

## **Public Submission to the West Virginia Legislature Joint Committee on Redistricting**

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Scott Lemley

Chairman Howell, Chairman Trump, and other members of the Joint Committee on Redistricting;

I would first like to thank you for having this public hearing today in Huntington, West Virginia. As you know, listening to the public's concerns and ideas is an important part of the redistricting process. I would also like to thank the committee for their transparency in this process. Over fifty-two days the committee will have visited twelve different locations across the state to get feedback from West Virginians. You will also conduct three virtual public hearings getting even more feedback from the public. Finally, you have also placed videos of each meeting online so people can see what others' concerns and priorities are across the state. I would like to commend the committee for your openness in this process.

Listening to the other public hearings, it's obvious West Virginians have a variety of concerns. Multi-member districts have come up multiple times. Lucky, with the passage of HB 4002 in 2018 all remaining multimember districts are required to change to single-member districts. This is one of many positive steps for West Virginia in recent years. You have also heard multiple times about the need for districts to be compact, formed of contiguous territory and bounded by county lines when possible. You have even heard recommendations to take other existing boundaries into consideration such as school districts, zip code, and geographic boundaries.

Adding to that, I would like for you to take into account existing municipal, town, and village boundaries across the state. Living in a district with people that have similar interests and concerns is important for representative government. An example of this currently exists with the 16th and 17th house districts. These two districts consist of five members of the House of Delegates, but split the City of Huntington into almost two equal parts. The 16th district includes the eastern part of Huntington, northern and eastern parts of Cabell County and parts of northern Lincoln County. The 17th District includes the western part of Huntington, southwestern parts of Cabell County and takes a small chunk out of northern Wayne County. When looking at the common interests of people within a district, the current district boundaries didn't make sense ten years ago when they were drawn, and don't make sense today. I would argue the interests and concerns of people living near Greenbottom (northern Cabell County) are completely different from people living in the Highlawn neighborhood in Huntington, which are again completely different from the people living in and near Hamlin in Lincoln County. All of those are currently contained in the 16th district. I have faith that when developing the new single member districts the committee will correct this issue and take into account urban and rural areas.

I would like to also state that with respect to dividing West Virginia into two districts for the U.S. House of Representatives, I would encourage you to read Dr. Bill Bissett recent article "West Virginia should be split into north and south for U.S. House districts". Although the title gives everything away, he lays out excellent points explaining his reasoning on why this would be the best option for West Virginia.

We know the redistricting process will be difficult in the coming weeks and months. Dividing the districts to achieve equality of population as near as is possible should be the main goal of this process. Taking into account other political and geographic boundaries is a secondary but still important concern. I would like to thank the committee for its time, and appreciate the process you have put in place for redistricting.

Sincerely,

Scott Lemley