

My name is Michael Mallon. I am president of the Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club of Queens (LGDCQ.) Founded in 1994, LGDCQ is the only LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) independent Democratic club in the Borough of Queens. LGDCQ was founded to increase the visibility of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities in the political arenas of Queens, New York City, New York State and the nation.

I would like to address redistricting as it effects the LGBT community in Queens County. Queens--specifically, western Queens--has been home to a large and ethnically diverse LGBT population for several decades. While people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender may be found throughout the entire borough, the neighborhoods that comprise most of Western Queens--Astoria, Jackson Heights, Long Island City, and Sunnyside--have gained the reputation of being both "gay" and "gay-friendly" neighborhoods due to their large and visible LGBT communities.

Of these neighborhoods, Jackson Heights has the distinction of being home to the greatest concentration of LGBT individuals, many of whom identify as Latino and are recent immigrants. The prominence of the neighborhood's LGBT population is made manifest in many ways. A number of not-for-profit organizations that make their home in Jackson Heights are headquartered there to serve the neighborhood's LGBT community. Some notable examples include the Jackson Height Historic District's Queens Center for Gay Seniors, which provides services to LGBT older adults, and Make the Road NY's "PRYDE" youth group, which serves low income and recent immigrant LGBT youth. Jackson Heights is also home to the Queens Pride Parade and Multicultural Festival, the largest LGBT Pride celebration outside of Manhattan, which has taken place in the neighborhood's historic district on the first Sunday of June for 20 years. Furthermore, LGDCQ is headquartered and was founded in Jackson Heights because of the neighborhood's sizeable LGBT population.

LGDCQ strongly believes that the current Councilmanic district lines in western Queens--particularly the 25th Councilmanic district, which comprises most of Jackson Heights-- are in accordance with the New York City Charter, which mandates that "district lines shall keep intact neighborhoods and communities with established ties of common interest and association, whether historical, racial, economic, ethnic, religious or other (N.Y. CITY CHARTER, ch. 2-A, §52(1)(c) (2004) Therefore, we urge the Districting Commission to keep Jackson Heights within the 25th Councilmanic district. With regard to electoral politics, dividing Jackson Heights into two or more districts would greatly diminish if not silence the voice of the neighborhood's LGBT community, which, in 2009, contributed to the historic election of New York City Council Member Daniel Dromm, one of the first openly-gay elected officials in Queens and the first to represent the 25th Councilmanic district. We are of the opinion that the existing Councilmanic district lines allowed for these historic elections and allow for "LGBT representation" in the City's legislative body. It is our fervent hope that the redrawn lines allow for such adequate representation and keep this prominent western Queens LGBT community intact.