

**Minutes for Redistricting Reform Regional Public Meeting – Laurel
Partnership Hall
811 Fifth Street, Laurel MD 20707
October 13, 2015
6:30 pm**

Alex Williams begins opening remarks

- On Aug. 6th Governor Larry established independent nonpartisan commission by executive order
- Present membership is 11
- Specific charge is to conduct a comprehensive examination of legislative and congressional redistricting
- To conduct regional summits
 - Eastern shore
 - Southern Maryland
 - Western Maryland
 - Central Maryland
- To give input on redistricting reform
- Commission has an electronic portal
- Commission will give recommendations for constitutional amendment on redistricting
- Commission further charge is to issue and give report to the Governor, Speaker of the House, and President of the Senate on November 3rd
- 5th and final meeting
- Last week in Easton
- Introductions by commission

Walter Olson says first order of business is to hear presentation by Elbridge James from the NAACP

Elbridge James gives presentation

- Brought signs to display the need to restore the Voting Rights Act
- Talking about Voting Rights Act of 64 and 65, close to 200,000 need to have their voting rights restored
- Gave commission handout
- The point of the fact is the previous redistricting did not give African American equal representation
- You don't need to look like me to vote for me, but you shouldn't disenfranchise African American
- African Americans need to have their voices heard
- Need to elect politicians who put more money into our schools and less into our prisons
 - Doing a disservice to our community and to us
- Gets heard by our legislators so they need to know this information
- Wants children to graduate high school and go onto a good commission

- If you reduce the dropout rate in the state of Maryland by 10% you will benefit state of Maryland by 400 million dollars a year
- Put our priorities in place
- Keep communities that look and talk alike to have a cohesive and have common goals and interests
- When saying black lives matter that does not mean I'm against anyone
- If we don't matter why should we be happy
- This is a country we love
- My mother said to me the constitution will protect liberty
 - I told my mother I would work to protect constitution
- If the commission and governor does not get it right, they are doing a disservice to Maryland
- Talk about this on a legislative side
 - Don't have tradeoffs in legislative districts
 - Potentially good legislators redistricted out of area
 - Either working on a campaign and being a candidate is not easy
 - Develop people and develop talent
 - Can't create a district to keep incumbents safe
 - Do not move districts
 - Needs to have voices heard
 - Redistricting allows to have voices heard
- We have in different districts folks that don't look like me, but they care about me. Those voices, those lives matter
- If you redistrict us out of the race we have a concern
- Our legislators work for us
- Restoring the Voting Rights Act matters
- If we don't get it right, we are doing a disservice
- Don't want to end up like Alabama

Alex Williams asks do you have any specific recommendations you wish this commission make to General Assembly and to legislators

- Redistricting is a tricky situation because it comes out of the census
- One of my concerns is we put a lot of money in Baltimore City
 - Baltimore City is an agent of the state
 - Need to look at how we redistrict so we don't diminish the other engines that drive the state
- Concern with district at large

Alex Williams say to be specific some prefer 3 member/single member districts or an independent commission. Do you have a preference?

- Not knowing the final verdict of the commission it's difficult to answer
- There will be a NAACP meeting in Howard County where we will discuss these things

Alex Williams invites elected officials to speak

Senator Anthony Muse

- Thank you for giving your time
- Came for the people he represents
- Would like to be kind and candid on what he saw with democrats
- The reason redistricting process was put in place:
 - Government by the people for the people
 - This was not part of the process
- A few party leaders thought of a particular person and had a line drawn for them
- The people who are elected should be the voice of the people and be held accountable
- A few people spoke for the entire state
 - Didn't work for my people
 - Didn't work for people in diverse state
- Party should Win only after people win –Applause
- Process I saw was purely gerrymandering
- People on Eastern Shore not related to inner city
- Hoping this committee will work for the people and not the party
- Asian, Blacks, and Latinos all
- Major perspective not adequate
- Clear legislative rule regarding single member or two member districts
- Look to Voting Rights Act for guidance, not merely elected persons for the driving force
- Hoping will give this process back to the people

Joan Carter Conway asks are you specifically talking about legislative and congressional?

- Sen. Muse responds talking about both. When you have persons not pitting one senator against another. Need the people to have a choice to decide.

Joan Carter Conway asks do you want an independent commission?

- Combination at end of day those in legislators held accountable

Senator Waugh asks do we have enough minority representation at congressional and legislative?

How do we provide this is how we judge our map?

- To be as frank as I can, how do we hear from different people? Come up with academic approaches, but until we are practical with very little concern that farmers in Frederick and Eastern Shore have different perspectives.

Delegate Bob Flanagan

- Thanks members for service
- Offers copies of my bills that I filed in the last session
- Would propose an independent commission, but with guidance
- Need compactness
- Also fairness to various communities in the state
- Propose single member districts
 - Serves in a single member district
- I think in terms of the best interest of our citizens they feel closer to you in single member districts

- More access and know better who they are voting for and make people feel more comfortable
- Single member districts would also be more competitive
- Competition on delegate level would be increased
- Don't want any group to be shut out
- Not to exclude any group but have very large population of Koreans, beginning to get involved in politics, would like to get them more involved
- Let me talk about the selection
 - If the commission is appointed there is going to be a ty breaker and it's going to be political, going to end up with what we have now
 - My solution is to propose select citizens carefully chosen by their own history of voting
 - Wants to do a lottery, wants people eligible for the lottery to be good voters, and perfect voting record
 - We would pick a number to be chosen. You would have to apply
- Quite frankly if you look at the districts we are getting now a lot of criticism
- Citizens feel estranged from redistricting process and their power to vote
- A group of citizens who are picked at random would do a better job
- Would need to give them staff
- Would give them DLS staff
- Would also give them legal counsel from the Attorney General's Office
- Non-voting and presiding officer
- My idea would be a chief judge pick a retired judge
- Need to consider the ethics of the group on whatever panel you have
- Would like to mention with legislative redistricting plus or minus 5 %
 - There is no reason to have vote have a 10% difference
 - Doesn't think that's fair
 - In the era of computers can get in at least 1%
- Thank commission members

Carol Ramirez asks what happened to bill

- All redistricting bills went to rules committee and they went to burial

Alex Williams, would a lottery system give advantage to party in the majority?

- Yes and fine with it thinks it should be in line with majority

Delegate Seth Howard

- Is in single member district and likes district
- Would like to see someone who has never run for office
- Want to see someone who has never lobbied
- Wants to see someone who has not worked for any elected official in the past five years
- Should sign an affidavit

Senator Waugh asks would an election judge fit this criteria?

- De. Howard responds not something written in stone
- Would imagine it probably would be
- Doesn't want to hamper anyone's rights or free speech,
 - Really need to make sure they reach ethical guidelines

Jason Buckel asks what is the composition of the independent commission, what's more important who serves or giving the commission members a fair guideline? What should be our most directional force?

- Del. Howard responds doesn't see why you shouldn't do both. Look at the composition of commission.
- A lottery a lot of folks have applied
- We need to find a balance and write guidelines and rules that fit in parameters to have as little influence as possible

Delegate Michael Malone

- Congratulates commission on final night of hearings
- In 2002 there was challenge to lines drawn, my wife was involved in process
- As someone who came back to Maryland from college it's embarrassing to be from Anne Arundel County and not have someone who understands the constituents of Anne Arundel Co.
- Representation should be people attending events in county
- Should have jokes as California jerry mandering and perry mandering
- It shouldn't be that hard
- I think the CA plan is a good idea
- Focus on compactness and following the Voters Rights Act
- Article 3 section 4 there is guidance, must follow political geographic boundaries
- If apply to state districts why is this not good enough for our congressional district
- The only way it will go somewhere is if there is pressure from the community to make it go somewhere
- One of the plat forms of Governor Hogan, people want this
- Wants to thank you for time

Senator Gail Bates

- On congressional level have 3 different congressman
- Doesn't promote county unity
- For second decade in a row the area I represent is combined with district down in Baltimore City
- Congressman works hard, but there is no way you can represent the agricultural issues that we are dealing with, they just don't work together
- The people I represent feel that they are totally misrepresented
- Coming from the edge you need to meet somewhere in the middle
- Some of the comments that were made talked about difference between the farmers and the city

- More concerned about recognizing county lines as much as possible, we are not quite there
- Would like districts to be compact and contiguous
- Doesn't want people to feel that their votes don't matter
- 5th graders can tell how much votes matter
- Vote in Howard County mattered by just one vote
- Need to make fair enough that everyone believes that every vote counts
- One gentleman said to urge for single member districts and truly equal population within the districts
- The political games give bad reputation

Alex Williams asks didn't hear view on independent commission

- Sen. Bates responds she doesn't have an opinion at this time

Pat Fenati

- Have a couple of suggestions if possible try to pack full district
- I believe if Montgomery County had one major congressional person county council, then state delegates could work with them
- Lives in upper point of Montgomery County in Damascus
- In my small town we can go different places for three different congressman
- Lives in District 14 and people from all different districts
- Crazy way to try to win campaign or do anything in that area
- My district runs from Frederick County line to Prince George's County line
- When I was running for state delegate one of the things they said to me was no one ever comes to talk to us
- Your votes are being taken for granted in these districts
- Most of the politicking takes place in the Olney area
- The lower part of the county is where everyone lives
- Important to have single member districts
- Would like to see senatorial districts representing the same types of people
- Would like to think about needs of people

Sam Fenati

- Citizen of Damascus
- Take Damascus and draw radius around it and those people would have the most common interest
- Do this in Frederick and Rockville
- Doing it that way as a guideline you could get areas of interest

Kenneth Stevens

- Lives in Columbia
- Redistricting is political and partisan
- Obviously the outline of some congressional districts look horrible
- Some republican districts look just as bad in Florida, North Carolina, and Texas

- After last election more people elected democrats in 2014
- Pennsylvania also had more voters statewide voting for congressional democrats
- In Virginia it was 8 republicans and 3 democrats
- Do you believe that if Maryland democrats went first, those republican states would follow
- It was not a voluntary act done by California democrats
- If you're interested in fairness in redistricting recommend all states should be done on a federal level

Alex Williams asks are you suggesting nothing be done here or we should wait for national bill to fix?

- Kenneth responds, yes that is what I'm saying

Angie Boyter

- From Howard County
- Acknowledge validity of concerns for recognizing racial and ethnic boundaries
- Over 900 friends and neighbors black and white are proud to be members of Dunlogging
- Despite the fact we are a highly recognized community we are split between district 9 and district 12
- Most folks in Dunlogging are republicans
 - This is what makes voters think their votes don't count
- A lot of mathematical techniques and models that should be used to work out good decisions
- Will get kind of results that make people think their votes don't count
- Look at kinds of easily measured things, but need to look at their attitudes
- Need tools, mathematical tools
- Statistical Techniques

Loretta Shields

- Chairman of Howard Co. Central Committee
- Have 118 polling places
- Three congressional districts that run through here
- Created a single member district, 9B
- With the number of different versions of voting that only had 190,000 voters
- That is a lot of expense and too many things broken up
- Have to drive 3 miles to vote and pass 8 different polls
- The polling place across the street from my house is from the same district
- So many ways we have looked and stretched these districts
- Have never seen her congressman
- If you look at how we were drawn all packed together
 - Whatever they could do
 - Very involved behind the scenes
- We need good, consistent ways
- Wants to make citizens to not be involved when they don't know what is going on
- It doesn't matter what party

Brian Griffiths

- In Maryland we have skewed and odd districts
- Testified on previous commission and said it was nothing more than a charade
- Maryland is home to the most gerrymandered districts in the country
- In 2011 the appointees were the president and the speaker and a republican that was closely aligned with the governor
- The map constituted the most gerrymandered, contorted districts in the country
- No other logical explanation
- Not only congressional
- Legislative districts were also guilty
- Governor O' Malley hand crafted the districts
- Some districts were several thousand larger than others
- Once again decided some districts would be one, two, or three member
- As a resident of District 31, was represented by three members, now lives in two member district
- In Maryland have varying amounts of representation and unfair
- I have created proposed solutions
 - 1. Create independent redistricting commission
 - Commission charged with congressional and legislative districts
 - 2. Require legislative districts be of equal proportion
 - Maryland has the time to lead on this issues
 - Needs to fairly represent people of the state

Alonzo Washington asks Bryan if he is still representing the Young Republican Club?

- Brian responds not anymore

Ed Levy

- Disappointed with Governor Hogan
- People told us what they thought on 2012 ballot
- There are no hearings in Montgomery County
 - Think it's because they didn't vote for him
- In 2012 congressional elections the democrats didn't come close to taking the house
- If we are looking for a fair Congress with equal representation it's not going to happen unless we have company
- Commission to recommend that other states follow similar path
- Have to use our power as strong and important state to lead the way

Jason Buckel mentioned had referendum on 2010 lines going to redraw lines in 2020 that governor will have under our current system significant power to redraw. Should there be a referendum after every census?

- Ed responds no. He's saying the people have already spoken.

Alex Williams wants to let him know the governor had no determination where the hearings were held. The Governor had nothing to do to discriminate against, the commission members

selection the location. They felt Laurel could bring people from Prince George's, Howard, and Montgomery Counties.

Caroline Ann Hecht

- Thank you for taking the time to reform the system
- Would like to thank Senator Muse for telling it as it is
- Three years ago I was a grandmother enjoying retirement, but the redistricting that occurred went too far
- President of National Council of Jewish Women
- Would of the things wanted to have included is the working that appeared on the ballot in 2012
- The voters of this state voted to approve the constitution, not the vote on the maps
- Most of the people I speak with think the maps make little sense
- I'm not an expert, but would like to discuss what she has learned
- Maryland should have standards in place with respect for communities and regard for politic subdivisions
- Should make more sense than to serve a certain political party
- Shouldn't wait for other states to act
- Todd Eberly pointed out in 2008 when the democrats controlled congress chose not to deal with issue because they took control
- I'm a Marylander I care that people receive proper representation
- We are a progressive state, we should be progressive on this issue
- Importance of standards to regulate absurdities like third congressional district
- Second our redistricting process should be open
- Hearings should be held before the maps are drawn
- The General Assembly should take the time to hold hearings that hold real citizen input
- I think there are other states that are moving in this direction and look for model
- Maryland should be required to do better
- Looks forward to recommendations

Timothy Hruz

- Lifelong resident and voter of the state of Maryland
- The governor and several others have referenced how contorted our boundary lines are
- Maryland has a very wide margin of error
- My home district is district 7, which is the most populated
- Completely unacceptable districts are unequal
- In VA no more than a deviation of 2%
- It's a disgrace in Maryland
- 15 most underpopulated districts are overwhelmingly democrat
- Conversely 7 of the 10 most overpopulated districts are republican districts
- There is no rhyme or reason to why we have one two or three member districts
- Some sub districts are obviously sub districted for democrats
- No sub districts are in conservative parts of the state
- Not fair to the residents of Maryland

- The purpose of districts is communities and districts shouldn't be overwhelmed
- Baltimore split over three districts
- Baltimore City should be one congressional districts
- Anne Arundel Co. and Baltimore Co. is shredded
- Taneytown and Eastern Shore have nothing in common, makes no sense
- I don't think it's a racial thing, I think people should be considered as part of their community
- Need more competition in the state of Maryland
- A lot of areas in our state that could be very competitive

Irma Shein

- Very happy to meet members of commission in person
- Assure no credentials in math, but has an interest in the commission
- Valid work that is buzzing in cyber space
- Have validated reform efforts
- Believes wide spread reform is a real possibility today
- Has heard enough about injustice of bi partisan gerrymandering
- Governor Hogan has been charged with creating a constitutional amendment
- Would like to create a bipartisan task force to draw legislation for Maryland to achieve equal population
- Allowance may be made
- The process should be transparent and open to public scrutiny
- Need to involve map
- One standard alone would replace monstrous districts
- Voters could be content with votes casted
- Social networks will discuss our actions
- Politicians and organizations can see the good sense and what we have done
- Make Maryland a model for other states

David Marker

- Winding lines in Baltimore County are silly
- 3rd congressional also does not make sense
- Strongly believe Maryland should not pass bill to move to an independent commission at this time
- Have democrat states that have good government movement
- Support all redistricting being done throughout the states independent
- Will empower citizens to have similar legislations
- Very heartened by Len Lazerick's blog
- Need guidelines
- During recent redistricting in Howard County a lot of people were testifying on how to create boundaries
- Some wanted east and west historic district in both places
- The point there is no one best plan

Roy Meyers

- Member of third district
- Democrat
- Supports Governor Hogan's call for a commission
- Many of the people do not understand the complexities of the commission
- Summarize a few points of this testimony
- Maryland has a rich history of commissions
- Work well when hear from citizens and experts
- Thinks this deadline is short
- Regarding the substance not an expert in this area
- His expertise is in government budgets
- Suggest tradeoffs
 - Contiguity
 - All in favor in having contiguity over water
 - Because are community of interest
 - Only standard must meet is equal population
 - Compactness
 - When you get down to compactness there are no agreed upon methods for compactness
- Live in third district, needs to be reformed, but not clear structure to reform
- Other points made about crossing city or council lines
- Think about how possible this is when meeting criteria
- Need to prevent partisan imbalance
- Quite useful to consider having diverse districts this would encourage members of both jurisdictions to consider their neighbor concerns
- The final is a friend to the court case Perry vs. Lulock case
 - You could use this technique to show current maps are biased against republicans
- Very important to not have partisans on the commission
- What I would prefer would be enlarged membership but encourage members to pass plan with super majority and also allow a very long public hearing time
- I hope democrats take the complaints
- Never the less the political reality is much more
- Ask Governor Hogan to call Governor Wolfe
 - Very democrat governor with a republican state
- Why not have governor make bi partisan outreach
- Bi lateral disarmament

Anne Rutherford

- Wanted to voice my experience with original commission
- Was told when signing in for last hearing 95% of them were testifying against the map
- People listened but didn't care
- Those maps were so unfair and ridiculous
- The train had left the station
- Maps were not going to be changed would like to see more time for public comment and more time for the vote

- As far as single member districts thinks it's odd you have three delegates so you have to deal with all of them
- Few of our candidates will have potential of knocking out some of district
- Single member districts have one person accountable to you
- Thank you for time and hope that you can come to agreement on how to better the system
- In republican and democrat states there is gerrymandering, divorce politics from this
- Put independent people that will give fair logical districts

Alex Williams says heard it is an advantage to have three delegates because you have three delegates on committees

- Anne doesn't think that matters

Michael Brooks

- Lives in 6th congressional district
- Lots of issues facing states and districts
- Issues are not going to be solved
- Not a republican or a democrat, an independent
- Wishes we had open primaries
- Wanted to address argument all the other states aren't doing it, so we shouldn't do it
- When a little kid saying everyone else is doing it wouldn't work
- I don't think we are going to get disadvantaged in House of Representatives
- About Maryland to get fair recommendations
- Guidelines for drawing the districts are more important then who is on the commission
- The thing with why guidelines matter is that they may be a registered independent, but cannot take out biases when on the commission
- A lot of people have spoken on how we need to keep districts as close to possible on county and city lines
- Lives in North Potomac
- Does not live where his congressman lives, in the 6th congressional district
- Personally contingent with a constitutional amendment should live in district they represent
- Talked about referendum any time we draw the districts there should be a map at the polling place

Brandon Cooper

- Quote from FDR, "let us not forget the government is not an alien, but voters of this country"
- Urge not to go the direction of national politics
 - Gives authority of states authority to handle redistricting
 - Act on a state level
 - Talk about two impacts on residents of Maryland
 - Double punch
 - Two issues that redistricting impacts is race and politics
- Originally from Ohio went to Howard University

- Prince George's has one of the largest black majority districts in the state
- 25% of our congressional districts is black
- When we look at Montgomery County it is majority minority yet all three congressional districts are represented by white men
- People in Montgomery Co. don't have any voice that speaks directly to them
- Look at impacts that are not fair
- Heard testimony majority of Marylanders do not like this process
- Need to make it more fair

Margaret Miller

- Personal perspective because she represents company, National Write your Congressman
- Knock on 30 doors and try to get your business owners to give perspective
- Started job 10 years ago in Anne Arundel County
- God forbid if one of the business owner asked who was my congressman
- Do you know how many businesses that I have found that have 2 or three representatives
- The system could not define who their representative was
- If people don't know who representatives are then representatives don't know who they are
- Three or four representatives
- Dreaded working in Anne Arundel co. then new redistricting map came out
- Now I'm going to have to do the same work in every county
- Looks like splattered districts
- Sending a lot of ballots in electronically and there is inconsistency one have three delegates one has one delegate
- What we need to remember first and foremost is community
- Didn't we grow up where we knew everyone?
- Was trying to explain to people just think community
- Went online pulled up NJ they have 23 districts, it's all linear
- NJ is divided into 23 blocks bottom left and moving way over
- Keep it in the community
- Draw lines and be done with it

Heather Olsen

- The truth is we almost elected a republican to congress last year
- The truth is the main beneficiary of gerrymandering is county is in Montgomery County
- In this county we have 2 congressional districts, if drawn properly 4 would be northern Prince George's county
- 5th district would be minority majority district and could be faced with opposition from African Americans
- Parts of most cities are in both districts
- My neighborhood people have to drive far to vote
- In southern part of county the chairmen of powerful party was punished
- Three incumbents delegates were squeezed to benefit county councilman

- I think it would make sense to have an independent commission to not benefit individual people

Jordan Cooper

- Lives in Bethesda, was a democrat candidate for the House of Delegates
- Hear tonight to speak about trust
- A vibrant and healthy state
- Read from testimony attached on link to this date on website

Ginny Haberman

- A democrat
- Lived in Maryland since she was five years old
- I agree that all people need to be heard
- Biggest problem in Congress is paralysis
- Whoever wins the primary wins the election
- Lots of people aren't heard
- Don't know anything about the specifics, but strongly believe all voices and votes need to be heard

Eileen Finnegan

- Lives in Silver Spring portion of Hillendale
- Considers congressional district 3 home
- Very sad state of affairs
- Most folks are disenfranchised
- Was in 4 before redistricting
- Got to know our congress people
- Something to be said to have districts that are geographically and economically tight
- If they are not doing a good job you can change your leadership
- Need more compact and economically compact communities
- See economic strata is really what is starting to count
- Important going forward
- Need to set standards, not just to meet federal standards
- Need to take into account we are becoming a much more diverse state
- Election referendum question was a joke
- People thought they were voting for the constitution
- If we had individual delegates we could change this
- If we had individual delegates we could have different mix and different thinking
- Fewer committees, but some of the lock step approach on how Annapolis runs needs to have a little shape up

Tony Spezio

- Lived in area for 45 years
- Lobbyist in Annapolis
- Also a libertarian, but not speaking for libertarian party

- All legislative districts should represent constituents
- As far as minority concerns feels the Voting Rights Act of 1965 should be respected
- Took the time to draw maps, they are on my Facebook page
- In favor of single member delegate districts across the state
- Tim Hruz earlier tonight spoke on the deviancy, need to bring deviancy as close to zero as possible
- State legislative district 12 is one of the most state gerrymandered and needs to be recalled
- Hoping it is possible for a referendum to come to the 2016 ballot recalling both state and congressional maps

J.H. Snider

- Read full testimony
- Attached on website link for this meeting

Minutes from Easton Approved

Adjourned at 9:43pm