

Testimony of Debra Cooper

August 16th 2012

I'm Debra Cooper. At present I am the Democratic State Committeewoman for the 67th AD which is the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I am hoping to actually represent this district on the NY City Council after the next election when your work will have been done. And those elected will be a true and fair representation of the people of this wonderful City.

Recently I have testified before LATFOR, the commission charged with redistricting the state. That was not a praiseworthy outcome. I certainly hope, for the sake of my community, that this next time there should be something to praise. And from what I have read about your goals, principles and working methods, it does seem like a significantly more likely possibility.

I am going to reprise some of my testimony from the LATFOR hearings as I described the Upper West Side. It also describes Council District 6,

I usually tell people I represent the Upper West Side and most people around the country know exactly what I'm talking about.

That's because the Upper West Side is an easily identifiable, historical, social, and political

entity. It's the very definition of a community of interest. Those of us who live there think of ourselves in many of the terms used to characterize the neighborhood. The Upper West Side has just about the highest voting performance in the City and so that means in the state as well. . It is a historically progressive district. The list of community organizations is very, very long. They all see themselves as part of the Upper West Side community groups with Upper West Side values. Inclusive, assertive, progressive, opinionated and very much there. It has long been a political powerhouse.

Below are a few terms I used to describe the dismemberment that LATFOR did to the Upper West Side/

What LATFOR did to the Upper West would meet none of the standards you seem to be setting out. Compact, contiguous, meaningful community or communities of interest.

Latfor cannibalized the Upper West Side. It was carved up like a Thanksgiving turkey into five and then ONLY 4 separate, just about irrational districts, that violated most tenets of the idea of a community of interest.

I live at 74th and West End which is one of the worst gerrymandered districts in the state. I went from very small numbers of blocks to Spanish Harlem to the South Bronx. The 31st was a much skinnier version of the country of Chile.

In the end THAT commission dismembered the Upper West side 4 ways.

There are hundreds of community, social, and cultural groups in the Upper West Side. Historically the Upper West has had an identity that has remained the same for decades. And it needs to stay intact both as an identity and geographically as an actual City Council district.

In the past few redistrictings the City Council district has always gone from the Hudson River to Central Park. The north and south boundaries has only varied uptown and downtown by a few blocks. At present those boundaries are from 56th to 96th. I urge that this basic, simple easy to comprehend rectangle remain intact. The ethnic make up is relatively stable. And the present population of the district from the Census and from our own Councilwoman, Gale Brewer is 160, 209. The present census for New York City is about 8.175 million people. Divided by 51 council districts that works out to 160, 294 people. This is further support for the fact that the present Council lines can stay the way they are with little to no tweaking needed.

The Upper West Side must be treated as a significant, indivisible unit by any future mapmakers.

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