

Testimony before  
The New York City Districting Commission

August 16, 2012

by Mark D. Levine

I want to thank Chairman Romano and the members of the commission for this opportunity to testify today. My name is Mark Levine, and I am a Democratic District Leader from the 71st Assembly District, part A, representing 145th St. to 190th St., west of Broadway. I am here to offer input on the drawing of the Council district in my area--the 7th District, which is currently represented by Councilmember Robert Jackson.

The considerable demographic changes uptown over the past decade have created a challenge in redrawing the maps in this area. The new lines must make up for a significant loss of population in the 10th district, while uniting communities of interest and preserving minority voting power.

However I urge the commission not to carve up the 7th District to achieve these goals. Specifically I believe the newly drawn district should keep together communities with deep ties and common interests:

- \* Western Washington Heights, including Hudson Heights
- \* Western Inwood
- \* West Harlem/Hamilton Heights, and
- \* Morningside Heights.

These communities all abut the Hudson River, sharing a common waterfront along with the adjacent park and paths. These communities share common bus and subway lines. All have high rates of homeownership, thanks to a large number of coop buildings in each neighborhood. All are currently united in the 31st State Senate District. And each of these communities is home to one of Columbia University's campuses--with the new campus in Manhattanville, the medical campus on 168th St., and Baker's field on 218th St.

Uniting West Harlem/Hamilton Heights with Morningside Heights puts most of Community Board 9 in a single council district, allowing for common representation for a community with common interests.

For two decades the 7th Council District has connected Community Board 9 and the western part of Community Board 12, which stretches north from 155th St. up to 218th St. These areas are united in virtually every possible way: by a common school district, extensive transit links,

large numbers of non-profits serving both areas, common representation in both the Assembly and State Senate, and much more.

The 7th Council district is currently one of the most diverse in the city, with Latinos comprising a plurality of residents (though no single group is in the majority). Under the lines I am proposing Latinos would retain this plurality--and minority residents in total would remain at over 60%. Minority voting power would also be maintained in adjacent districts, with strong majorities remaining for Latinos in the 10th District and African-Americans in the 9th.

For all the reasons I believe that a 7th Council district which include Morningside Heights, Hamilton Heights, Western Washington Heights, and Western Inwood, would serve the best interests of local residents while meeting all legal requirements of the districting process.

Thank you.