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From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
Sent: Monday, October 26, 2020 4:39 PM
To: Senate Redistricting
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input
Attachments: Texas Redistricting Testimony (Senate Portal) PDF.pdf

Date: 2020-10-26
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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Congressional

Message:

My name is Miguel Rivera and I am the Redistricting Outreach Fellow at the Texas Civil Rights Project. I would like to take this opportunity to speak about my experiences with Redistricting in Texas.

I grew up in Stafford, Texas, a small suburb of Houston that is frequently overshadowed by its larger neighbors, Sugar Land and Missouri City. Despite this, we are a proud and tight-knit community. I attribute most of this to the fact that our town is anchored by the only municipal school district in the state. Our life revolves around the school and the activities jointly put on by the City and the School District.

Stafford is within Fort Bend County, the most diverse county in the state, and Stafford shares in this diversity. We are a minority-majority community with only about 11% of the population identifying as non-Hispanic white. Growing up in Stafford, I believed the only division in our town were the railroad tracks that run parallel to HWY 90, separating us into north and south. However, I later learned that an invisible and more powerful division existed. The western part of Stafford finds itself in congressional district TX-22 while the eastern part is in TX-9. The demarcation line runs through a residential area that separates one neighbor to another (the Promenade neighborhood).

Given Texas' record of drawing districts that intentionally cut up minority communities with the intent to dilute their voting power, I knew that this line placement was more than just coincidence.

At 18 years old, I moved to Austin, Texas to start school at the University of Texas.

Like most first year students, I lived on an on-campus residence hall and voted in TX- 25. As an upperclassmen, I lived in the West Campus neighborhood that is a short walk from UT, but this made me a voter in TX-21. My fellow classmates who lived in nearby student neighborhoods like Riverside and North Loop found themselves in different congressional districts. This means that the youth population couldn't unitedly petition the same congressperson for accurate representation. I believe that communities of interest, like the UT student body, should be given a shot at accurate representation.

I am not advocating for a packing of communities of color and young people into single districts. Instead I am asking that the Texas Legislature not intentionally attempt to dilute the voting power of communities like these as they have done repeatedly since the passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. It is unfair and undemocratic.

I am also asking for a more fair and transparent Redistricting process. Please commit to public input on the entire Redistricting process. From now until the maps are created, Texans deserve to know how this incredibly important process is conducted and have the right to decide how they want their communities to be represented by these maps.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to this process and to a more fair and equitable Texas.

Miguel Rivera

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