

NYSCEF DOC. NO. 634

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I write today to respectfully provide input to the court and special master tasked with the responsibility to draw fair Congressional Districts for the State of New York, specifically as to how this process will affect the Long Island counties of Nassau and Suffolk. While the special master's goal of not crossing county lines is understandable, here it does not make sense and attempts to fix something that is not broken. For many years now, redistricting of Long Island Districts west of the 1st C.D. have centered them on either the North Shore or South Shore of the Island. The Second Congressional District is currently a "South Shore" District that includes the Townships of Babylon and Islip in Suffolk County and the Southeast communities in the Towns of Hempstead and Oyster Bay in Nassau County. These communities are bound together in their common concerns and issues ranging from the economy to the environment and must remain a united district to assure fair and just representation from their federal representative.

Logically and quite correctly, the special master kept the north shore south shore districts intact for the State Senate maps. This makes it even harder to understand why this was not done for the Congressional Districts. While it is necessary to cross the county line between Nassau and Suffolk counties at some point to meet the required population per district, it makes for a much more contiguous district and keeps communities of interest together to do so on the South Shore and restore the communities of Massapequa, Massapequa Park, Seaford, Farmingdale, Bethpage and Levittown to the Second Congressional District.

Long Island's unique history and geography has made the development of communities of like character stretching from East to West as opposed to North to South. The Long Island Railroad, that has serviced Long Island commuters since the 1800's, has a North track and a South track that knit together communities from East to West. When Long Islanders refer to what exit they live off of, they mean which East to West arteries such as the Long Island Expressway or Sunrise Highway. That's why federal dollars for infrastructure improvement will almost always be centric to North Shore or South Shore communities. North Shore residents aren't concerned about the condition of Sunrise Highway but just ask any South Shore resident about the Oakdale Merge and you'll get a very passionate response to say the least.

Any civic, community, chamber of commerce or governmental leader will agree that the South Shore of Long Island has unique issues and challenges that make it imperative that these communities not be annexed through redistricting. From water quality, transportation issues, protecting barrier beaches and the southern bays, the issues facing these communities make them unique and united in their efforts to protect their quality of life. Federal matters such as efforts by the Army Corp. of Engineers to preserve barrier beaches are concerns that non-South Shore residents just can't and don't understand. Putting Eaton's Neck in the same district as Fire Island would seem nonsensical.

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Due to Long Island's topography, the way natural disasters affect the South Shore communities differ from their North Shore counterparts. In Super Storm Sandy and Hurricane Irene, the South Shore communities suffered uniquely from coastal flooding, while North Shore communities dealt more with downed power lines and tree damage. In fact, the bulk of reconstruction dollars were spent on the South Shore communities devastated by Super Storm Sandy and nearly a decade later residents still grapple with the aftermath of the storm. Having a Representative in Congress who fully understands these facts and is not divided in the best interests of different communities enables that person to quickly advocate for the correct FEMA response to the disaster.

All these issues have an enormous economic impact on the region as well. Restoring power and transportation quickly obviously is key to avoiding ruinous financial losses to our local businesses and companies. That's just one reason why local Chambers of Commerce and business groups understand and appreciate the unique nature of the South Shore communities. Even retail patterns differ from North Shore to South Shore. You're not likely to find a surf shop on the North Shore as you will on both Babylon and Sayville's Main Streets.

Respectfully, New York's Second Congressional District is a situation where it isn't broke and doesn't need to be fixed. It is contiguous, close to rectangular in shape and contains communities with similar concerns. The new maps that now have the Southeast Nassau communities such as Massapequa and Massapequa Park contained in a dominantly North Shore District does them an extreme disservice. Similarly, putting Long Island Sound communities such as Lloyd's Neck, Centerport, and Northport in the same district as Amityville, Lindenhurst and Great River denies them a representative that understands and is devoted to their unique concerns. In closing, it is my sincere hope that these maps can be amended in such a way that keeps the communities of the South Shore of Long Island together and represented by one of their own residents who can be an effective voice to advocate for the safety, prosperity and well-being of their families and neighbors.

Cordially:



Executive Director