

October 4th, 2012

NOTE: I am submitting this testimony via the NYC Districting Commission's website on 10/9/12 so that it appears online for the constituents of CD7 & CD10, and any others that are interested in reading testimony concerning these districts. I was present to testify the following on the 4th, however the Districting Commission cut off many people that were pre-registered and signed in to testify. Many of us had patiently waited hours to testify, only to be told we could not because the Commission made an agreement to vacate the venue by 9pm. Throughout the evening the Commission allowed speakers that exceeded their two minute allotted time to continue speaking, in many cases for several minutes, robbing many other Manhattanites the ability to testify. The following is what I would have presented to the Commission, had the testimonies been allowed to continue:

Good evening. My name is Alex Luis Castex-Porter. I am 29, and a lifelong resident of Washington Heights in what is currently the 10th City Council District. I work in residential real estate sales and primarily work in the 7th and 10th Council Districts.

The current proposed maps for the 7th and 10th districts are enormously troubling for several reasons.

First, the connections in these neighborhoods that I am going to describe tend to run in a north/south direction along the avenues, as do the geographical features of the land. These two points are extremely important when confronting the redistricting process in northern Manhattan.

The 7th district has been obviously dismantled and skewed, throwing out the window ties that have bound these neighborhoods for my entire life. Furthermore, as a Latino, I am upset that the 10th district's proposed map has diluted the power of my vote, and the chance that I will be represented by a Latino in the City Council.

Washington Heights and Inwood, under the proposed maps would also only have one councilmember north of 182nd Street which will limit funding in the four or five distinct sub-neighborhoods that are north of 181st Street from river to river.

These maps also pose a problem because they've put 5% more residents in each district when compared to other districts city wide.

Council District 7 has a wide range of common concerns and interests including:

- Bus and subway lines: M4, M5, M98, A-Train, C-Train and 1-Train.
- Many condos and cooperatives, meaning many home owners.
- The Greenway linking northern Manhattan to Battery Park.
- Waterfront Parks including Riverbank, which is a state park, and Fort Tryon Park, Fort Washington Park, Riverside Park, and Inwood Hill Park & Nature Center, which are city parks.
- Shared automobile transportation concerns in regards to the Henry Hudson Highway, George Washington Bridge, Trans-Manhattan Expressway and access points to these roads.
- Shared Columbia University facilities including the main campus, which lies just outside of District 7, The New York Presbyterian Hospital and Baker Field.

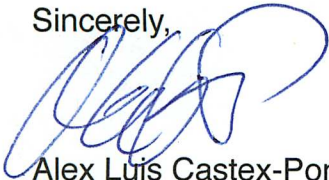
Council District 10 also has a wide range of common concerns and interests that include:

- Bus and subway lines: BX7, M3, M100, M101 and the 1-Train (north of 168th Street).
- Highbridge Park and the Sherman Creek Waterfront Esplanade.
- Immigrant rights advocacy and CBOs that do outreach to immigrant families, and children who are recent immigrants to the United States.
- Affordable housing, and tenants rights advocacy for those that are having rights violated by landlords.
- And of great importance council District 10 has one, if not the largest, Dominican populations in the world outside of the Dominican Republic.

These commonalities are obvious to anyone who has spent an afternoon walking through these neighborhoods. I would encourage you all to take a walking tour this weekend and become acclimated with the area, as the maps that have been proposed seem to have been drawn without a hint of knowledge about Washington Heights and Inwood.

I wish you well in this difficult process, and hope that the next maps reflect the neighborhoods more accurately.

Sincerely,



Alex Luis Castex-Porter

Testimony before
The New York City Districting Commission

October 4, 2012

by Mark D. Levine

Thank you. My name is Mark Levine, and I am a Democratic District Leader from the 71st Assembly District in Washington Heights. I am here to provide feedback on the drawing of the 7th and 10th Councilmanic districts uptown.

In short, the commission's first proposal for these districts was simply terrible. There are a few principles that most New Yorkers expect the Commission to be mindful of in drawing our new maps: 1) there should be an effort to keep together communities of common interest, 2) minority voting power should be protected, and 3) the basic notion of fairness should be adhered to.

Unfortunately, when it comes to Northern Manhattan, the Commission's preliminary plan failed on each of these counts.

First, the plan rips apart Northern Manhattan neighborhoods along the Hudson--namely Hamilton Heights, Washington Heights, and Inwood--areas with deep ties and a decades-long history of common representation in the 7th Council district, areas that remain connected today in the Assembly and Senate districts. I and many other testified about the nature of these deep ties in the August hearing so I won't repeat myself on this today, but suffice to say that these waterfront neighborhoods are connected by common parks and transit lines, a common school district, the presence of Columbia University campuses, similarly high rates of homeownership, and much more. That's why every effort should be made to keep these waterfront neighborhoods together in a common district.

Second, the Commission's preliminary plan dramatically dilutes Latino voting power in the 10th District, which traditionally has been overwhelmingly Latino. Under the new plan the portion of Latinos among regular votes in a Democratic primary would drop to 51%. I am talking about the so-called "prime Dems" number, which is far more relevant to the outcome of elections than raw census numbers. And if current demographic trends continue uptown then your proposal would ensure that Latinos would cease to be a majority of primary voters in the 10th district in just a few short years.

And lest you think that there were compensating gains for Latino voting power in the newly

drawn 7th, the numbers there are even weaker, with Latinos making us just 30% of regular primary voters.

And finally there is the issue of fairness. As many have already pointed out, the Commission's proposal packs in 5% more voters to almost every Manhattan District as compared to the city-wide average. This is exactly the same tactic employed by State Senate Republicans, who pack in more voters downstate to dilute our voting power--and we downstaters have rightly been highly critical of this. That fact is that Manhattan's population has *grown* relative to the rest of the city and we should see a corresponding increase in representation here. Instead we are losing one Council seat to the Bronx.

And this practice of over-packing directly affects the Washington Heights area, where the extra growth has made the contortions in the 7th and 10th districts even worse.

None of this has to happen. The commission has received multiple proposed maps that comply with every legal obligation, avoid the weaknesses of the current proposal, and leave the uptown districts largely intact. I urge you take these suggestions and jettison your preliminary draft plan.

Thank you