

An Open Letter to the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission

August 27, 2021

Dear Commissioners Clark, Curry, Eid, Lange, Lett, Kellom, Orton, Rothhorn, Szetela, Vallette, Wagner, Weiss, and Witjes,

Your historic service to the people of Michigan is an inspiration to the thousands of volunteers who worked very hard to end political gerrymandering in our state, and to the millions of voters who overwhelmingly supported the fair, transparent redistricting process that you are now carrying out. The thirteen of you serve on behalf of more than ten million Michiganders who are counting on your full engagement in every step of drawing legislative and congressional maps we will use for the next ten years.

The public has entrusted you to carry out the people's will.

The very thought of a group of real Michiganders working across political divisions to draw fair maps was enough to inspire four thousand volunteers to stand outside in the heat and the cold for hours on end, week after week, collecting an average of more than 100 signatures each. Twenty-two of them collected *one thousand* signatures or more.

I witnessed this extraordinary effort to strengthen our democracy as I organized the Voters Not Politicians petition campaign and then helped lead the successful ballot campaign, over the objections of those who wanted to keep politicians, not voters, in charge of redistricting. All of us at Voters Not Politicians, including those thousands of volunteers, are cheering you on. We are deeply invested in your success in bringing fair district maps to our great state.

The millions of voters who voted "Yes" for fair redistricting in Michigan are also thrilled to watch you in action. Many others, in states across the country, are facing another decade of gerrymandered maps that will be created by politicians behind closed doors with the help of partisan operatives whose mission is to rig the outcome of elections. These voters wish they had what we have here in Michigan: A group of citizens standing up for the people as new legislative and congressional maps are drawn.

Each of your voices matters.

According to the 2020 census, there are 10,077,331 people in the state of Michigan. Dividing by thirteen, each of you represents 775,180 people. As you do your crucial work, I hope you keep in mind that every time you do your research, carefully consider public comment, or make your voice heard in a discussion, you are doing so on behalf of hundreds of thousands of people who have entrusted you to make their hope for fair representation a reality.

As in any group of colleagues, there are some among you who speak up more than others. There are some who tend to lead discussions and some who tend to follow. Some feel more comfortable voicing disagreement, and some don't. Everyone is different, and we knew that when we designed a commission made up of a group of diverse individuals. But when you choose whether to do more research, ask a question, or speak up, we urge you to consider that you do so (or don't) on behalf of three quarters of a million people who are counting on you to represent them.

The public needs to see each of you fully participating in every aspect of the commission's work.

When you and over 9,000 others applied to serve on the commission, you decided to make a significant investment of your time and effort, should you be randomly selected. You committed to periods of full-time and part-time work, to working collaboratively, and - quoting from the application - to "perform your duties in a manner that is impartial and reinforces public confidence in the integrity of the redistricting process." To build that confidence, the public needs to see every commissioner fully present and engaged as you dig into each step of the redistricting process.

Thank you for taking on this important duty. The map-drawing process you are starting now promises to be the most challenging and contentious part of your work, but if you listen to the public and maintain your commitment to collaboration and impartiality, you will continue to make Michigan proud.

I know you take your role seriously, and I ask you to keep the 775,180 people you represent in mind as you shape Michigan's future for the next decade.

Jamie Lyons-Eddy
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Voters Not Politicians