

Dear members of NYC Council Districting Commission!

My name is Vladimir Epshteyn and I am the President of Russian American Voters Educational League (RAVEL). RAVEL as a non-partisan, non-for-profit organization with more than 25,000 Russian-speaking members who are registered voters. We provide objective information and education to Russian-Americans in order to encourage their civic participation and responsibility and to make them an indispensable part of the American electoral process.

Russian-American Community is an integral part of New York City. Our community flourished in our great city. Russian-speaking immigrants achieved tremendous success in business, culture, sports, arts, science, medicine and politics.

There are more than 350,000 Russian Americans in all five boroughs. Brooklyn is a home of the largest Russian-speaking community in the United States.

We have today NYS Senator David Storobin, Assemblyman Alec Brook-Krasny, Democratic District Leaders Mark Davidovich and Ari Kagan, Republican District Leader Boris Pincus. But until now there are no Russian-Americans in New York City Council and community is eager to change this situation.

When we looked at the proposed redistricting map, it became obvious that the lines of 48th Council District are redrawn in a special way to divide the Russian-speaking voters and not to give real opportunity to Russian Americans to win elections in this district.

The Commission cut out Manhattan Beach from 48th district and added to it a significant part of Midwood with predominantly Orthodox Jewish population.

While we value our good relationship with every Brooklyn community, including Orthodox Jews, we strongly believe that 48th District should keep in consolidation the unique, vibrant and active Russian-American community, so we would be able to elect Russian-speaking immigrant to New York City Council.

So, I am asking the Districting Commission to take several blocks in Midwood (in areas of Avenue J, K, L, M and others that were added to the current boundaries of 48th District) and to move them back to the 44th District (currently represented by Councilman David Greenfield).

In order to offset the population from these Midwood blocks, I am asking the Commission to include several buildings located along Seebreeze Avenue (with many Russian-speaking residents) into 48th District, excluding them from the current 47th District.

By implementing these actions you will ensure that Russian American community will have next year a fair chance to elect a first Russian-American to the New York City Council. It will be a tremendous milestone for our community and for the whole New York City that we love so much.

Thank you,
Vladimir Epshteyn.