

Good morning Charwoman Sims, Vice-Chair Silvestri, and the 2020 Redistricting Committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak regarding the redistricting process.

My name is Marlow Colvin, i am a life long resident of Chicago and Cook county. I served in the Illinois General Assembly in the House of Representatives from 2001 to 2012, and was a member of the 2011 Illinois House of Representatives Redistricting Committee. In the spring of 2011 the committee and I travelled to more than 15 Illinois counties, participating in more than two dozen redistricting hearings from Waukegan in Lake County, to East St. Louis in St. Clair County. Across this state the message was the same; equitable, sustainable districts that protects diversity in the General Assembly per the 1965 Voting Rights Act. It was the overwhelming theme of those hearings.

And while that message was articulated in various ways, what I learned was there are four basic rules that the Cook County Redistricting Committee must follow; the districts must be contiguous, there must be 17 of them, they must follow the one-person, one-vote rule, and they must obey the Voting Rights Act. You have to start with the Voting Rights Act. If not, the courts will throw the map out as illegal.

Ever since Illinois' 1970 Constitution gave Cook County home-rule powers, groups such as the League of Women Voters, the Urban League and Common Cause had urged adoption of a single-member district system. The newly drafted state Constitution allowed adoption of single-member districts either by the commissioners' vote or by an initiative from the electorate. More than 20 years after the 1970 Convention Cook County was prepared to adopt a more sustainable and equitable process to elect its 17-member board.

Prior to 1994 the make up the Cook County Board, representing 2.8 million Chicagoans and 2.3 million suburbanites, was elected at large throughout the entire county. They were a semi-anonymous board, managing at the time a \$2.1 billion annual budget and overseeing a public hospital, a forest preserve district, a massive jail, law enforcement in unincorporated areas and assessment of property values in the most populous county in Illinois.

However, things changed for Cook County residents, who until then had no reason to be acquainted with a particular board member as their specific representative. The County Board of Commissioners had been elected at large, 10 from the city and seven from the suburbs. The ultimate effect was to polarize power on the board and minimize accountability to voters.

Starting in December of 1994, following the general of that year, commissioners would be elected from 17 single-member districts. The County Board itself determined which districts went where, and adoption of a district map was completed in September. The change carried numerous political implications, chief among them was a new system of political, governmental and fiscal accountability, but even more importantly was an opportunity to observe and protect the interests of the diverse communities that compose Cook County in accordance with the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Single member districts gave the residents of Cook County a first-time opportunity to elect representatives that reflected the values of their respective cities, towns, villages and neighborhoods in an unprecedented way.

It is hard to argue against the wisdom of the idea of single member districts, and the effect it has had on the overall accountability the board of commissioners have had on the operations of Cook County during the last 27 years. To that point, I am respectfully asking the Redistricting Committee to continue to observe and heed the goals of the 1965 Voting Rights Act - to ensure our county's diverse landscape continues to recognize the rights of all voters to choose their representatives. At this particular point in

Cook County's history I can't remember a time when the board was as diverse and so reflective of our communities at large. It is in that spirit that I ask the Committee to embrace the good work of the current make-up of the board and resist calls and urges to "reinvent the wheel" and undo a legislative map that has proven that it is possible to elect a county board of commissioners that is strong, functional and accountable to the several million residents and taxpayers in one of the nation's largest counties.

Of course there is always some measures that need to be addressed in the redistricting process, and this august committee will no doubt address those concerns, however, I urge you to continue to be mindful of the tremendous diversity, equity and sustainability the county has accomplished with this process, which should serve as a model for redistricting goals and outcomes across the country.

When I was asked by Commissioner Stanley Moore if I had any interests in testifying to the Redistricting Committee I jumped at the chance. In large part by the hard work and results Commissioner Moore has produced. Commissioner Moore has worked very hard to bring the County's vast recreational opportunities to communities that have underutilized them for decades. In my opinion his work to partner with PACE Bus Service and the Brookfield Zoo was the type of innovative thinking that provided access to one of the county's Crown Jewels, the Zoo, to residents across the county. His work with the Shobonna Camp Grounds, Greenlake Swimming pool, the Dan Ryan Woods exercise stairs and the major Taylor Trial are a few of his accomplishments that have enhanced the recreational activities in our Forest Preserves, truly providing an oasis in our urban areas of Cook County. His stewardship on matters of financial accountability reflects his years of governmental experience as well.

On a personal note and as a (very) amateur Civil War historian, I especially recognize and applaud his work to have Juneteenth recognized not only as a county holiday, but yet another opportunity to civically engage America in its promise for equity and justice for all Americans.

Ladies and gentleman of the committee thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testimony as you complete your work to ensure the voting rights of nearly 5.2 million residents who make Cook County home are recognized, respected and preserved.

Respectfully submitted;

Marlow H. Colvin, Cook County Resident