

William S. (Bill) Samuel

701 King Farm Blvd., Apt. 134, Rockville, MD 20850-6168
240-477-8827 (home), 301-943-6406 (cell), 240-801-6245 (Google Voice)

E-mail: billsamuel3@gmail.com
Fax to E-mail: 413-485-2881

Testimony on Congressional Redistricting Map Proposed by the Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission

Hello. I am William (Bill) Samuel, a resident of Rockville, Maryland. I am a longtime Maryland voter and a registered Democrat. I have had a longtime concern for fair, democratic election processes. One of these processes is the drawing of districts.

The criteria for fair legislative districting should be that districts are compact and contiguous, jurisdictions should not be divided more than is needed to make for nearly equal populations, that there should be no partisan considerations in the drawing of districts, and there should be no favoritism towards or against any particular politicians. The map proposed by the Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission (LRAC) fails on all of these criteria, and therefore should be rejected.

The history is that Maryland has had some of the worst gerrymandering in the country. One judge noted that one of the current districts looks like a pterodactyl. The LRAC openly admitted that their primary consideration was keeping voters in the same districts as they are currently. Since the current districts are not fairly drawn and are in fact some of the worst gerrymandered ones in the nation, that principle ensured that the result would not be fair redistricting. While there may no longer be a district shaped like a pterodactyl, several districts continue to be oddly shaped, political jurisdictions continue to be divided up unnecessarily (e.g., Baltimore City is divided among three different districts, while the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission proposal has it all in one district), and it is clear that there were political considerations involved in drawing the map. My current Congressional District (8) looks like a funnel and the part in Montgomery County (my county) is a narrow strip running from north to south through the central part of the County on an East-West basis. My County is illogically split up for purely political considerations.

The Princeton Gerrymandering Project, a nonpartisan effort supported by key good government groups such as the League of Women Voters and Common Cause, is considered the leading authority on gerrymandering in Congressional redistricting in our country. It has given the LRAC proposal a grade of F. In other words, it flunked fairness criteria.

I urge Democratic members of the General Assembly to look beyond partisan considerations to basic fairness principles. Let us change Maryland from one of the worst states in the country on Congressional redistricting to one of the best. Vote on good government principles rather than partisan considerations. I strongly urge you to vote against the LRAC Congressional redistricting proposal.



William S. (Bill) Samuel III
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