



VA Redistricting <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

Eastern Region

1 message

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Mon, Jul 26, 2021 at 5:03 PM

Dear Commissioners,

I was unable to attend the hearing on July 22 for the Eastern Region, but would like to add my comments to those already submitted.

My husband and I have lived on the Eastern Shore (Accomack County) since 2005, and enjoy the rural lifestyle here. There is a strong sense of community and history on the Shore, and we feel proud to call this home.

We have actively participated in elections at the county, state, and federal level since moving here, and support the Commission's mission to make districts at every level more contiguous and representative.

I noticed that the map the Commission is using includes the "Eastern Region," with Accomack and Northampton counties on the Eastern Shore, along with Essex, King & Queen, Lancaster, Middlesex, Northumberland, Richmond, and Westmoreland counties on the Western shore of the Bay. Although these counties have a lot in common in terms of the issues we're dealing with (rural nature, demographics, tidal environment, coastal economy), there is one major obstacle in combining all of these into a future district (if in fact that is being contemplated). The obstacle is a 30-mile-wide body of water called the Chesapeake Bay -- anyone representing the Eastern Shore along with any of these western counties will spend a lot of time travelling, and less time dealing with the concerns of their constituents. Currently, our representatives travel across the 17-mile CBBT to reach us; to travel from the Shore to some of these Western counties would take the better part of a day.

Sen. Lynwood Lewis, our current State Senator, has related his experience in dealing with this issue, since at one time his district included Matthews County along with both Eastern Shore counties.

As you know, our current State Delegate, State Senate, and Congressional Districts combine the Eastern Shore with parts of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and beyond. Although this combines our two rural counties with more urban counties, we still have a lot of issues in common -- flooding and sea-level rise, tourism and water-based economies, military installations, poverty. Although specific "tweaking" may be required, please don't burden our representatives unnecessarily for the sake of uniformity. In this case, I would hope that "contiguous" and "compact" will win out over similar demographics.

Thank you for your hard work on this important issue.

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