



Testimony to the Redistricting Advisory Commission
at its public hearing on September 8, 2022
by Judith B. Esterquest, Member of the
League of Women Voters of Port Washington-Manhasset

My name is Judy Esterquest. I have served as a trustee of the Manhasset Public Library for six years. I'm a member of our local League of Women Voters. I've lived in Manhasset for over three decades.

At the August 31 hearing, both Chair Maroney and Commissioner Mejias repeated the phrase "fair and transparent."

- "Fair" redistricting is foundational to our democracy.
- "Transparent" redistricting is foundational to our TRUST in democracy.

"Fair and transparent" gives voters voice and confidence. Its absence breeds cynicism, disengagement, crisis — recent news shows what happens when Americans lose trust.

"Fair" redistricting,

- keeps communities of shared interest together to strengthen their voices,
- respects natural boundaries, and
- seeks a compact shape.

My district, however, which includes this Town Hall, looks like districts where politicians choose their voters — not where voters do the choosing. Similar to the 1812 district that inspired the word "gerrymander," District 9 is a monstrous horned creature, rearing back on a long, long neck, with a misshapen, almost cloven, body. It appears as an extreme partisan gerrymander, snaking east and west to aggregate isolated enclaves of selected voters — its perimeter defined by no natural borders. It brings together no communities of interest, only 7 fractured school districts and many fractured villages.

What would "fair" look like?

Perhaps putting all of Manhasset with all of Port Washington and all of Roslyn — which almost totals the target size — the LI Sound bordering its west, north, and east.

Even more important, it would be socially, culturally, and economically coherent, with shared institutions. Our special districts— fire, water, parks— would not be divided. Rather than fracturing 8 school districts, we would have 3 whole districts, each its own vibrant community. Our League of Women Voters offers forums for our peninsula's local and state elections.

As for residents without school children, we all shop in the (limited number) of large grocery stores, specialty bakeries, hardware and florists. We use the same LIRR line. Restaurants across the peninsula are "neighborhood" favorites for everyone. Cultural events and civic spaces bring us together. We enjoy our shared shoreline, live events at the Landmark Theater and our three great public libraries, history walks and cemetery tours, our Science Museum, Art Museum and, of course, our amazing Barr Beach.

Manhasset is now arbitrarily divided across 3 legislative districts and Roslyn is divided across 4. Our peninsula should be made whole. As residents we cannot advocate effectively when our voices are fractured. For this redistricting to be fair in outcome, please make its process transparent.

Legislative District 9 — Attachment to Testimony

Published vs Approximate Schematics Showing Precinct Partisan Lean

Partisan gerrymandering — that is, setting district boundaries to "crack and pack" or otherwise marginalize disfavored voters — is always against the public interest. That both parties do it is no excuse. The League advocates for "fair and transparent" redistricting that raises voices of communities of special interest rather than silencing or diminishing them.

The League denounced the gerrymandered approach of the NYS Senate maps (that were later overturned and redrafted by the justice system) and the partisan approach of the Town of North Hempstead. And we express our concern to those involved in Nassau County redistricting that loss of public trust benefits no government and actually harms our democracy.

