

To: Redistricting Commission

From: Katherine Slaughter, Former Charlottesville Mayor, former chair, Thomas Jefferson Planning District

Re: Virginia Planning District Boundaries as Basis for Redistricting;
Opposition to Including Political Addresses in mapmaking

I am Kay Slaughter of Charlottesville, a former city councilor and Mayor and a retired environmental attorney who lobbied the General Assembly in the '90s and early 2000s.

I am here to urge commission members, despite your Republican or Democratic label, to reject political considerations in designing district boundaries. I request you utilize planning district boundaries AND exclude addresses of General Assembly members in the mapping criteria.

The criteria for voting districts should include compactness, contiguity, racial equity, and representation by communities of interest. I focus here on communities of interest.

Past gerrymandering has led to absurd results, for example our area is split into four separate Senate districts: two including western neighbors in the Shenandoah Valley, and one from Spotsylvania in the East, and Lynchburg to the south. Likewise, our area is split among five House districts, including two from the Valley and Richmond. Our Congressional District stretches from Fauquier to the North Carolina border. Across the state other glaring examples abound where the communities of interest are split up and not truly represented by a common legislator.

I urge you to correct this by adopting Planning Districts as your working template for legislative and congressional districts. PDs are special districts created by Virginia statute. The 23 planning districts provide the best basis for creating communities of interest.

The counties and cities in these PDs are contiguous, share a common geography, and have collaborated on common interests, such as housing, transportation, economic development, and waste management. Because the Planning Districts are creations of the state government, using their structure as a template for redistricting is most appropriate.

For example, Charlottesville and Albemarle County are part of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District 10, which also includes Nelson, Louisa, Fluvanna, and Greene. Neighboring Rappahannock-Rapidan District 9 encompasses Madison, Orange, Culpeper, Rappahannock, and Fauquier.

Congressional districts could be fashioned by combining some portions of adjacent planning districts. To reach the ideal size for congressional districts, some PDs would need to be combined in whole or in part with adjacent PDs

I hope you will adopt this model and that you will exclude political addresses in your redistricting mapping criteria. I am happy to answer any questions.

Testimony Before Redistricting Commission

Sarah Dewees

Thank you for allowing me to speak with you this afternoon. My name is Sarah Dewees and I live in Fredericksburg, Virginia. I vote in the 28th House of Delegates district. I am also employed at the University of Mary Washington, where I work at the Center for Community Engagement. As part of my job at the Center, I work with University of Mary Washington students to help them register to vote and to learn more about civic engagement. With permission, I am sharing this testimony on behalf myself and of some of the UMW students I work with. So I am presenting this testimony today with University of Mary Washington, and also Fredericksburg, Virginia as my two communities of interest.

As part of a nonpartisan voter registration program called UMW Votes, my students and I have worked to educate other UMW students about how to register to vote, how to vote in Virginia, and when elections are being held. Some UMW students choose to register to vote in Fredericksburg, Virginia, at their campus address, rather than their home address. They often do this because they are in Fredericksburg during fall elections, and find it easier to vote at their campus address. They also live at their campus address nine months out of the year.

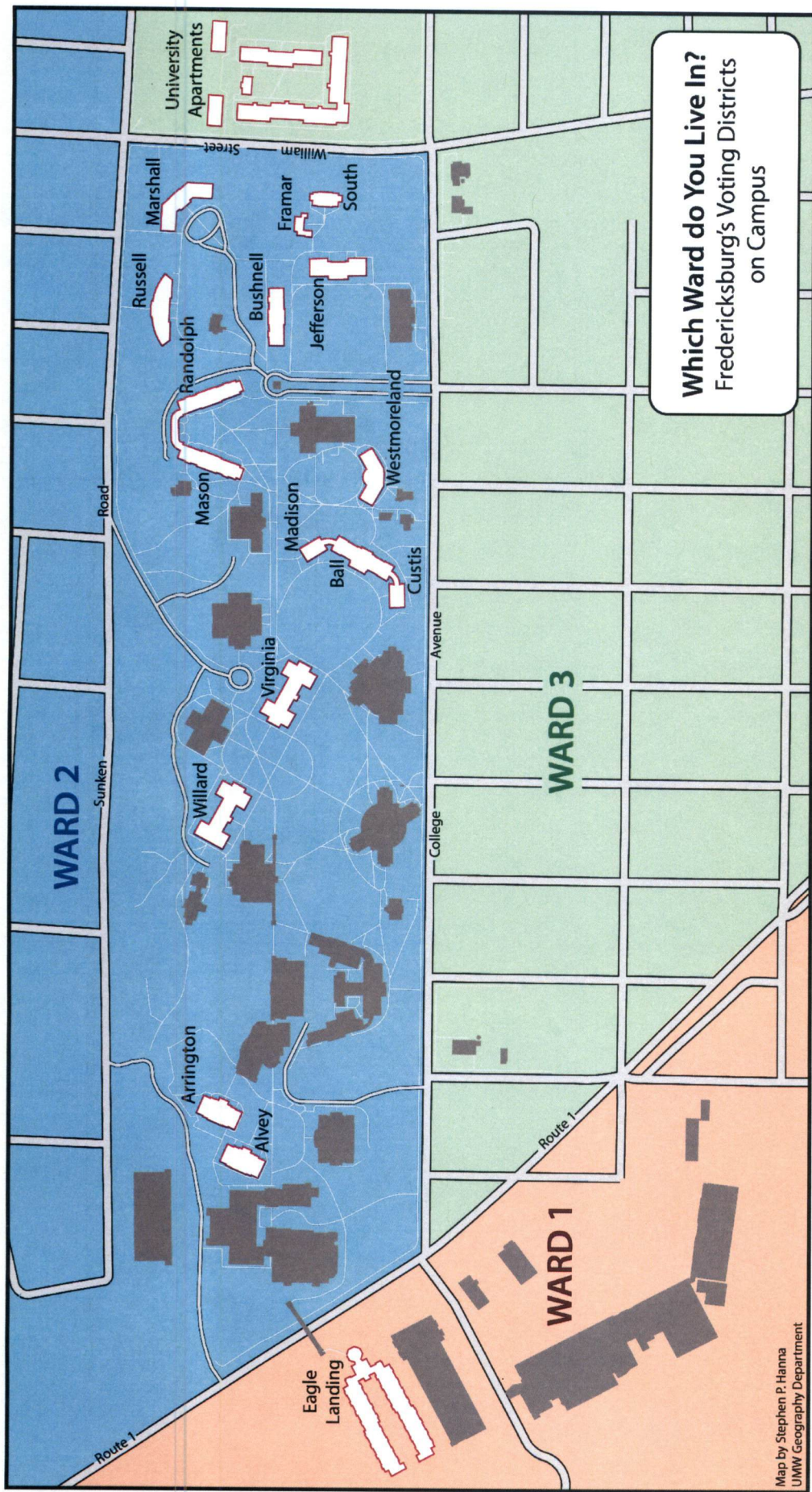
We try to educate UMW students regarding which candidates and issues are on the ballot. Unfortunately, the residence halls on the UMW campus are divided into two different State Delegate districts, District 28 and District 88. When I started in this job three years ago, I found out how complicated it can be to make sure that we give the right information regarding which candidates would be found on students' ballots, depending on where they lived.

The University of Mary Washington campus has a collection of residence halls, as can be seen in this map I am holding up. A new residence hall was built across Route 1 from the main UMW campus about 10 years ago. This new residence hall, and all the students who are registered to vote at that address, vote in a different House of Delegates district from all the other students who live in UMW residence halls on the rest of the UMW campus.

Now, UMW is a small college – around 4,400 students. We are not talking about a huge campus like Virginia Commonwealth University or James Madison University. So it was a big surprise to me to find that the UMW campus was split into two districts for the House of Delegates. So, not only is Fredericksburg split between two districts, but the UMW community is split too. I request that you not divide up our community of the University of Mary Washington or the residence halls on our campus. Students are new voters and we should reduce obstacles that stand in their way to their involvement in our democracy.

Thank you for all your work on this commission, and for taking time to hear my comments today.

Sarah Dewees
809 Marye Street
Fredericksburg VA 22401



Which Ward do You Live In?
 Frederick's Voting Districts
 on Campus

My name is Sabina Weitzman, and I'm from the City of Fredericksburg where I've lived and worked for nearly 30 years.

In 2016, I started volunteering with OneVA2021, talking to voters from across the political spectrum about ending partisan gerrymandering. I'm proud of the tiny role I played to create the commission on which you serve. It's an honor to address you and provide input.

I'm here to ask that you not divide up Fredericksburg. Many have spoken to what makes us a community of interest, so I'll offer just one additional data point that I find instructive: our local government's elected officials don't run or serve as members of a political party. Like us OneVirginia volunteers, they set aside the Rs and Ds to do the people's business. Refreshing, quaint even, and as far as I know, unique in our Commonwealth.

While we think of ourselves as a community, the current *House of Delegates* map divides Fredericksburg in half, befuddling anyone who wants to be informed and involved, and creating enough confusion to question the results of a 2017 race.

The current *Senate* map groups us with rural voters and pieces of other small cities where our shared interests would be difficult to define. Ditto with the US congressional map.

Fredericksburg is a small municipality, not big enough to be a voting district on our own. Assuming you can avoid dividing us, please look at the state's planning district maps. These show how economic development and infrastructure priorities link us to adjacent counties, and how our community of interest extends regionally in specific ways.

Like you, I understand that voting is fundamental to our democracy, and every time I see turnout numbers I'm astounded – how is it that so few people exercise their right to vote? Friends, my experience talking to voters has one irrefutable takeaway: very few people know *who* represents them in Richmond or Washington. I'm glad there are apps like "Who's My Legislator", but how much better it would be if voting districts made sense!

See, not knowing quickly becomes not caring, and toxic for the engagement that "We the People" governance requires. Of course, the lines need to go somewhere, and I'm well aware you need to consider many factors to draw maps that a super majority of you agree are fair. But lines that snake through and chop up communities have consequences, and these consequences are not good.

Please make sure each district you create reflects the sense of place / the sense of community that citizens inside the boundaries can recognize. Start with Fredericksburg, and build on what makes our City so special that we line up to tell you about it.

Thank you for serving the people of Virginia!

VA Redistricting Commission – Comments 8/3/2021

Nancy Collins, 1222 Sophia St, Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Resident of City of Fredericksburg – Small historic city with a population @ 30,000 people

As Sabina noted earlier, we are not large enough to fill an entire district in any of the legislative categories ,,, but I urge you to **KEEP the City of FREDERICKSBURG together INSIDE each of the 3 districts you will be designing.**

Currently

House of Delegates – we are divided into HD 28 and HD 88 with boundary line running thru the Univ of Mary Washington (put there to confuse college students about where to vote? And creates a split local voting precinct, which caused a lot of unnecessary confusion in a tight HOD race in 2017).

State Senate – SD 17 includes entire city but stretches thru A LOT of rural countryside to the eastern edge of Charlottesville and we have a Senator that for most of us, does not represent our values

US Congress – CD 1 – Good Luck 😊

Fredericksburg shares the same school system, main post office, downtown and a local newspaper... and *Zip Code 22401.*

We have been terribly gerrymandered for years... Please use your new map designs to allow our votes to be counted ... to express *our* values and priorities as we select leaders for our future.

Thank you.