

Minutes for Redistricting Reform Regional Public Meeting - Towson
Towson University, Minnegan Room
September 15, 2015
6:30pm

Call to order at 6:32pm

Attending: Walter Olson, Alex Williams, Michael Goff, Tessa Hill-Aston, Chris Summers, Ashely Oleson, Carol Ramirez, Sen. Joan Carter Conway, Sen. Steve Waugh, Del. Alonzo Washington, Del. Jason Buckel

Alex Williams, Opening Discussion

- Opening discussion
- Present members
- Goal is to conduct a comprehensive examination
- Conducting Regional Summits
 - Eastern
 - Southern
 - Northern
 - Western
- Promote redistricting reform
- Thank President Timothy Chandler's Office and Towson University
- The Minnegan Room where we are meeting is in district 3 and the rest of campus is in district 2
- Introduces the League of Women Voters speaker, Lu Pierson

Lu Pierson, League of Women Voters

- Research has shown 73% of Marylanders want redistricting change
- 2000 Census shifted Marylanders
- 1.5 million voters were moved from one district to another
- Emphasis need to promote redistricting process with fair representation
- We should not wait for Congress to do redistricting
- Thanks Governor Hogan for his willingness to reform redistricting

Jennifer Bevan-Dangel, Common Cause

- California is a gold star example for how to run a commission
- Putting subscriptions into a poll
- People considered to serve should be truly independent
- Another aspect to make for a successful commission is outreach and education
- In California they had over 100 public meetings
- They received over 20,000 comments
- This created greater responsiveness from elected officials
- We should also look at Arizona
- In past have seen bills introduce a hybrid model for redistricting

- Hybrid style is not inherently bad if it serves the right purpose for Maryland

Senator Jim Brochin

- Senator from the 42nd District
- Shows map drawn under Parris Glendening
- He says districts are compact and contiguous
- Had clashes with O'Malley, made it apparent they were going to redistrict him out of the legislature
- Packed as many republicans as they could in his district
- Thanks Governor Hogan for creating this commission

Delegate Kathy Szeliga

- Plus or minus 5%
- Plus or minus 1 citizen in Congress
- Her district has most citizens of anyone in the state

Delegate Christian Miele

- Here as a freshman legislator
- Discuss HB 906 from 2015 session
- Went to Ways and Means and was never brought out for a vote
- This is a great opportunity for Marylanders
- Would benefit constituents

Delegate Eric Bromwell

- Came same time as Sen. Brochin
- Elected when he was 25
- Lived and breathed process
- Here to support reform
- Unfortunate it has become a political process
- Maryland can be a leader and use resources
- People of Perry Hall don't have same interests as those on the eastern shore
- Not unique to the state of Maryland
- All 3 delegates from this district are here

Delegate Chris West

- Represents district 42B
- Express appreciation to present testimony
- Observed 3 redistricting cycles
- Maryland constitution sets forth criteria that must be used in the redistricting plan
- The Maryland court of appeals has enforced language
- The Maryland constitution is silent about congressional district lines
- Constituents in his district are represented by 4 different congressmen
- First suggestion is to propose an amendment to Maryland constitution for congressional districts

- Wants non-partisan and single member districts
- Congressional district should be compact in form
- Maryland constitution should be amended to have a non-partisan commission
- Should be living in close proximity of district

Christopher Boardman

- Community activist for many years
- Ran for congress
- Need discussion and debate
- Member of 2nd congressional district
- Running for office in gerrymandered district is very difficult
- The districts are all over the place
- Need to develop consensus
- Issue of public trust
- Affects confidence of democracy
- Can't get people to run if things are stacked against them

Russ Kovak

- Thinks redistricting favors republicans
- You could make argument district 1 is a well-drawn district
- If you want it blocked together where are you going to bring it?

Delegate Robin Grammer

- Youngest member of great Dundalk revolution
- Took every seat in government in the district
- Detachment between people of Maryland and the representation they are receiving
- People are unhappy with representation they were getting
- Complete detachment of what was important to the people
- Grew up in a democrat family
- People in lopsided districts are not responsive
- Connection with your constituents
- Centralization of opinions
- Gerrymandering becomes a weapon
- Electoral process is criminally unfair

Delegate John Cluster

- Lives in Perry Hall
- Two children live within half mile of him, but in three separate congressional districts
- Seems like you can't get away from redistricting issue
- Top vote getter was drawn out district
- Represent a hodgepodge of districts
- See single member districts

Maria Pycha

- Does a lot of door knocking for candidates
- Voters are aggravated with systems
- Need voters to get engaged
- Feels underrepresented
- On Baltimore County Central Committee

Cindy Sharretts

- Three things to call attention to
- Data
- Outcomes based process to achieve certain ends
- Not fair
- Voting Rights Act is a process that requires certain outcomes
- No partiality of prejudice
- Use Maryland government to its fullest
- Need pragmatic solutions
- Against independent commission, wants legislators to do their job

Caroline Seamon

- Would like to promote an independent commission

Tony Campbell

- Worked with Chris West and a group
- Marylanders for Fair Representation
- Fletcher v. Lamone dealt with congressional districts in Greenbelt
- Describes café in Maryland that three districts meet
- 2002 Parris Glendening took map to draw Bob Ehrlich out of a congressional seat
- Need independent redistricting commission

Jason Boisvert

- When you rig districts that is a problem
- Parts of regions that don't have anything in common
- The rules ensure the wrong people make the right decision
- Single member districts much easier
- 3 member district not worried about

William Newton

- Used his scholarship to give it to other district
- Lines keep moving around his house
- Nuts and bolts change what you do

Larry Smith

- Concluded number one villain is gerrymandering
- Can help with details
- Packing and cracking

- Special interest districts
- Presents presentation
- Get chief judges and polling judges who are unaffiliated involved

Tim Robinson

- Was Jim Brochin's opponent in last election
- Massive change in who is representing you
- Have to change the corrupt system
- Need young voters
- Mike Miller being president of senate for 28 years looks fundamentally corrupt
- Against multiple legislator districts

Phil Andrews

- Close to hearts of people in our state
- Purpose is to rig elections
- Holds up map of congressional district 3, believes it is incomprehensible
- If an independent commission came back with this map they would be laughed out of room
- Need to make sure district 3 doesn't happen again
- Reflects only standard that applies is population
- Blood splatter from a crime scene
- District drawn for political purposes
- Point is gerrymandering is done to rig elections
- Bring about fair and competitive districts
- Gerrymandering disempowers voters
- Open primaries to empower all voters and not shut out independents

John Gordon

- Tremendous amount of support
- Ran for delegate four years ago
- Is in district 42
- Put him in district 11
- Took everything to west side of Joppa Road into Pikesville
- Destroys compact neighborhoods
- Will hear story after story of neighborhoods that are divided into different districts
- Major travesty of gerrymandering

Craig Graugraude

- Lived for 23 years in district 3A
- Has respect for John Delaney
- In a seat that is not considered to be safe for his political party, but wants national gerrymandering
- But says you are disingenuous
- Ron Young "when the state acts alone all you are doing is selling your people out"

- Karen Lewis Young had similar statements
- By the year 2022 independent voters may pass republicans in this state
- Feeling that playing field on party

Deborah Harris

- Lives in Baltimore city
- Can walk four steps from house and be in a different district
- Makes it inaccessible for most people to reach their congressmen
- If you look at this from standpoint of board of elections Loch Raven has two voting polls
- 21 voters who shared a different legislative district
- Creates nightmare for board of elections
- Compact districts would be less of a nightmare on board of elections and on districts

Tony Campbell

- 3rd congressional districts can't get to by car

Draft minutes approved from meeting on August 27th

Meeting adjourned at 8:47pm