

Testimony in Favor of SB 253 & SB 254, & against SB 240 & SB 241

Senate Special Committee on Redistricting; January 10, 2022

Rep. Timothy Horrigan (Strafford 6)

I was unable to attend the January 10, 2022 hearing, but I still wish to submit the following written testimony.

In 2012, the Executive Council districts were blatantly gerrymandered. My community, Durham was placed in District 2, which has been variously nicknamed “The Van Ostern Belt”, “The Volinsky Belt”, and now “The Warmington Belt.”

All three of the councilors who have represented District 2 have been outstanding, which is one reason why their names have inspired nicknames. Two of them ran for Governor, and Colin Van Ostern also came within one vote of defeating the almost unbeatable and now-recently retired Secretary of State Bill Gardner. Even though the existing District 2 produces great Executive Councilors, it is still a bad joke. It is a narrow band of towns and cities running across the entire width of the state from Hinsdale to Dover, passing through five of the state's ten counties, and including six of the state's thirteen cities. The only thing those towns and cities have in common is a propensity to vote Democratic.

I urge the committee to adopt the map proposed by Senator Soucy, in SB 254 ,which produces more compact and more coherent districts, and which respects the boundaries of seven of the state's ten counties.

As for the Senate Districts in SB 240, the Republican plan is slanted towards protecting incumbents, which is explicitly forbidden under federal voting-rights law, but I am sure it would still pass muster with both the Governor and “the feds.” The only district out of 24 which lacks an incumbent just happens to accommodate the personal plans of a Senator who is planning to move. That Senator has openly acknowledged those plans in a recent interview in the *Union Leader*. The legality and ethics of drawing such a district for such a purpose are highly questionable. Happily, there are a number of well-known individuals, from both parties, who might also be interested in running again who already reside in the proposed district, including at least two former State Senators. So, we can look forward to an entertaining campaign in that district.

The plan outlined in SB 240 is not terrible, aside from the problems I just mentioned. But Senator Soucy's SB 253 is much fairer, produces much more coherent districts, and makes fewer changes. Please vote for her plan.

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