data and use it. Suggestions that the
3 Democrats may use the ACS data results in
4 districts being based on a small sampling of the
5 population.

6 Witness testimony has reminded
7 this committee that the use of ACS data will
8 disenfranchise voters, disenfranchise
9 communities of color, disenfranchise communities
10 of interest that have changed over the past 10
11 years and even over the last year. This would
12 be like basing our election results on poll
13 numbers rather than counting the actual votes.

14 We continue to hear false claims
15 that Republicans want these hearings stopped.
16 This has absolutely no basis in truth. In fact,
17 we along with the independent -- with
18 independent groups from across the state have
19 continually asked for even more hearings than
20 are currently planned, but we should stop
21 cramming them all into a few weeks, and instead,
22 ensure the public has ample time to arrange
23 their schedules and participate in a meaningful
24 manner. Voters want this process to lead to

1 more choices at the ballot box. They want more
2 competition in our elections instead of
3 politicians using this process to protect their
4 own interests.

5 The Senate Republicans are
6 committed to obtaining a bipartisan solution to
7 the problems of politicians picking their
8 voters, and so last week we introduced the
9 People's Independent Map Act. Senate Bill 1325
10 uses identical language from an amendment that
11 was proposed last year by Senator Julie Morrison
12 and -- or, back in 2019, and that -- that
13 amendment garnered 37 cosponsors in the Senate,
14 including 18 of Senator Morrison's fellow
15 Democrats, some of whom serve on this committee.

16 A similar independent commission
17 amendment was cosponsored by Speaker Welch.
18 That amendment passed the House in 2016 with 105
19 yes votes. The point is today is a historic
20 opportunity to do something that many members of
21 the legislature on the Democratic side of the
22 aisle have said over the years that they support
23 and many have voted for.

24 The People's Independent Map Act

1 would take the politicians like us in this
2 committee out of the map drawing process. An
3 independent redistricting commission has long
4 been supported by Governor Pritzker and, again,
5 many members of the other side of the aisle.

6 We took care to introduce this
7 legislation exactly as it was when it had
8 received so much support from Democrats because
9 we wanted to ensure that it was a bipartisan
10 solution to the problems of politicians picking
11 their voters.

12 I look forward to further
13 testimony from the witnesses and discussion with
14 the members of this committee on how we can help
15 to bring real change and transparency to this
16 process.

17 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Thank you, Senator
19 Barickman.

20 And I'm not surprised that we may
21 disagree on a lot of the facts that have been
22 stated. The intros, I will not go through them
23 all now except to say this is the 14th -- lucky
24 number 14th hearing since March 17th and with

1 more to come.

2 So we have -- let's get started
3 on today's hearing. Also, if any of the
4 witnesses -- and I thought I saw a window here
5 of maybe someone driving. I want to point out
6 that obviously this is a public hearing, and if
7 you could make sure to park your vehicle in a
8 safe spot. That individual, I think, will
9 testify later on in the hearing, so you have a
10 little bit of time, but please make sure that
11 you're operating the vehicle safely.

12 But first, I'd like to invite
13 Gloria Yen, the director of the New American
14 Welcome Center at the University YMCA, to
15 testify here today.

16 Ms. Yen, are you still there?

17 MS. YEN: I am. Good afternoon, everyone,
18 and thank you, Chairman Bennett. Should I go
19 ahead?

20 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Yeah, if you'll
21 introduce yourself and then begin your
22 testimony. Thank you.

23 MS. YEN: Great. So good afternoon,
24 everyone. My name is Gloria Yen, and I'm the

1 director for the New American Welcome Center at
2 the University YMCA in Champaign, Illinois. I'm
3 very grateful for this opportunity to engage in
4 the redistricting process today.

5 At the New American Welcome
6 Center, we work each and every day to ensure
7 equitable access to services, economic
8 opportunity and meaningful belonging for the
9 25,000, which is nearly 12 percent, of
10 foreign-born residents living in Champaign
11 County. They come from over 110 countries from
12 all over the world, from the Democratic Republic
13 of the Congo, from Mexico, from China and so
14 many more.

15 Despite population laws across
16 the state, our community actually continues to
17 grow, and that's in no small part thanks to
18 immigrants. In fact, 51 percent of our local
19 foreign-born population entered the U.S. after
20 2010.

21 Immigrants in Champaign County
22 support key sectors from STEM education to
23 manufacturing, healthcare and hospitality. A
24 third of them are U.S. citizens with another

1 quarter eligible for naturalization. This is an
2 effort that we have been working hard on through
3 citizenship instruction courses, immigration
4 legal assistance and voter education.

5 Regardless of their status,
6 immigrants in Champaign County have established
7 homes, contributed to our economy and strengthen
8 the social fabric of our community. Our
9 community looks very different today than it did
10 10 years ago. Meaningful belonging means that
11 districting will keep immigrant communities
12 together, that it will foster reflective
13 representation, equitable distribution of
14 resources and civic engagement.

15 I believe that this committee has
16 a very tall order in front of you by June 30th,
17 but I trust the commitment of this committee to
18 fulfill its constitutional duty and ensure that
19 that's a reality.

20 Thank you very much for your work
21 to improve fair representation and voting power
22 for racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities.
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Thank you, Ms. Yen.

1 All right. Is there discussion
2 from the committee or questions for the witness?

3 This is always the delicate thing
4 on a Zoom meeting. I will look for hands, but
5 if I don't call on you and you want to unmute
6 yourself and call out, that's fine, too. I
7 don't see any -- I'm sorry.

8 Senator Rose.

9 SENATOR ROSE: So, Chairman, is it
10 possible to hear all of the witnesses' testimony
11 before we do questions or not? The reason being
12 is I have certain questions that are probably
13 going to be specific. I don't know. I mean, I
14 think I'd rather hear everybody first, but are
15 you suggesting maybe we don't do that?

16 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Well, you make a good
17 point, Senator Rose, but I'll tell you, just
18 with respect to people's time -- and I don't
19 know. I have not checked the availability.
20 We're in the middle of the day for many of our
21 witnesses -- I think it would probably be more
22 accommodating if we could address them
23 individually, and that's how we've done all the
24 hearings thus far.

1 So if you have -- and you know,
2 we can certainly discuss as we go, but if you
3 have individual questions for Ms. Yen, please go
4 ahead.

5 SENATOR ROSE: Okay. Thank you.

6 Ms. Yen, thanks for your
7 testimony today. I guess my question is this:
8 We have a requirement that we use the best data
9 to draw maps, which would be the census data.
10 That is not going to be available anytime soon
11 due to the COVID situation.

12 So, you know, to make sure that
13 we're in compliance with, you know, not just the
14 Constitution, but also the Voting Rights Acts
15 and Civil Rights Act, et cetera, what is your
16 thought on using a different source of
17 underlying data, one that really only surveys 1
18 percent of the population?

19 And do you think that we're going
20 to get a valid map using data that only surveys
21 1 percent of the population?

22 MS. YEN: Thanks for your question,
23 Senator Rose. So I will say that I am not a, as
24 a disclaimer, data expert; however, with regard

1 to American Community Survey data, I think
2 that's proven to be reliable over periods of
3 time. And also, the census makes annual
4 projections that would map onto decennial census
5 data, I think, that is also reliable.

6 SENATOR ROSE: So even though ACS only
7 uses 1 percent of the population in a given
8 year, you would be comfortable vesting the civil
9 rights protections in the United States code in
10 data that only surveys 1 percent of the
11 population?

12 MS. YEN: One question I guess I would
13 have is I don't know what dataset or datasets
14 are necessarily being used in the process,
15 whether it's only ACS or if, for example, other
16 datasets are being brought into place.

17 I think that folks on the ground
18 have just, through interactions with the
19 community, through the work that we do, for
20 example, through the public health district's
21 response to the pandemic, have very granular
22 level data on who is in our communities.

23 SENATOR ROSE: But if you only use the one
24 set, ACS, that is based on 1 percent surveyed in

1 any given year -- and by the way, I think
2 there's even issues about how that survey's
3 taken within the year. I mean, the census
4 itself, as you all know, was painstakingly done
5 with lots of people, boots on the ground,
6 literally going door-to-door. The ACS doesn't
7 do that.

8 So I guess, to get back to my
9 question, if that's the source of the data and
10 it's only 1 percent of the population, are you
11 comfortable vesting the protections of the Civil
12 Rights Act, Voting Rights Act and the United
13 States Constitution in a data source that's only
14 1 percent of the surveyed subset of the United
15 States?

16 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Well, I'm sorry, Ms.
17 Yen, if you want to answer that, it's fine, but
18 if we were in court, Senator Rose, I think I'd
19 object as asked and answered.

20 SENATOR ROSE: She didn't answer the
21 question. She said that she was wondering what
22 other data sources might be possible, and I'm
23 suggesting, if it's ACS and that's the data
24 source. I would like the answer to that

1 question.

2 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. So the question
3 is, if that's the only data source, would you be
4 comfortable with that, Ms. Yen, if you have an
5 opinion.

6 MS. YEN: I don't have an opinion on that
7 at the moment.

8 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. One point -- I'm
9 sorry, Senator. If you have another question,
10 please go ahead.

11 SENATOR ROSE: I would just ask that, if
12 the witness wants to survey her organization and
13 see if they'd like to submit a written answer on
14 that, I know that the committee would probably
15 be happy to take that.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Not only that, we would
18 be happy if her organization would like to go
19 into the portal and draw their own map. We'll
20 talk more about that as we go.

21 I want to point out I've heard
22 that -- I just want to make sure that all
23 members of the redistricting committee and the
24 subcommittees fully understand. I've heard it

1 said over and over, which I believe is a
2 misstatement, that there's a commitment to only
3 use a data option including ACS. Everything
4 that I have, every meeting that I've been in,
5 everything I've read, the redistricting
6 committee and its subcommittees have noted that
7 we're reviewing all data options right now, and
8 obviously, this is part of that.

9 ACS may be what we have at the
10 time. We're hopeful that we'll get the census
11 data earlier. Again, that's out of our hands
12 like so many things with the pandemic, but a lot
13 of what we need to do is what we're doing today,
14 hearing from people in the communities about
15 their communities. So the more that we can ask
16 questions today about our individual witnesses
17 and their communities of interest, I think the
18 more we're going to get out of the today's
19 hearing as well.

20 So with that, Senator Rose, do
21 you have additional questions or any others on
22 the committee?

23 SENATOR ROSE: I'm good. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: All right. Thank you,

1 Senator Rose.

2 Senator Koehler.

3 SENATOR KOEHLER: Yes, I have a question,
4 but first, just a comment. Although, I do know
5 that ACS data is going to be the documentation
6 that the Republicans in the State of Oklahoma
7 are going to use, so I guess it's okay for them.

8 But, Ms. Yen, where are most of
9 the immigrant populations located? Is it near
10 Champaign-Urbana? Are they coming primarily
11 because of the University of Illinois?

12 MS. YEN: No. So I think that may be a
13 common misconception in our area. Of the 25,000
14 immigrants who are living in our community, I
15 think about 14,000 are affiliated -- hold on. I
16 do not want to misstate this. Only 40 percent
17 of the folks in our community are associated
18 with the University community. So there are a
19 lot folks in our community, again, from all over
20 the world, who are establishing their homes
21 here, working in our community, voting in our
22 district.

23 SENATOR KOEHLER: And would this include,
24 say, migrant farm workers that come into the

1 area to work seasonally and folks like that as
2 well?

3 MS. YEN: I do not believe that's included
4 in the 25,000, but I can look into that. I
5 don't know the answer.

6 SENATOR KOEHLER: So that would be -- and
7 I know from my years of working with United Farm
8 Workers that there is quite a flow of migrant
9 workers into the State of Illinois, a lot of
10 them who settle out and remain here permanently,
11 so that would be over and above then the
12 population you're talking about?

13 MS. YEN: Potentially.

14 SENATOR KOEHLER: That's all. Thank you
15 very much.

16 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Thank you, Senator.
17 I saw another hand. Senator
18 Barickman. And if you haven't already, would
19 you kindly turn on your video and please ask
20 your question?

21 SENATOR BARICKMAN: Sure. Thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman.

23 Actually, I want to talk about
24 the exchange that just occurred between the

1 witness and you on the data. You -- you
2 specifically said that there's not -- that
3 there's under consideration multiple choices for
4 data that will be used in drawing the map.

5 Could you please tell us what
6 data is being considered for the use of drawing
7 these maps?

8 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. Ms. Yen, we'll
9 get back to questioning you here in just a
10 moment, but, Senator Barickman, my understanding
11 as a member of the redistricting committee is
12 that at this point all data options are
13 available, whatever information we have.

14 At this stage, this early
15 stage -- and it's early April -- we're on a
16 listening tour. We've done 14 hearings. We
17 have more to go. We're trying to learn more
18 about the state and every crevice of the state,
19 not just, you know, certain more populous
20 corners. And we're -- that's the stage we're in
21 right now.

22 As we advance toward the June
23 30th deadline, we'll see what information is
24 available. I think most of us are hopeful that

1 some of the census information will be there
2 earlier. I know, if it's not, other states have
3 relied on what's been referred to earlier, the
4 ACS, the survey data we have, and certain states
5 have found that to be reliable and certainly
6 very timely.

7 But at this point, I think the --
8 I think it's more an issue of there has not been
9 a commitment to what data is on the table or off
10 the table, and we're more about -- interested in
11 learning about the state and how it's changed in
12 the last 10 years.

13 SENATOR BARICKMAN: Well, okay. So again,
14 your point, though, was that there were multiple
15 choices, and now you've alluded to that again,
16 and I'm trying to understand what those choices
17 are.

18 I guess I'd also point out,
19 Mr. Chairman, that you asked of the witness that
20 her group provide maps to the committee and that
21 those would be considered. What data should the
22 witness use in proposing maps to the committee?

23 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Thank you, Senator.

24 My understanding -- and we've

1 invited obviously the whole state to go to the
2 portal and put in maps. The best information we
3 have now to do the proposed maps is ACS data.
4 That's from the census bureau. As I said, it's
5 historically been accurate.

6 Other states, Republican led and
7 Democrat ones, are relying on that, if we do not
8 end up with the census data, but again, we don't
9 know that. We have projections of when the
10 census bureau will have their numbers available,
11 but if it's not available before then, there are
12 other options which I think are before the
13 committee.

14 SENATOR BARICKMAN: Is your suggestion
15 that the witness then use ACS data, and if so,
16 do you suggest the one-year data, the three-year
17 model, the five-year model? What is the
18 suggestion?

19 Again, the witness was asked by
20 you to produce a map, and I think the witness
21 deserves to know what data they should use to
22 fulfill the request that the chairman of the
23 committee has made of her.

24 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Well, Senator, I

1 believe, if she goes to the portal, you know,
2 the data that's there -- we have to use
3 something to draw the maps. And as you know,
4 the census data is not available, so what we
5 have right now is the ACS. So they can draw --
6 you can use that data today to draw those maps.
7 That is one more thing.

8 There's hearings. There's also
9 the maps that we're inviting the public to make.
10 That is all part of the process, I think, that
11 the legislature is committed to using to come up
12 with the maps in light of their constitutional
13 timeline, but that's -- I mean, again, if I
14 haven't answered your question, I'm happy to
15 talk more about it, Senator.

16 But I will say this: I know
17 these are some of the same talking points I
18 heard you make at previous hearings. I doubt
19 that you'll get an answer too much more
20 satisfactory from me than you've heard before
21 because we're kind of, you know, covering the
22 same ground. And we do have a lot of witnesses
23 in the queue here giving us their time in the
24 middle of the day.

1 Can we go ahead and finish,
2 though --

3 SENATOR BARICKMAN: We can.

4 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: -- and then, if you'd
5 like to talk tomorrow, I'd be glad to answer
6 your questions.

7 SENATOR BARICKMAN: We can, and I
8 appreciate that, Mr. Chairman.

9 To be clear, these aren't talking
10 points. This question was raised by witnesses
11 that the Democrats asked to testify at some of
12 our previous hearings. They're the witnesses --
13 instead of, you know, putting this on
14 Republicans as talking points, I think your
15 point actually is quite critical of the
16 witnesses that you've invited here. This is
17 their question.

18 And again, I'm raising it again
19 here, as was raised by witnesses previously,
20 because of your suggestion to this particular
21 witness that her group draw a map. My point,
22 which is, again, your witnesses' previous point
23 is that it's unfair to ask witnesses to provide
24 maps unless you tell them what specific data

1 they should use.

2 So I appreciate your comment.
3 I'm glad to move on in the testimony, but I
4 think candidly that the witnesses deserve an
5 answer to the question of the data that they
6 should use to respond to your request that they
7 provide you maps.

8 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: I believe that's
9 available there on the portal.

10 Senator Barickman, do you have
11 questions for the witness?

12 SENATOR BARICKMAN: No. Thank you,
13 Mr. Chairman.

14 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: All right. Senator
15 Turner, do you have a question?

16 SENATOR TURNER: I don't have a question.
17 I just really wanted to kind of follow up with a
18 comment that Senator Koehler made about Oklahoma
19 and them using the ACS data.

20 And we've heard several comments
21 about the -- questioning the accuracy of the
22 data, but I just want to say that historically
23 the ACS data has been fairly accurate when
24 compared to final census data, and a Pew

1 Research Center analysis compared 2009 ACS
2 population estimates to 2010 census results and
3 found a difference of just 1.1 percent in
4 Illinois. So I think that, you know, as we move
5 forward, that's one -- you know, one comment
6 that I think we can maybe take off the table.

7 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: I appreciate that,
8 Senator.

9 Are there -- I do not see any
10 other hands. Is there any further discussion
11 for Ms. Yen? And if not, I would like to ask at
12 least one question.

13 First of all, I appreciate your
14 work in the community, and I'm sure I speak for
15 the other senators who represent parts of
16 Champaign County as well. And to me, I think
17 it's especially relevant because of the -- some
18 of your information about how much Champaign
19 County has changed over the same census period,
20 the decennial issues.

21 Can you describe -- you know, can
22 you give us maybe the largest nationalities that
23 you see through the New American Welcome Center
24 that we should be concerned about in Champaign

1 County?

2 What are some national groups
3 that we want to make sure that aren't
4 subdivided?

5 MS. YEN: Sure. We work with many
6 communities from the Democratic Republic of the
7 Congo. There has been a sizable flow of
8 migration from the DRC in the past 10 years
9 where I'm not sure how many people that -- not
10 negligible, but a very small number of people,
11 if any, were in Champaign County prior to 2010,
12 so that is a great group to be paying attention
13 to.

14 Another large group of folks that
15 we work with are Mexican immigrants. In
16 addition, we have increasing flows of migration
17 from Central America and finally in East Asia,
18 China, South Korea, Taiwan community, the East
19 Asian community.

20 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: All right. And what --
21 we try very hard in these hearings to recognize
22 that communities of interest don't have zip
23 codes. They transcend municipal boundaries and
24 often county and state boundaries.

1 But are there parts of the
2 district that you serve, the area that you
3 serve, where you find most of these populations,
4 whether it's Champaign-Urbana or St. Joseph or
5 any other communities where you find that the
6 DRC or some of these other groups tend to
7 congregate?

8 MS. YEN: So there is -- most of the folks
9 that we work with do live in Champaign-Urbana,
10 also in Rantoul. And unlike, perhaps, in the --
11 for example, in the Chicago area, folks
12 aren't -- you can't necessarily designate
13 different neighborhoods and kind of know what
14 kind of racial and ethnic makeup you're going to
15 find.

16 I think there is a pretty
17 distributed spread in terms of where people
18 decide to reside and make their life in
19 Champaign-Urbana and cities like Rantoul as
20 well. So I know that, for example, yeah, it's
21 important that those -- the diverse voices of
22 those communities are represented in the
23 process.

24 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: All right. Thank you.

1 I have no further questions for
2 this witness; although, I did see Senator Rose
3 with a late second hand, but since this is his
4 county as well, I'm happy to open it back up to
5 questions from you.

6 Senator Rose.

7 SENATOR ROSE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
8 You may regret that, but I do appreciate it.

9 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Too late, but go ahead.

10 SENATOR ROSE: Gloria -- or, I'm sorry.
11 Ms. Yen -- I apologize -- did your organization
12 help organize the census count locally?

13 MS. YEN: I didn't --

14 SENATOR ROSE: Did your organization help
15 organize the census count locally? Did you guys
16 perform work for -- as a census taker?

17 About how many people -- which
18 organization -- I know you said there's a
19 couple, but which organization specifically was
20 the one that helped do the census count locally?

21 MS. YEN: It was really a coalition, so
22 the regional administrator, the regional
23 intermediary of census funding -- (Inaudible)

24 SENATOR ROSE: You've got to get closer to

1 the microphone, ma'am. We couldn't hear you,
2 the last part there.

3 MS. YEN: The administrator of IDHA census
4 funds was the Champaign-Urbana Public Health
5 District.

6 SENATOR ROSE: And then you guys were
7 what, subcontractors then?

8 MS. YEN: Yes, we were.

9 SENATOR ROSE: Okay. In which group, the
10 YMCA or a different group?

11 MS. YEN: The University YMCA was one of
12 several subcontractors working with historically
13 undercounted communities.

14 SENATOR ROSE: Okay. So about how many
15 people did you send out on the streets to help
16 get an accurate count as part of that process?

17 MS. YEN: While you would think that we
18 had sent out a lot -- and that was the plan --
19 but the pandemic hit, and a lot of our outreach
20 efforts were done virtually through our pandemic
21 health navigators.

22 SENATOR ROSE: Got it. But you would say
23 that your efforts were helpful towards reaching
24 an accurate count for our areas; is that fair?

1 MS. YEN: Yes. I would say that's a fair
2 and accurate count.

3 SENATOR ROSE: Okay. So something that I
4 have learned -- I maybe should have been more
5 clear on earlier when I was asking about the ACS
6 count. I do think Senator Barickman makes a
7 good point that, you know, without knowing what
8 data source to use, it's very difficult for you
9 to produce a map, but that 1 percent of the
10 country that is surveyed in ACS isn't
11 necessarily Illinois or even a subpart of
12 Illinois.

13 So I guess I come back to this:
14 Your organization put a lot of time and effort
15 into trying to help get an accurate census
16 count. Let me rephrase my question from before.
17 If the ACS data didn't even include Champaign
18 County where your organization was working, then
19 how can it be accurate?

20 MS. YEN: Again, I'm not a data expert,
21 but I will say that my understanding is that
22 there is ACS data that is inclusive of Champaign
23 County, and I am glad -- I was glad to hear of
24 Senator Turner's comments with regard to the 1.1

1 percentage of error.

2 SENATOR ROSE: Well, okay. So there's 300
3 what, 65, 70 million people in the United States
4 of which Illinois is 12 million, so, yeah, I
5 guess the question is, how is it -- if they're
6 only doing 1 percent, how can it be accurate?

7 And I heard you say that you
8 believe that maybe they've done Champaign, but
9 what about Danville, or what about Decatur, or
10 what about Bloomington or Charleston or Rantoul?
11 How can it be accurate if they're only sampling
12 1 percent of the whole United States?

13 And you know, I'd like to see --
14 I guess I'd like somebody to show me what was
15 actually sampled by ACA -- ACS in the State of
16 Illinois. But you -- so your position would be
17 that -- well, I don't want to put words in your
18 mouth, so I'll just say yes or no, if the ACS
19 didn't sample some portion of the State of
20 Illinois, is that accurate or not?

21 MS. YEN: From this conversation, it
22 sounds like it could be beneficial for the
23 committee to invite an expert in statistics who
24 works on the ACS, for example, and can speak to

1 those questions much better than I.

2 SENATOR ROSE: Okay. I'll let you off the
3 hook here, but one last thought. You know, you
4 represent a group in campus, you represent a
5 group that worked their tail off to get accurate
6 data. You're certainly entitled to your
7 opinion, your personal opinion on this matter.

8 What do you think?

9 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Can you be more
10 specific, Senator? Think about what?

11 SENATOR ROSE: Would it be accurate -- I
12 mean, is it accurate --

13 MS. YEN: I would look at the
14 recommendations and look at the data sources
15 that the committee will be reviewing while
16 they're making redistricting and also use that
17 to inform this commission that our organization
18 makes to the portal.

19 SENATOR ROSE: We can move on. Thanks,
20 Mr. Chairman.

21 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Thank you, Senator.

22 I saw another hand, and I'm happy
23 to have all members of the committee
24 participate. Senator Baily, do you have

1 questions for Ms. Yen?

2 SENATOR BAILY: Thank you very much, yeah,
3 but I am in the backseat of a car traveling, so
4 I'm trying to operate two cell phones. And I
5 just wanted to make a statement.

6 The national state legislatures
7 conference, they have issued -- and I can't find
8 it right now, but they have suggested that the
9 ACS data is indeed the less reliable source to
10 use, so I wanted to throw that out there.

11 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: All right. Appreciate
12 your comments.

13 Seeing no other, I'm going to go
14 ahead and move on unless somebody speaks out
15 here, but I don't see any other hands.

16 So with that, Ms. Yen, I
17 appreciate so much your testimony on the
18 communities' interest that you are an expert on
19 and can appreciate, you know -- can appreciate
20 your testimony very much, so thank you for
21 joining us today.

22 Our next -- you're welcome to
23 hang out if you'd like, but it's a beautiful
24 day, if you want to move on to other work.

1 Our next witness will be Scott
2 Eisenhower, the administrator for the Village of
3 Rantoul. Mr. Eisenhauer, would you introduce
4 yourself, and please begin your testimony?

5 MR. EISENHAUER: Thank you very much,
6 Mr. Chairman and to the distinguished members of
7 the Senate Committee.

8 First, let me thank Ms. Yen for
9 handling all of the very tough questions that
10 were going to be lobbied at witnesses today, and
11 so I appreciate her going first.

12 What I want to share with you
13 today is just very simply a quick perspective as
14 it relates to redistricting from a village
15 perspective, and that is some additional things
16 that I would like for you to keep in mind as you
17 go throughout this process. And I understand
18 it's a very difficult process.

19 This is a process that our
20 community just went through on a very small
21 level two years ago as we moved from electing
22 our trustees at large to electing them by
23 district. And so I understand the complexities
24 of the very difficult process of which you are

1 undertaking, and I applaud you all for your
2 efforts in hosting these public meetings to do
3 such.

4 So I'm just going to ask you to
5 keep three things in mind as you go through this
6 process. And while certainly the numbers are
7 going to be important, the three things that I'm
8 going to ask you to keep in mind are, A,
9 community partnerships.

10 Here, in the Village of Rantoul,
11 we have great partnerships, as Ms. Yen just
12 commented, with our communities just to the
13 south of us in Champaign and Urbana, whether
14 that be through the New American Welcome Center
15 programs that Ms. Yen just spoke about, whether
16 that be through the Economic Development
17 Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce, whether
18 that be with the tourism bureau, Visit Champaign
19 County.

20 We work very closely with our
21 neighbors to the south in Champaign and Urbana,
22 and we have enjoyed the opportunity to be in the
23 same legislative district with them which gives
24 us some strong, powerful opportunities as we

1 move forward in our lobbying efforts, and so I
2 appreciate that.

3 But we also have a partnership
4 with Danville and the Central Illinois Land Bank
5 Authority. And previous to me coming here to
6 Rantoul, I spent 16 years as the mayor of
7 Danville. And also, being in the same
8 legislative district with a community like
9 Danville has given us opportunities to be able
10 to partner and share in some of our efforts.
11 And so I appreciate the efforts that led to this
12 particular district 10 years ago because I think
13 building upon those community partnerships
14 should be an important part of this process.

15 I also think -- and this is my
16 second and third point -- it's important to also
17 look at economic and demographic
18 comparabilities. And so, while sometimes we're
19 not necessarily here in Rantoul of the same
20 economic comparability as Champaign-Urbana, I
21 feel that, while we're smaller than Danville, we
22 certainly match Danville very closely when we
23 start talking about demographic and economic
24 statistics. And so I would also ask as you go

1 through the process to consider that as well.

2 And again, having another
3 community in this particular legislative
4 district where we've been able to work together
5 on challenges as well as opportunities because
6 of our similarities, not in size, but in our
7 economic makeup and our demographic makeup, that
8 has been extremely beneficial to us.

9 So I recognize you're going to
10 spend a lot of time talking about the numbers,
11 and I appreciate that part of the process, but I
12 hope you will also take just as much time to
13 focus on community partnerships, economic and
14 demographic comparabilities when looking at
15 these legislative districts.

16 We've enjoyed that, relationships
17 that we've had over the course of the last 10
18 years, and you know, given the opportunity to
19 draw my own map, while I wouldn't necessarily
20 draw the rest of the state, I would certainly
21 draw a legislative district very, very similar
22 to the one we have today because of the
23 partnerships and also the opportunity to share
24 some of our challenges and opportunities with a

1 community like Danville that has the same makeup
2 as we do here.

3 Those are my only comments today,
4 Mr. Chairman, and I'm more than happy to stay on
5 and answer any questions.

6 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Well, you will regret
7 that immediately, Mr. Eisenhauer, but thank you
8 again for your testimony and for being on.

9 Is there any discussion, members
10 of the committee?

11 All right. Let me start us off.
12 Suddenly everyone is so shy. But honestly, that
13 is a district that I currently represent, Mr.
14 Eisenhauer. I represent Champaign-Urbana,
15 Rantoul and in Danville. I've spent a lot of
16 time on the interstate, you know, on 57 to
17 Rantoul, 74 to Danville back and forth. I'm
18 certainly not the only car on that road.

19 And it seems to me there's a lot
20 of commerce of people living in one community
21 and working in another, either Rantoul to
22 Champaign-Urbana or Danville, the Vermilion
23 County area, to Champaign-Urbana.

24 Has that been your experience,

1 too, as either the village administrator or as
2 the mayor of Danville?

3 MR. EISENHAUER: It certainly is,
4 Mr. Chairman, and in fact, I can give you a very
5 personal reflection on that. While we lived in
6 Danville, my wife and I moved to Rantoul. We
7 love this community and enjoy it immensely, but
8 my wife still works in Danville. And so she is
9 just one of many examples of somebody who is
10 driving between Champaign and Vermilion County
11 for work-related activity as well as in many
12 cases personal and entertainment and dining
13 experiences as well.

14 And so that's what I'm talking
15 about when I'm talking about those community
16 partnerships and the makeups of having a
17 legislative district that allows that continuity
18 where you see a significant number of both
19 import and export of the workforce.

20 I will also tell you here in
21 Rantoul we're very fortunate to have an
22 industrial base here that is a large importer
23 for our community, and some of those people who
24 are coming to work here, yes, they're from

1 Champaign-Urbana, no question. They're also
2 from Danville and Vermilion County, so we feel
3 very fortunate to be positioned where we are
4 between two very strong communities in
5 Champaign-Urbana and Danville, two great
6 counties in Champaign and Vermilion.

7 And we feel there's great benefit
8 in the redistricting process to continue to keep
9 us together, so that we have the opportunity to
10 continue to flourish on some of these
11 partnerships and relationships since they are so
12 interchangeable.

13 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Appreciate that.

14 Senator Koehler.

15 SENATOR KOEHLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Mr. Eisenhauer, I appreciate your
17 comments. I guess I have a little different
18 perspective, and I want to just ask you to
19 reflect on this.

20 In the Peoria area, we are split.
21 In fact, until just recently we for years and
22 years had four different legislators from four
23 caucuses. We had a Republican senator. I'm a
24 Democrat senator. We had a Republican

1 representative and a Democratic representative.
2 And so any time there was a community gathering
3 or something that happened within the tri-county
4 area, we always had, you know, a nice mix of
5 bipartisan support, especially when it came to
6 local issues.

7 So what you're offering is a
8 little different perspective that I really
9 hadn't thought much about, and that is just the
10 need to have continuity and to have communities
11 that are alike one another, kind of relate to
12 one another.

13 So tell me more about that. Do
14 you think the Peoria model -- I mean, I guess
15 there's no one perfect model is what I'm saying.

16 MR. EISENHAUER: Senator, I appreciate
17 your question and your perspective. I think, if
18 maybe I were still in Danville or if I were in
19 Peoria or maybe even Champaign-Urbana because
20 those are larger communities, maybe I'd have a
21 different perspective, but in the Village of
22 Rantoul, we're 13,000, and very honest, could
23 easily get lost in a situation like what you're
24 discussing.

1 If we had multiple senators or
2 representatives who were legislating our
3 particular area, my fear is because we would be
4 combined with much larger cities by all of them
5 that somehow being on the outskirts we would get
6 lost. That has not been my experience in the
7 last 10 years. We've been very included in that
8 conversation with Champaign-Urbana and Danville.

9 And so my fear would be that by
10 having us a part of multiple districts or having
11 multiple representatives servicing our area that
12 somehow we would get lost in that mix, and for
13 smaller communities, that's what concerns me.

14 SENATOR KOEHLER: I thank you, and I think
15 this is the benefit of these kind of hearings
16 because that's a new perspective for me, and I
17 want to think about that because I guess we all
18 kind of tend to have perspectives that relate to
19 our own environment and all that.

20 So thank you for sharing that,
21 and I've learned something.

22 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Me, too. Okay. I just
23 want to check -- oh, Senator Rose, please go
24 ahead.

1 SENATOR ROSE: Thank you, Mr. Eisenhower,
2 Scott, if I can say that. I've known you for --

3 MR. EISENHAUER: Please do. Please do.

4 SENATOR ROSE: So, Scott, and I think to
5 Senator Koehler's point, even for smaller
6 communities, it's a big deal. They don't want
7 to get split down the middle, and you're going
8 to have to have a line somewhere.

9 But I remember for years Arthur,
10 Illinois was split down the center of town down
11 Vine Street, and the east side was represented
12 by myself in the House, and the west side was
13 represented by Bob Seider (phonetic) in the
14 House. And you know, Bob and I always, you
15 know, worked together very well, and we always
16 tried to go to Arthur and do joint events and
17 things of that nature to meet with citizens,
18 but, you know, at the end of the day, I'm not
19 sure for the smaller counties and towns, you
20 know, they would prefer to be all together or
21 not in some level. However, you have to have a
22 line somewhere; right?

23 So, Scott, I want you to take
24 what you just said and expound on it a little

1 bit, a different community of interest. And one
2 I was thinking of yesterday, but really, it's a
3 great analogy for your community because right
4 now the Rantoul School Districts, which would be
5 a community of interest at some level, maybe not
6 a Constitution recognized one, but certainly,
7 people who go to Rantoul High School would come
8 from all over that area; right?

9 Well, right now that school
10 district is split in two, and Chairman Bennett
11 represents the majority of it, and I have as
12 well, you know, the northwest corner. And you
13 know -- and so I guess, Scott, you're no
14 ordinary witness. You were the former president
15 of the Illinois Municipal League, and so you've
16 been around the legislative process for a long
17 time, been a mayor of a large town, now a
18 village administrator.

19 What do you think about the
20 school district as a community of interest
21 issue? And I realize you're not a school
22 administrator. Maybe we should have someone at
23 a future hearing. But, you know, people tend to
24 identify -- I mean, you know, what is the one

1 thing you say, Where did you go to high school;
2 right? You know, you're 30 or 40 years old,
3 Where did you go to high school? People still
4 ask that question. In your 60s and 70s, they
5 ask that question.

6 So, you know, what do you think
7 about that as a moniker or a -- you know, sort
8 of a -- a symbol is probably the wrong word, but
9 you know, just some sort of imprimatur of a
10 community of interest? You know, does that make
11 sense to go on those lines?

12 MR. EISENHAUER: Well, it does, and you
13 know, I think the points that you bring up
14 and -- are very important ones. And let me say
15 this: I think, in whatever you do, it's the
16 people who represent those areas that make the
17 difference; right?

18 I know you, Senator Rose, you
19 represent an area just outside of Rantoul, and
20 very frankly, you've come to Rantoul, and you've
21 been a part of things we've done in Rantoul.
22 That's great. You know how much I appreciate
23 that, but you do that because you're the type of
24 legislator who is going to get out and do that.

1 My concern is not just the people
2 that we have surrounding us today, but that type
3 of relationship, at least in my experience
4 through the Illinois Municipal League, doesn't
5 happen all the time, and so that's where those
6 smaller communities get left out.

7 School districts are the same
8 way. I know that you and the senator, the chair
9 of this committee, work very well together to
10 both represent a single school district. I
11 don't know what a school would say. My guess
12 would be that there would be some benefit to
13 having all of that under one legislator instead
14 of two, but I don't want to speak on their
15 behalf.

16 What I do believe is it is
17 important for smaller communities, for school
18 districts, particularly those who are split, to
19 have representatives who are going to pay
20 attention to them regardless of how much of
21 their area they represent. And you don't see
22 that all over the state. And again, I think we
23 just need to be honest about that. A lot of
24 times people will focus only on what is their

1 larger voter base, and having been in politics,
2 I completely understand that.

3 So, yes, I think perhaps there
4 are some reasons why it would be important for
5 all elements of the school district to be
6 underneath one legislator, but I think what our
7 superintendent would say for Rantoul Township
8 High School is, as long as he's got two good
9 senators like what he has today, it doesn't
10 matter what the system is.

11 My fear is through redistricting
12 that may not always happen, and that's where
13 communities get split apart.

14 SENATOR ROSE: I appreciate that, and I
15 notice Bennett also thanks you with a smile for
16 saying two good senators, but --

17 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: One and a half either
18 way, but I'm sure we'll argue about who is --

19 SENATOR ROSE: One and a quarter. I've
20 only got one, so one and a quarter.

21 So, you know, actually, Chairman,
22 the better example would be Salt Fork that you
23 and I split; right? I mean, the school itself
24 is on your side of the road. The east side of

1 the road is you, and the west side of the road
2 is me. Yet, if you ask anybody down there, Salt
3 Fork clearly is a community of interest; right?
4 You know, the identity of the whole area
5 revolves around the school.

6 So -- well, thank you, and I know
7 we tend to be philosophical sometimes, but we
8 appreciate your testimony. Thanks, Scott.

9 MR. EISENHAUER: Thank you, Senator. I
10 appreciate it.

11 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: I appreciate your
12 questions, Senator Rose. That's a good point.

13 Senator Barickman.

14 SENATOR BARICKMAN: Actually, I lowered my
15 hand. Sorry, Mr. Chairman. No questions.

16 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: No problem at all.

17 All right. I don't see any other
18 further discussion, so I want to thank you, Mr.
19 Eisenhower, for your very unique perspective,
20 having a leadership role in two different
21 communities, and feel free to make your exit if
22 you need to get back to work. And we appreciate
23 your testimony today.

24 MR. EISENHAUER: I do. I appreciate it

1 very much, Chairman, and to the distinguished
2 members of the committee, thank you for your
3 time today.

4 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Thank you, sir.

5 All right. Our next witnesses --
6 and I don't know -- I got them here together,
7 but I don't know how that works with Zoom. So
8 if you -- I have Ammar Bhutto and Reema Kamran
9 with the Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition, and so
10 I assume you have talked amongst yourselves and
11 decide how you want to do it. I suppose
12 everybody can just take off mute and speak one
13 at a time.

14 Please introduce yourself and
15 begin your testimony. Thank you.

16 MS. KAMRAN: Thank you -- thank you,
17 Chairman Bennett and legislators. Thank you for
18 inviting us to share our testimony here today.

19 My name is Reema Kamran,
20 R-E-E-M-A, K-A-M-R-A-N for the reporter, and I
21 am here with the Illinois Muslim Civic
22 Coalition. My colleague, Ammar Bhutto, is here
23 as well.

24 We are a coalition of over 150

1 partners and allies of all races, ethnicities,
2 class, faith and backgrounds, and our focus is
3 ensuring that policies made for us are made with
4 us, and redistricting is one critical piece of
5 this. We appreciate CHANGE Illinois for sharing
6 information about these meetings with us.

7 With your permission, I would
8 like to just share my screen because there's
9 some visuals that go along with the presentation
10 that may help, so I think you'll be able to look
11 at my screen as I go through.

12 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: We can see it.

13 MS. KAMRAN: The coalition recommends --
14 Oh, wonderful. Thank you for that. Thank you
15 for that positive feedback, letting me know.

16 The coalition recommends that
17 legislators make sure that census data plus
18 community organization feedback and other data
19 are engaged in redistricting and that the
20 process is transparent, inclusive and clear.

21 In Illinois, we have communities
22 that did not exist in 2010 and others that were
23 never vocal about their needs and still others
24 who have grown in the last 10 years. Our

1 communities fit into many of these criteria.
2 I'd like to share a little data with you, and
3 then my colleague will also share with what's
4 happening specifically in his area.

5 The American Muslim story is
6 diverse. The American story is diverse. Muslim
7 communities across our nation are amongst the
8 most diverse faith group. Though, the Illinois
9 Muslim Civic Coalition is not a religious
10 organization, we want to highlight that race,
11 class and faith connect, and when redistricting,
12 these are critical aspects of a community to
13 consider.

14 Those who identify as Muslim also
15 identify as African-American, and as you can see
16 from that little pie chart right there, almost
17 28 to 30 percent, Asian, 25 percent, white,
18 Arab, Latino and African immigrant. This is a
19 story that many of us do not know because it's
20 often one of an invisible community that does
21 their work and focuses on following the rules in
22 going about trying to achieve the American
23 dream.

24 In my own family, for example, we

1 have Arab, Pakistani, Indian and Latino members.
2 I immigrated to the U.S. over 20 years ago.
3 I've been an active member of the community ever
4 since. And as an immigrant, I'm aware of the
5 challenges, the fears and the hopes and share
6 those experiences of many hard-to-count
7 communities that, you know, were -- that are a
8 part of this country's rich tapestry and the
9 efforts that all of us continue to make to be a
10 part of the American dream that we all strive
11 for.

12 Illinois is one of the most
13 diverse states in the U.S. It ranks in the top
14 25 percent in terms of racial diversity and in
15 the top 10 percent in religious diversity.
16 Illinois actually has some of the largest
17 numbers of Polish, Irish, African-American,
18 Latino, Catholic and Hindu residents in the
19 nation, and Illinois has the largest per capita
20 American Muslim population in the whole country.
21 We beat out Virginia, New York, New Jersey and
22 even Michigan.

23 These residents live, work, play,
24 pray and serve our cities and counties, and they

1 work for a better Illinois, but have zero
2 representation in our state. Representation
3 matters, and as elected officials, we know that
4 you want to make sure that your constituents are
5 represented.

6 Our goal as the Illinois Muslim
7 Civic Coalition is to help provide maps of the
8 diverse Muslim communities across the state, and
9 we would like to make sure that we are a part of
10 the process, so we have three asks that we would
11 like to put forth:

12 Please do not push the
13 responsibility back to 2030 to provide
14 representation to communities who have had zero
15 representation or have been underrepresented.

16 Arab communities are identified
17 as white in the census, and this is incorrect.
18 Consider using census data, ACS data and
19 community leaders as well as community
20 partnerships who know the racial, faith and
21 ethnic demographics across 10 counties as well
22 as across the State of Illinois and ensure that
23 the 2021 maps reflect the diversity of race,
24 ethnicity and faith across Illinois.

1 We know that it is a lengthy and
2 complex process, but we hope that what results
3 from these efforts are well drawn out in
4 equitable districts which do not marginalize any
5 community, but instead, protect the proper
6 allocation of funds and resources and create
7 equitable representations for all Illinois
8 residents.

9 I would like to invite my
10 colleague, Ammar Bhutto, with the community and
11 civic leader to share a little bit about his
12 community in Champaign and share a little bit
13 about his area. Go ahead, Ammar.

14 MR. BHUTTO: Thank you -- thank you,
15 Reema, and I would also like to thank Senator
16 Bennett here.

17 I have been in Illinois in the
18 Champaign-Urbana area, Savoy to be exact, for
19 about two decades now. Just like Reema, I am an
20 immigrant to the U.S., about a quarter century
21 ago. It was 1995, so it's been some time. And
22 you know, believing the American dream, I am
23 always looking forward to look at more chances
24 in a more positive aspect.

1 I just ran for the village board
2 of trustee, and by the way, the results are
3 still out. Our district is still counting the
4 ballots, so it's one of those elections. But
5 having said that, this hearing was really
6 interesting and intriguing in how it was laid
7 out, and I heard some concerns on ACS data being
8 the only source, and should we wait for the
9 census data.

10 By the way, I have some
11 background in data analytics. I'm actually a
12 professor at Eastern Illinois University down in
13 Charleston, so it's always interesting to see
14 how we try to sometimes, you know, cherry pick
15 data and try to make a larger point and
16 sometimes a political point here.

17 So just like how Reema laid out,
18 usage of census data is critical for our
19 community specifically because it has not only
20 increased in terms of population, definitely not
21 in representation. We are highly underserved.

22 Even when I look across Urbana
23 and the Savoy area, we don't have any Muslim
24 representation per se in the electoral offices,

1 but the usage of ACS data along with the census
2 data as well as the community leaders on the
3 ground, organizations like the Illinois Muslim
4 Civic Coalition and several other organizations,
5 YMCA, Champaign Public Health District and many
6 other organizations who do have partial
7 representation of Muslims in there.

8 But to try to summarize it, we
9 need to have another perspective, and I would
10 actually throw the question back to the
11 committee -- and maybe this is a question for
12 you, Senator Bennett -- why do you think that
13 our colleagues on this committee, what I hear
14 mostly from the right, are interested in
15 including more data here? You know, the words
16 are not matching up to the actions from what
17 we've seen in the past several decades.

18 And I leave my testimony with the
19 question to the committee members, to the actual
20 politicians here.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Well, we have rules in
23 the Senate that if you say someone's name they
24 get to speak before --

1 MR. BHUTTO: Okay.

2 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: And by the way, I do
3 not live in Savoy, but I saw lots of your signs
4 out, so I know the results aren't counted, but I
5 know you worked very hard.

6 So I will tell you my theory in
7 terms of why suddenly the census is the end-all
8 be-all, and it has to do with time. I said at
9 the beginning of the hearing that the
10 Constitution has a deadline for the general
11 assembly, which is elected by the entire state,
12 to come up with a plan. And if it's not passed
13 and signed by the governor by June 30th -- this
14 is a requirement of the Constitution -- then you
15 go to this fallback plan, which in my mind
16 represents an absolute failure of the
17 legislative process because what it does is
18 requires the four caucus leaders, the Speaker of
19 the House -- the often maligned Speaker of the
20 House -- the Republican leader of the House and
21 then the Democratic and Republican leader of the
22 Senate, those four incredibly political
23 individuals then begin a process which is not --
24 it's not people that have been elected from

1 across the state as the general assembly.

2 Instead, each of those four hyper
3 political individuals select two people. One is
4 a sitting legislator, and one is a non-sitting
5 legislator, which means it could be a former one
6 or just a member of the community. Now, the
7 odds that that person is going to be apolitical
8 or independent, not super high.

9 If the speaker picks two people,
10 they're probably going to be pretty connected,
11 and that has historically been borne out. This
12 has happened three times since the Constitution
13 has come into effect, in 1981, 1991 and 2001.

14 When you have an even number,
15 eight people, who are that divided on a partisan
16 issue for an issue that is seen as this
17 important for each political side, it is
18 historically deadlocked each and every time.
19 It's a four to four tie, Republican versus
20 Democrats.

21 And then, under the Constitution,
22 in what I think is the world's dumbest
23 tiebreaker, we then put names in a hat -- this
24 is literally mocked at legislative conferences

1 around the county. We put names in a hat,
2 Republican and Democrat, and the Secretary of
3 State selects the tiebreaker name. And so
4 whoever they select, a Democrat or Republican,
5 that person is added to the commission. Now
6 it's a five to four split, and so basically a
7 person who has no public input is now deciding
8 what the map is going to be, which it's going to
9 be.

10 So if you are in a -- if you are
11 in a minority party -- and this is --- I'm sure
12 this would be true if it was Oklahoma who was
13 relying on this or you're a Democrat or
14 Republican in Illinois -- you don't like that
15 you're perceived as having less votes on a map,
16 so you're hoping to punt until after June 30th.
17 After June 30th, this tiebreaker process kicks
18 in, and at least you get a 50-50 shot.

19 In 1991, it was a Republican name
20 that got drawn out of the hat, but I would point
21 out then, in 1991, the Republicans didn't just
22 say, Oh, I'm going to lay that down and create
23 an independent commission. They took their
24 partisan advantage, and they ran with it.

1 And I would point out during that
2 decade it was the only two-year period where
3 Mike Madigan in all 40 years until this year was
4 not elected Speaker of the Illinois House. So
5 it's simple numbers, sir.

6 I mean, it's an issue of both
7 political parties seeing an advantage, a
8 partisan advantage, to drawing the maps. And if
9 you have less than 50 percent of the votes in
10 the general assembly, well, then the best chance
11 we have is putting two names in a hat, and maybe
12 it will be us, and then won't it be great
13 because the hyper partisan person that we
14 select -- I believe in 1991 it was the
15 Republican Chair of the State of Illinois that
16 was picked. And if there's anyone that was
17 around back then -- maybe, Chapin, you were in
18 office then -- if you want to correct me if I'm
19 mistaken on that.

20 But in my personal -- since you
21 asked me, sir, my personal remark on this is
22 suddenly the census is a thing we have to wait
23 for. It has nothing to do with that data. It
24 has to do with the fact that due to the pandemic

1 they told us we're not going to have it until
2 after the constitutional deadline; and so
3 therefore, that is a convenient thing to lean on
4 to say, Let's go ahead and just draw a name out
5 of a hat and not even worry about that process.

6 Now, I'm happy to hear from other
7 members of the committee who might disagree with
8 me, but that is my interpretation.

9 MR. BHUTTO: Thank you for -- at least for
10 my question, you were able to go into details.
11 You know, we try to hope these things do not
12 become too political like the world is today,
13 but --

14 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Agreed.

15 MR. BHUTTO: -- this is a pretty good
16 question that has real political impact
17 especially in communities of color, communities
18 of minority representation. So thank you for
19 going into these details.

20 And as I said, you know, I do
21 have knowledge of data analytics. I teach
22 computer science, so I would rather take some
23 representation than no representation. That's
24 my thought.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: I appreciate your
3 comments.

4 Other participation?

5 I want to point out -- I want to
6 thank Ms. Kamran. I did not know under the
7 census, which, again, has been held up as a
8 paradigm of virtue and representation, that your
9 point that someone of -- someone that might
10 identify as Arab is considered white under the
11 census. So there are certainly questions under
12 any process about whether or not we're counting
13 what we think we're counting.

14 Senator Barickman, your hand's
15 up.

16 SENATOR BARICKMAN: Sure. Thank you.
17 Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

18 Mr. Chairman, I listened with a
19 bit of light-hearted humor, your multi-minute
20 narrative of the complaints you have with the
21 system. And what's humorous to me,
22 Mr. Chairman, is your narrative suggests that
23 you're a bystander in the parade criticizing the
24 float that's going by you when, in fact, you're

1 in the legislature.

2 Why have we never heard of these
3 criticisms from you, and more importantly, why
4 haven't you done anything about it? I mean,
5 what's -- your solution last year to all of the
6 problems you just said was last year to support
7 an independent commission.

8 And for all of your political
9 kind of talking points, to use your language
10 from earlier, what you haven't recognized is the
11 legislation you supported last year, the same
12 legislation we support this year and put it in a
13 bill, actually mandates by law that an
14 independent commission be composed of members of
15 the public who represent the ethnic, racial and
16 gender demographics of the state, all of which
17 solves the problems that you just pointed to.

18 And so I guess my question,
19 Mr. Chairman, is why was that solution good for
20 you last year, but it's not good for you this
21 year?

22 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Well, again, Senator, I
23 don't want to turn this hearing into a partisan
24 fight. That's not why we have witnesses here.

1 This is a process that --

2 SENATOR BARICKMAN: It was your rant.

3 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Please let me finish.

4 Please let me finish.

5 A rant that was in response -- it
6 wasn't my opening statement, as I've heard other
7 statements in other hearings made. It was in
8 response to a question from an individual.

9 The reason, sir, that -- you're
10 correct, I did support the constitutional
11 amendment as it was previously drafted in
12 previous -- you know, because it would have
13 changed the process. You object strenuously to
14 my term "talking points," and you aren't going
15 to like this either. The difference between
16 Senate Bill 1325 and the constitutional
17 amendment that we -- that I supported last year
18 is that 1325 is a political stunt.

19 You and I and Senator Rose all
20 attended one of the better university law
21 schools -- public university law schools in the
22 country, the University of Illinois, in about
23 the same period, early 2000s, and we had great
24 constitutional law professors in Ron Rotunda and

1 John Nowak. And I don't know who yours were,
2 but I know you were a couple years behind me,
3 and Senator Rose, you were a year in front of
4 me.

5 But you would certainly
6 understand that since this timeline, as I stated
7 before to the witness, is in the Constitution,
8 but a simple statute does not undo that
9 timeline. You need a constitutional amendment,
10 which is what I supported last year. The
11 process is the same in terms of the results, and
12 it does take out the backroom deals and all the
13 other concerns that I had, and I continue to
14 have that.

15 I lost you, Senator Barickman.
16 Are you still there? There you go.

17 But this is different. The
18 deadline for constitutional amendments sadly --
19 and I did try to do something about it. I
20 joined as a cosponsor last year or the year
21 before. It was during that general assembly.
22 But the deadline to get constitutional
23 amendments on the ballot was sometime early last
24 summer.

1 If you don't like something in
2 the Constitution, the process, as you well know
3 as an attorney -- and I'm sure the other
4 attorneys on the commission know -- or, the
5 committee know as well -- is it's got to pass by
6 a supermajority of the general assembly and then
7 put on a ballot where the voters get to decide
8 about it.

9 I personally thought that was a
10 good idea, but it didn't get voted on in time.
11 It didn't end up -- with the pandemic and
12 everything else, it did not come before the
13 voters. And so, if we wanted to run that now --
14 if you change this to a constitutional
15 amendment, I would sign on for it, but I would
16 point out, because of the timing now, it would
17 not take effect until 2022, so it would not
18 affect this year's redistricting.

19 That's what I mean by political
20 stunt. You know that we can't change the
21 timeline of a constitutional provision by a
22 simple statute. So what's the reason to run
23 this, is to argue that the whole time you're
24 looking for an independent commission, but

1 frankly, that's not what's going on here in my
2 opinion.

3 My opinion is each party is
4 looking for a partisan advantage, and if you
5 don't -- if the voters of Illinois across the
6 state have not elected your members into that
7 majority, the best chance you got is to draw a
8 name out of a hat, so that is my response.

9 SENATOR BARICKMAN: Okay. Mr. Chairman,
10 the legislation doesn't propose to change the
11 Constitution, and so for -- again, the long
12 narrative on all these supposed constitutional
13 issues are just irrelevant. They're in no way
14 related to the point.

15 The legislature can create an
16 independent commission. There's never been a
17 doubt of that. The Constitution says that the
18 maps need to be drawn by October 5th. Again,
19 you know, to be clear, it's highly misleading to
20 suggest the Constitution suggests otherwise on
21 that exact point.

22 Politicians are given an
23 opportunity in Illinois to draw maps before June
24 30th, and the partisans today are looking to

1 maximize that opportunity. That's why there's
2 this sincere effort to convince the public that
3 June 30th is some magical date. Anyone can open
4 up the Illinois Constitution and see the date is
5 October 5th.

6 So again, there's no
7 constitutional issue here. This is a proposal.
8 The legislature, we need your help, my friend.
9 You Democrats, we saw all the press releases
10 over the years that you're for an independent
11 commission. Let's do it.

12 I mean, we're picking up the
13 exact language that you've supported in the
14 past, so it's hard to understand what reasoning
15 exists for not supporting the exact thing that
16 you supported before.

17 The public's drawn their own
18 conclusion. The public's concluding that the
19 only reason some politicians won't support
20 something that they put their name behind
21 previously is because they want to maximize the
22 partisan advantage that they have through the
23 majority legislative role that they've got.

24 And you know, look, I guess I

1 would just ask like be -- if there's a desire to
2 be transparent here, be transparent about that,
3 and then voters can make their decision, but
4 hiding behind a false narrative of a
5 constitutional issue, I just think there's no
6 constitutional lawyers over at the University of
7 Illinois claiming that our legislative proposal
8 that many of you once embraced is
9 unconstitutional.

10 Quite the contrary, we lawmakers,
11 we propose changes to the law every day, and
12 what we're asking is that the Democrats join us.
13 Join us in a bipartisan solution to create an
14 independent commission. It was good last year.
15 Why not do it this year? I still -- I don't
16 understand the objection.

17 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Except you do, Senator
18 Barickman, because you're -- and again, this is
19 the last thing I'll say about this, and we
20 should probably talk at the end of the hearing
21 if you'd like, but you do understand it because
22 it's unconstitutional.

23 If a timeline and process is
24 created by the Constitution, it needs then to go

1 through the amendment process, as I said before,
2 getting it past the supermajority and then
3 finally passed by the voters in a November
4 election before that process changes.

5 So my reading of this is this is
6 more smoke and mirrors, which we spent all our
7 time talking about a bill that even if it passes
8 wouldn't change anything, and what a surprise,
9 when it was challenged by the courts, we find
10 out the Illinois legislators elected by the
11 entire state did not abide by the Illinois
12 Constitution from 1970, and now we've got to
13 draw a name out of a hat. And what a surprise
14 which side that will give an advantage to, sir.

15 So again, we clearly disagree on
16 the process itself. I would encourage, you
17 know, you to put this process through as a
18 constitutional amendment, and then we can talk
19 about that for future years. I do think we can
20 talk about that being a better process, but I
21 simply think that by putting it the way 1325 is
22 set up now with the timing that would not be
23 constitutional if it passed is an inferior way
24 to run this.

1 The better way -- so we're left
2 with two choices. We're left with the general
3 assembly, which has been, again, elected by --
4 each and every person in there has been elected
5 by an equal number -- at least in 2010, an equal
6 number of Illinois voters, or based on '81, '91
7 and 2001, heading right back to drawing that
8 name out of a hat, and that is the most insider,
9 partisan, backroom deal way to draw your maps.
10 And I don't think that's what voters want, so
11 again, the voters will have their say on that.

12 Let's go on with anyone else with
13 questions.

14 SENATOR BARICKMAN: Thank you. Thank you,
15 Mr. Chairman.

16 Just to be clear, the two
17 choices, though, one is a partisan drawn map by
18 the legislature today. The other is a
19 bipartisan commission -- again, our legislation
20 doesn't propose to change anything in the
21 Constitution.

22 The other choice in the
23 Constitution is a bipartisan commission. Our
24 caucus leader, our Republican leader, has

1 pledged that any appointment to that bipartisan
2 commission would only support an independent map
3 that's drawn. So again, a false narrative is
4 being suggested here, I think, designed to taint
5 the public's view of what's really going on
6 here.

7 So thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

8 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Well, Senator
9 Barickman, let me respond to that point.

10 I did watch the Lake County
11 hearing. I did see Leader McConchie. His
12 statement actually was anybody that he puts on
13 the commission, his two people, they would
14 listen to him, and they would go with an
15 independent commission, and nothing sounds more
16 independent than them taking orders from a party
17 boss, so I'll leave it at that.

18 Senator Barickman, do you have
19 any questions for the reason we're here, for the
20 witnesses, the Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition?

21 SENATOR BARICKMAN: No. Thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman.

23 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: All right. Moving on.

24 So I have Senator Koehler,

1 please.

2 SENATOR KOEHLER: Yes, thank you.

3 There are many days that I give
4 thanks to God that I'm not an attorney, and
5 today is one of those days.

6 So, yes, getting back to the
7 witness, I want to just comment about Reema
8 Kamran's testimony. I really appreciated what
9 she said. And you know, reflecting on
10 immigrants coming to this nation, my
11 grandparents were immigrants from Russia. They
12 were German-speaking Russians, and so that
13 really is the richness that we all share
14 together in being Americans.

15 But I'd like -- in particular,
16 you're talking about what makes diversity, and
17 it's not just race. It's race and ethnicity and
18 religion and faiths. And I think that what is
19 not understood enough by just in general the
20 population of Illinois is how diverse our
21 communities even in downstate are.

22 I have visited our two mosques in
23 Peoria. I visited the Hindu temple. I visited
24 the synagogue. We have excellent interfaith

1 dialogue that takes place. You know, I happen
2 to be an ordained minister, but I'm heading the
3 Unitarian Universalist Church right now where we
4 celebrate all faiths, and I guess that's an
5 important aspect of us looking at how we
6 redistrict in a political way.

7 So whether it's Ammar or Reema,
8 if you just comment about, you know, the -- I
9 guess the hope that we have in that people want
10 to be included and want to be counted, you know,
11 that there's a feeling that this is -- this
12 America is, even if you're immigrants, this is
13 yours as well.

14 MR. BHUTTO: Reema, you want to speak? Or
15 else I can.

16 First of all, thank you for the
17 question and what you mentioned, even Central or
18 Southern Illinois, you have diversity. That's
19 the message that we're trying to bring here,
20 that it's just not the Chicago area, like folks
21 like to follow here.

22 Illinois is changing, just like
23 the rest of the country, and we are the face of
24 that change, the Muslim communities, Hindu

1 communities or many other ethnic groups that
2 were mentioned by the previous witnesses as
3 well.

4 We do want to bring a message of
5 unity. We do want to bring a message to build
6 bridges. That was part of my campaign that I
7 ran here in Savoy as well. It's always meant to
8 be a pro message, but not at the cost of losing
9 our own representation. And we are highly
10 underrepresented in many of these government
11 arenas.

12 And you know, I'm not going to
13 call anyone out by their name here, but I was
14 disappointed to see the message was what is --
15 how are you going to help make this
16 recommendation more effective, and all I hear --
17 you know, heard was -- and this is not from
18 Senator Bennett, but from the other side
19 unfortunately, was, you know, just to try to get
20 an upper hand by trying to get an opportunity,
21 whether it is the independent commission or
22 whether it is trying to bring a --

23 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Mr. Bhutto? Mr.
24 Bhutto?

1 MR. BHUTTO: Yes. Sorry.

2 SENATOR KOEHLER: I can still hear him.
3 He's on.

4 MR. BHUTTO: The idea is just the
5 community -- or, the state itself is changing,
6 and what we are trying to push for is more a
7 representative government in place at the local
8 level, at the congressional level, throughout.
9 And whatever we can do to help this cause,
10 whether it's representation from the Illinois
11 Muslim Civic Coalition or several other groups,
12 we would like to be part of this discussion.
13 And I'll stop there.

14 MS. KAMRAN: Thank you so much, Senator
15 Koehler.

16 And as Ammar was mentioning, you
17 know, there is a growing diversity in our state.
18 Here's a little map here that shows you. This
19 is some of the Muslim led centers and businesses
20 just in Central Illinois. Here you see a little
21 bit of Peoria. You have Macomb, you know, the
22 Central Illinois Mosque & Islamic Center,
23 Springfield, so a large group of diverse faith
24 communities that proudly live and work and

1 celebrate being an Illinoisan within our state.

2 And I think one of our big -- I
3 think many communities of faith as well as
4 underrepresented communities, what we are all
5 bringing to the table and as a part of these --
6 as a part of these testimonies is to talk about
7 as long as we have a fair and holistic picture
8 when redistricting is happening. That's what
9 we're striving for; right?

10 The census, ACS, leadership,
11 having organizations, having community
12 partnerships, having all those conversations
13 going on and having conversations with
14 leadership -- sorry -- leaders within these
15 communities is going to be vital to get a better
16 understanding of faith communities as well as
17 ethnic and immigrant, refugee.

18 There's so many different
19 communities that exist and have been
20 underrepresented for many years. And that was a
21 big challenge, right, when the census was going
22 on is how do we create the opportunities for
23 them to be counted and making sure that we take
24 that messaging all throughout the redistricting

1 process to ensure that the voices are still at
2 the table and still a part of this process.

3 I hope that answers your
4 question.

5 SENATOR KOEHLER: Yes. Thank very much
6 for your input.

7 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: And, Ms. Kamran, I
8 really enjoyed -- Senator Rose, I know you're on
9 next.

10 I really enjoyed the time you
11 both put into the presentation. I wonder if
12 it's possible -- if you have a pen, I'll give
13 you an email address -- if you would send in the
14 presentation to the committee, and I'll make
15 sure we share that with all the members of the
16 committee.

17 It's the redistrictingcommittee,
18 one word, @senatedem.ilga.gov, so
19 redistrictingcommittee@senatedem.ilga.gov. I
20 know there's that dem in there, but I'll make
21 sure -- as the chair, I'll make sure we get it
22 to every email address we have. So if you'll
23 kindly send the presentation after you're done
24 here, I really think that would help the members

1 of the committee.

2 Senator Rose, you've been
3 patient. Please go ahead.

4 SENATOR ROSE: Thank you. In the immortal
5 words of Captain Renault from Casablanca, I'm
6 shocked, shocked that the constitutional
7 amendment didn't pass the Democrats'
8 supermajority last year in the time in which it
9 could have actually been sent to the voters of
10 Illinois. I'm stunned really that time couldn't
11 be found to put that question before the voters.

12 That said, I did have Mr. Rotunda
13 for constitutional law, and I don't know what
14 your grade was, Mr. Chairman, but I got an A,
15 and I know darn well that there aren't two
16 choices here between -- two bad choices between
17 a map that is drawn by politicians before a
18 deadline set in the state Constitution and a map
19 that is drawn by a ridiculous process after the
20 deadline set by the Constitution.

21 In fact, the other choice that's
22 easily there and is done in New York is a
23 statutory independent commission that comports
24 with the State Constitution's deadlines. That

1 would be absolutely constitutional, and it would
2 give all of these witnesses, no matter what
3 organization they're with, the opportunity to
4 address that independent commission and have a
5 map that isn't drawn by partisans.

6 Now, on the topic of
7 partisanship, I would like Mr. -- is it -- how
8 do you pronounce your last name, sir? Bhutto?

9 MR. BHUTTO: Yeah, Bhutto.

10 SENATOR ROSE: I would like you to know
11 that, despite whatever preconceived notions you
12 have about members of this committee, I actually
13 signed an amicus brief to the United States
14 Supreme Court as a Republican asking to strike
15 down the Wisconsin map, which was a Republican
16 map, sir, okay?

17 So you can take whatever
18 preconceived notions you have about the right or
19 Republicans or members of this committee
20 individually, and I simply would ask that you
21 look at the record of me individually and know
22 that I asked the United States Supreme Court as
23 one of less than a hundred legislators across
24 the United States to strike down a party map

1 drawn by my own party in Wisconsin, and instead,
2 give the people of any state their government
3 back, their democracy back -- small D, by the
4 way, small D -- because when politicians draw
5 maps, whether they're Republicans or Democrats,
6 Independents, Greens, Socialists or Communists,
7 it doesn't help.

8 Citizens should choose their
9 politicians. Politicians should not select
10 their citizens. And that's exactly what happens
11 when you have a map drawn by any partisan group
12 in America irrespective of party.

13 If you really want to have your
14 state back, sir, then you should be demanding
15 that all of us get out of the map drawing
16 business, and instead, do what we suggest, and I
17 would suggest be done in any state, which
18 is -- well, actually, Iowa is a perfect example
19 of where you have a computer, a computer that's
20 given the data. It doesn't know where the
21 incumbents live, so it doesn't know who to
22 protect or who to remove, and it also doesn't
23 know where the Republicans or Democrats are.

24 You know, the only data it's

1 given is enough data to comport with the United
2 States Constitution and the Civil Rights Acts to
3 protect minority interests. That is a fair
4 process. That is not this process before us
5 today.

6 And so I guess I would ask, you
7 know, since we really for the last 45 minutes
8 have completely ignored our witnesses, I would
9 like to go back to the witnesses with some
10 questions, if that's okay, Mr. Chairman.

11 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: I would encourage that.
12 Thank you.

13 SENATOR ROSE: Okay. So Mrs. -- or,
14 Ms. Kamran -- and I apologize if I said that --
15 I got to tell you, with a first name like
16 Chapin, I'm very sensitive of how I pronounce
17 other people's names, so if I mispronounced
18 that, I apologize, okay, because for the better
19 part of my life I've been Chapin or Chaplin, and
20 there's no L. I don't know where they get the
21 L, but I'm very sensitive, so if I mispronounced
22 it, I apologize.

23 Previously your organization has
24 testified on -- that you would be proposing a

1 map for us to look at, and I think that would be
2 very helpful. I think it would be very helpful
3 in examining the third prong of the compact,
4 contiguous and communities of interest test,
5 third prong being communities of interest.

6 Does your organization still plan
7 to produce a map for this body to look at before
8 we vote on anything?

9 MS. KAMRAN: Yes, yes, Senator Chapin. Is
10 that the right way?

11 SENATOR ROSE: We're all good.

12 MS. KAMRAN: Thank you so much, Senator
13 Rose.

14 SENATOR ROSE: So is --

15 MS. KAMRAN: Yes, Senator Rose.

16 SENATOR ROSE: We're all good.

17 MS. KAMRAN: We do plan to -- we do plan
18 to produce a map. We're in the process of
19 working on it. The goal is to have it by April
20 30th. It is in process at this time --

21 SENATOR ROSE: So what data are you
22 using --

23 MS. KAMRAN: -- and it will be --

24 SENATOR ROSE: What data are you using to

1 produce your map?

2 MS. KAMRAN: What data? So a combination
3 of a variety of data as mentioned. We are using
4 conversations with our communities. We are
5 looking at faith centers. We are looking at
6 some ACS data. We're looking at census data in
7 the past, all the different combinations of
8 data, whatever is available, as well as the
9 lived experience of communities within that
10 space to put together a suggested map.

11 SENATOR ROSE: So look, I'm not going to,
12 you know, try to pin you down on this because
13 obviously you're going to show us your map.
14 Given your preliminary analysis, I mean, if
15 April 30th is your deadline -- that's only a
16 couple of weeks from now -- where would those
17 communities be?

18 I mean, how -- or, I guess a
19 better way to say it is, you know, kind of
20 geographically speaking, in my mind, obviously,
21 I think of Chicago, but you pointed out in your
22 presentation there's other pockets throughout
23 downstate Illinois.

24 How many legislative districts do

1 you think, House districts and Senate districts,
2 would be fair?

3 MS. KAMRAN: Well, I'm not -- you know
4 what, I would -- I would not be in a position to
5 answer that question at this time because, like
6 I said, this is still in process. There's a lot
7 of different community members who are involved
8 in this.

9 So I'm absolutely happy to get
10 back to you with that information, but at this
11 time, I think we're in the process of just
12 collecting data and trying our best to -- trying
13 our best to see what we can come -- what we can
14 do to ensure that we have -- you know, we have
15 equity in the way that we can make it happen for
16 a holistic picture to present -- present when
17 redistricting is being considered.

18 SENATOR ROSE: So let's just -- you know,
19 would it be -- I honestly don't want to put
20 words in your mouth here, so you know, I realize
21 that there's this whole issue of data, but you
22 talked about you're going to use ACS and
23 additional data.

24 I think we would all agree that

1 census would be the best, correct, if we had it?

2 That would be the best; correct?

3 MS. KAMRAN: I don't think that it's going
4 to -- I don't think it's -- we're agnostic about
5 the resources that are used to produce these
6 maps as long as they are fair, so...

7 SENATOR ROSE: Okay. So more than just
8 ACS?

9 MS. KAMRAN: Yeah. We're suggesting --
10 like mentioned before, we would suggest census,
11 plus ACS, plus conversations with community
12 leaders, plus, you know, community partnerships,
13 plus conversations with faith leaders, plus
14 conversations just like this, you know, hearings
15 as well as additional town halls to have
16 conversations with communities, usually
17 underrepresented and invisible communities, to
18 say, All right. Let's talk about it.

19 SENATOR ROSE: So then you're going to
20 propose your map by the end of this month.
21 Let's assume the legislature produces a map, you
22 know, at some point in that time between now and
23 the applicable constitutional deadline; right?

24 How much time should the public,

1 organizations like yours, have to view and
2 examine and understand and analyze, really get
3 your arms around it and sink your teeth into it,
4 to use my metaphors, before the legislature
5 votes on it?

6 Would you suggest that -- you
7 know, what time period would be sufficient for
8 your organization to have fair warning before
9 the legislature actually votes on the map?

10 MS. KAMRAN: How much time -- and please
11 forgive me. I am not an expert in this field,
12 so how much time do we have currently?

13 SENATOR ROSE: Well, we don't know. I
14 mean, in the veto -- or, this lame duck session,
15 we dropped an 800-page amendment that was voted
16 on 58 minutes after it became public. I
17 remember in the 2012 map there was an amendment
18 that changed the 15th and 13th congressional
19 districts, and suddenly, what was then
20 Congressman Tom -- Tim Johnson and Congressman
21 Costello suddenly were flip-flopped on less than
22 an hour's notice.

23 And I guess what I'm asking you
24 isn't really -- you know, neither you or I

1 control this process. That's Senator --
2 Chairman Bennett's party, but I'm saying to you,
3 as a citizen and as an organization leader, how
4 much time would you like to have to view a map
5 to give comment, thoughtful, logical comments,
6 you know, to the process before we vote on it?

7 Do you need a day or two days or
8 three weeks? I mean, how much time would you
9 need to really look at it and digest it?

10 MS. KAMRAN: I mean --

11 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Again, that's if you
12 have an answer on that. It's a hypothetical,
13 so if you have an answer.

14 MS. KAMRAN: I do not have an answer.

15 SENATOR ROSE: It's not a hypothetical.
16 I'm asking the witness how much time she thinks
17 her organization will need to review the
18 handiwork that's put forward by the legislature.

19 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Let's listen to the
20 answer.

21 MS. KAMRAN: Thank you. I think that it
22 will -- I think that -- oh, thank you so much.
23 I think that this is a difficult question. You
24 know, if you are looking for community feedback,

1 we are one of many, many communities that you're
2 speaking to. I'm not sure. I don't know.

3 SENATOR ROSE: Well, I guess my point is,
4 would you like to have another chance -- would
5 you like to have a chance to look at it and
6 review it and see what it does; right? That's
7 an easy one.

8 MS. KAMRAN: Absolutely, we would
9 appreciate an opportunity.

10 SENATOR ROSE: Right.

11 MS. KAMRAN: We would hope that all
12 testimony is taken into consideration, sample
13 maps that are -- that are submitted are taken
14 into consideration, and once maps are drawn, we
15 hope that community organizations are consulted
16 and have an opportunity to look and talk about
17 it.

18 SENATOR ROSE: So the way we would consult
19 you would be to have another hearing. So would
20 you suggest, once the map is available to view
21 and look at, would you like to come back and
22 comment on it?

23 MS. KAMRAN: I am not sure. Yes, I think
24 that most community organizations would say yes.

1 I'm not sure where our organization would stand
2 on it. I would have to get back to you on that
3 one.

4 SENATOR ROSE: Okay. Well, I mean, I
5 would think most people would want to see what
6 it is that's going to take effect for the next
7 10 years. And you know, what happens if it
8 comes back with no seats for Muslim communities?

9 Wouldn't you want to have another
10 hearing to voice your opposition to that?

11 MS. KAMRAN: So I think -- I think,
12 Senator Rose, I think we are going to try our
13 best along with our partner organizations, like
14 Latino Caucus, like UCCRO, all the other
15 organizations that are at the table to, you
16 know, be vocal for our communities and as well
17 as other underrepresented and invisible
18 communities.

19 So I hope that the -- I hope that
20 the legislature takes into consideration the
21 testimony and any of our suggestions and we have
22 an opportunity to have this conversation and
23 that there is a fair distribution of -- or, a
24 fair redistricting process for Illinois. That's

1 all I can say at this point.

2 SENATOR ROSE: Okay. Fair enough.

3 So, Chairman Bennett, I know 10
4 years ago it was voted on in less than 24 hours.
5 I know that at previous hearings you have
6 different community groups that suggested two
7 weeks of, you know, sunshine on it.

8 Do you have any idea how long the
9 public is going to have? Will there be another
10 opportunity for groups to come back and say, We
11 like this. We don't like this?

12 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: I don't know, Senator.
13 I don't know the process. I know there's future
14 hearings. Like I said, this is the 14th. I
15 know there's three more scheduled, but I don't
16 know if that's the end of the hearings. I think
17 we're just trying to gather as much information
18 as we can right now, and you know, we'll --
19 personally, I think we all agree the more input
20 we have the better, so...

21 SENATOR ROSE: I would just say that -- we
22 all agree on that, but I would say that it does
23 no good to have all these hearings on the front
24 end if we don't come back around and show the

1 work product to the people who are testifying
2 and give them a chance to look at it, examine it
3 with enough time to thoughtfully comment on it
4 and to give us their comments.

5 Thank you for your time,
6 Chairman. And witnesses, thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. Thank you,
8 Senator.

9 I don't see any other questions
10 for these witnesses.

11 I have one for either Ms. Kamran
12 or Mr. Bhutto. Have either of you lived or
13 spent any significant amount of time in Iowa?

14 MR. BHUTTO: I lived right across the
15 border in Wisconsin, so thank you, Senator Rose,
16 if you did take the right stand. I think it's
17 good to know. I know that you mentioned that.

18 I lived in Platteville, Wisconsin
19 where the Bears used to practice for about a
20 year and a half, right around the 2000 election
21 in that state, so it's been a while. I still
22 have friends in that area.

23 SENATOR ROSE: Well, I'm a Packer Backer,
24 but other than that, we'll agree on the

1 (inaudible) case.

2 MR. BHUTTO: Okay. Thank you.

3 SENATOR ROSE: By the way, CHANGE Illinois
4 is for a two-week -- it's a two-week process
5 before voting.

6 MR. BHUTTO: Okay. Good to know.

7 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Thank you, Senator.

8 Well, unlike some members of the
9 committee, I'm not going to try to force an
10 expertise on either of you. If you haven't
11 lived in Iowa, I won't ask you more questions
12 about a place you haven't lived, so I'll excuse
13 both of you, and thank you so much for your
14 testimony today. Please go out and enjoy your
15 day. Thank you.

16 I will go ahead then. I know we
17 have two more very patient witnesses, and I
18 really appreciate your patience with us today.
19 Obviously, a lot needs to be discussed.

20 And I think we'd like to call
21 next Jeff Evilsizer who is representing himself.
22 Mr. Evilsizer, are you still on? I'm toggling
23 here. Do I see you? If you are on, sir, please
24 feel free to unmute yourself. Let's turn on the

1 camera and introduce yourself and begin your
2 testimony. And if you haven't been able to hold
3 on, who could blame you. But let's move on, and
4 maybe he gets connected and can come back and
5 join us at the end.

6 We also have one more witness, a
7 Milena Sukovic, also representing herself.

8 Ms. Sukovic, are you present?

9 MS. SUKOVIC: Yes, I am. Hello.

10 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Hello.

11 MS. SUKOVIC: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Would you be able to
13 turn on your camera and begin your testimony?

14 MS. SUKOVIC: Actually, I'm just going to
15 do it without the camera. It's my phone, and I
16 have notes in front of me, and it's too hard to
17 handle, to do both.

18 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Proceed.

19 THE WITNESS: Sure. Thank you.

20 So my name is Milena Sukovic, and
21 as you can tell by my name, I am also from a
22 different ethnic background that the census
23 would typically put me in the group of white
24 where I'm really not being represented as an

1 ethnic minority, not just an ethnic minority in
2 Illinois, but a global ethnic minority. The
3 numbers of -- for Serbian Montenegrins are very
4 low, Montenegro, extremely low. So I appreciate
5 this. Thank you for opening up this discussion
6 to the citizens of Illinois.

7 So like I told you, I am an
8 immigrant and a naturalized citizen and a
9 professional and a member of a large community
10 church here where immigrants have always been
11 welcomed.

12 This country was the envy of the
13 world, but through my years here, I have seen
14 that some politicians do not seem to want to
15 base decisions on facts, and it's disturbing to
16 me the lack of common sense in politics. And as
17 to the Constitution not predicting COVID, that
18 sounds like an excuse to me. Legislators should
19 have the power to make sure we wait for the
20 census data so that we can count every human
21 being.

22 I'm not expert in statistics, and
23 there's no expertise in statistics needed to
24 know that a sampling does not count every

1 person, and I believe, as a human, every person
2 needs to be counted. A sampling by definition
3 is not a counting of every person, and I really
4 would like more transparency as to these
5 proceedings.

6 I haven't seen anything in the
7 news about this. I was lucky enough to have
8 heard about this meeting and then come on here
9 to represent myself. I think if more people
10 heard about this and it was on the news that
11 they might want their individual self to be
12 counted in this, any kind of redistricting.
13 Just a basic human right kind of issue.

14 I liked what Senator Rose had
15 said, the idea that Iowa's using. It seems to
16 be the most fair, and that's all what I think we
17 need to do here. I don't think politics should
18 become an issue here. I think we should try and
19 make it a human rights issue where every human
20 deserves to be counted. And we can wait. I
21 don't see why we're rushing to make this
22 judgment.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Ms. Sukovic, I

1 appreciate you being on. Would it be possible
2 just as -- what we've been trying to do in every
3 committee, if you're done with your notes, would
4 it be possible to turn on your camera now so we
5 can have a conversation with all the committee
6 members?

7 MS. SUKOVIC: No, I'm sorry. I'm not
8 comfortable. I don't see the need for that.

9 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. Can I ask, where
10 do you live, and what's your community?

11 MS. SUKOVIC: Sure. I live in
12 Lincolnshire, Illinois, and the community here
13 is a Serbian community. There's a church here
14 and churches throughout Illinois, but we have
15 never really been represented in the census
16 data, and this is the first time we're being
17 counted, so I look forward to seeing the
18 numbers.

19 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. So, Ms. Sukovic,
20 how did you hear about today's hearing?
21 Lincolnshire is now your district, so I'm just
22 curious. We have done several hearings in the
23 Lincolnshire area.

24 How did you hear about it today,

1 and were you invited by a particular person or
2 group?

3 MS. SUKOVIC: Very last minute. My nephew
4 is involved in politics, and he sent me
5 something that he wrote, and then I noticed
6 there was a meeting today. I just looked it up
7 very quickly in the last -- this afternoon.

8 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. Well, I
9 appreciate having you on no matter how you
10 found out. Your nephew you said is involved in
11 politics. How is he involved in politics?

12 MS. SUKOVIC: He ran for office in
13 Illinois, but I forgot which one it was.

14 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. Do you know what
15 political party he ran in?

16 MS. SUKOVIC: No.

17 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Do you know, what's
18 your nephew's name?

19 MS. SUKOVIC: Marko.

20 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. I don't know if
21 it's the same Marko. I know there was a Marko
22 who testified in the Lake County hearing, and he
23 said that he testified -- or, he had previously
24 run as a state representative as a Republican.

1 Does that sound possible to you?

2 MS. SUKOVIC: Yes, yes. I voted on both
3 sides. I'm independent.

4 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Oh, sure. That's fine.
5 I just wanted to make sure. You have similar
6 names. So you said you identify as a member of
7 the Serbian community; is that right?

8 MS. SUKOVIC: Right.

9 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: And you filled out the
10 census when it was your chance to do that this
11 year?

12 MS. SUKOVIC: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. And did it have
14 a space on there to identify yourself as
15 Serbian?

16 MS. SUKOVIC: No. I had to write it in as
17 other.

18 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Okay. But you still
19 feel that that process is what made sure you
20 were counted?

21 MS. SUKOVIC: Yes. It's much better than
22 not being counted with a sampling.

23 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: I see. Okay. All
24 right. And with that, any other discussion,

1 please?

2 Seeing none, thank you so much,
3 Ms. Sukovic. Thanks for being on. Appreciate
4 you staying quite so long. It was very kind of
5 you.

6 MS. SUKOVIC: And the meetings are during
7 work hours, so I can see why not a lot of people
8 would get involved in the political process. It
9 would be more convenient if you were really
10 wanting more involvement to have it after work.

11 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Madam, if I could just
12 address that for a second. This meeting was
13 actually noticed on March 19th, and of the
14 meetings that I've been in, some are at night,
15 and some are during the day when regular
16 committees are. The goal is to try and find a
17 time for everybody.

18 So you know, we certainly get
19 people that ask those questions and say, Well,
20 if you do them at night, then I've got childcare
21 issues. If you do them during the day, we have
22 work issues. I have -- I've done hearings that
23 were in the middle of the afternoon, that were
24 at 5:00 o'clock and that were later in the

1 evening, and you know, no matter what, there's
2 some criticism. Same as if it's virtual or in
3 person.

4 And I appreciate your concerns.
5 Our goal is with enough hearings we'll make sure
6 that it's available for everybody, including, as
7 you said, you're all the way up in Lincolnshire.
8 You weren't able to make that one, but we're
9 glad to have you here in the Southern region.

10 So thank you for joining us
11 today.

12 MS. SUKOVIC: Sure. And maybe more
13 information on the local news as to what's going
14 on with these hearings. I don't see anything in
15 the news, yeah.

16 CHAIRMAN BENNETT: Well, again, we did one
17 in Lincolnshire because, again, we have 22
18 counties in this region, and that's not one of
19 the communities in here, but again, thank you
20 for your comments. I know media advisories do
21 go out.

22 So I wanted to make sure -- thank
23 you so much. Unless there are any other
24 questions for this witness, we will double-check

1 and ask if Mr. Evilsizer who stayed on this
2 whole time is still here.

3 Is there a Jeff Evilsizer still
4 on? And I apologize if I'm saying the name
5 incorrectly.

6 Any other additional witnesses
7 that are still on?

8 Okay. Well, seeing none, there's
9 no further business to come before the
10 committee, so this meeting of the Senate
11 Redistricting Subcommittee on East Central and
12 Southeastern Illinois stands adjourned.

13 Thank you, everyone, for your
14 testimony.

15 (Hearing concluded at 5:00 p.m.)
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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Shari L. Szerbat, a Registered Professional Reporter doing business in the State of Illinois, do hereby certify that I reported in shorthand the proceedings of said hearing as appears from my stenographic notes so taken and transcribed under my direction.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of April, 2021.



Shari L. Szerbat
No. 24037

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