

VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC INPUT REPORT – SOUTHWEST REGION

October 7, 2021

TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMENTS: 14

DATE: 10/7/2021 12:48:08 PM

Name: William Shepley
Stakeholder Type: Organization staff
Organization: Grayson County
Email: wshepley@graysoncountyva.org
Locality: Grayson County
Region: **Southwest**
Type of comment: Comment on the community in which I live
Map: N/A
Topic(s) of interest: Communities of interest
Community of interest name: Grayson County/ Mount Rogers
Community of interest description: Mount Rogers PDC Area

COMMENTS:

Dear Commission Members,
During my time as county administrator for Grayson County, I have come to understand and appreciate how close knit the localities in the Mount Rogers PDC are. We share so many interests and have worked collaboratively on many initiatives including economic development, broadband deployment and educational opportunities. Many of my counterparts in other planning districts of Southwest Virginia feel the same as I do and respectfully request that as you determine the final make up of house districts, you consider how well PDC localities work together to move the region forward and are natural friends and allies with like minded interests. For the Mount Rogers PDC in particular, breaking up these areas into more than 2 house districts could undermine decades worth of work and progress.
Respectfully,
William "Bill" Shepley
Grayson County Administrator

DATE: 10/7/2021 12:34:32 PM

Name: Kenneth Belton
Stakeholder Type: Elected official
Organization: Grayson County Board of Supervisors
Email: kbelton@graysoncountyva.gov
Locality: Grayson County
Region: **Southwest**
Type of comment: Comment on the community in which I live
Map: N/A
Topic(s) of interest: Communities of interest
Community of interest name: Mount Rogers Area
Community of interest description: Mount Rogers Planning District Commission

COMMENTS:

Dear Commissioners,
I write today to ask you to consider the Mount Rogers PDC as a specific community of interest in Southwest Virginia. The Mount Rogers localities are very close knit and share many interests in common including economic, community health and educational interests.
I would respectfully ask that you consider dividing the Mount Rogers PDC into two House districts. This will help keep our communities of interest together and allow our local governments to work more effectively with our members of the House of Delegates. This would be a win-win for our region and for your mission of keeping communities of interest together.

VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC INPUT REPORT – SOUTHWEST REGION

October 7, 2021

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Belton, Chairman

Grayson County Board of Supervisors

DATE: 10/5/2021 9:51:34 PM

Name: Aung Thet Htwe

Stakeholder Type: Private individual

Email: aungth.htwe13@gmail.com

Locality: Wise

Region: **Southwest**

Type of comment: General comment about the conduct of the Commission

COMMENTS:

nnnnnnn

DATE: 10/5/2021 4:21:16 PM

Name: R. Tyrone Foster

Stakeholder Type: Elected official

Organization: Bristol Virginia Public Schools

Email: tfoster@bvps.org

Locality: Bristol

Region: **Southwest**

Type of comment: Comment on the community in which I live

Map: N/A

Topic(s) of interest: Communities of interest

Community of interest name: Southwest Virginia Interstate 81 Corridor

Community of interest description: Bristol, Washington County, Smyth County

COMMENTS:

I am appreciative of the opportunity to share my views about the Redistricting Commission’s work to redraw district lines in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Washington County and the City of Bristol have long been served in the same district along with Smyth County and other localities along Interstate 81. Russell County does not always experience the same concerns that we have in our section of Southwest Virginia. When you consider the economy, infrastructure, transportation and geographic needs of our community, Russell County shares more in common with coalfield localities like Tazewell and Buchanan. Those counties have longstanding partnerships already developed through their Health District, Planning District, and Community College service area.

As you are drawing lines that will impact the way our rural communities are represented in Richmond, please consider the preexisting partnerships that are already established to ensure our community interests are better represented and protected.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on this important issue that will impact our region for years to come. The work you are doing is important and I am confident the input of stakeholders will be given careful consideration.

Sincerely,

R. Tyrone Foster

School Board Chairman

Bristol Virginia Public Schools

DATE: 10/5/2021 4:17:18 PM

VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC INPUT REPORT – SOUTHWEST REGION

October 7, 2021

Name: Keith Perrigan
Stakeholder Type: Organization staff
Organization: Bristol Virginia Public Schools
Email: kperrigan@bvps.org
Locality: Bristol
Region: **Southwest**
Type of comment: Comment on the community in which I live
Map: N/A
Topic(s) of interest: Communities of interest
Community of interest name: Interstate 81 Southwest Corridor
Community of interest description: Bristol, Washington County, Smyth County

COMMENTS:

I am writing to share my opinion about the redistricting process that is underway in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is my understanding that there is a possibility of combining Russell County with Washington County and the City of Bristol. Even though Russell County adjoins Washington County, Russell County does not share many natural relationships with Washington County and especially not with Bristol. Whether the consideration is for Community College opportunities, Health District guidance, economic relationships related to transportation, or regional educational partnerships, Russell County is a much more natural fit with Tazewell County, Buchanan County, etc. The current recommendation honors this ideal by aligning District 100 in a way that keeps LENOWISCO and Mountain Empire Community College counties together.

Some examples of the benefits of excluding Russell County from a District with Bristol and Washington County include:

- Throughout the pandemic the Mount Rogers Health District has provided guidance to their school divisions that has been different than the guidance from other Health District guidance based on community metrics and practices.
- Virginia Highlands Community College serves as an important partner with our school divisions and offers workforce development opportunities based on our communities' needs.
- The economy on the 1-81 corridor is very different than the economy that is accessed by Highway 19.
- School divisions on the 1-81 corridor have regional partnerships for Special Education, transportation, and mental health related services because of the natural collaborations that are afforded due to proximity, accessibility, and even similar weather patterns.

In summary, please consider the partnerships, relationships, and natural collaborations that students, schools, and industry currently enjoy as you finalize the redistricting process. This will ensure that the best interest of all communities are protected as legislative decisions are made.

Sincerely,
Keith Perrigan, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Bristol Virginia Public Schools

DATE: 10/3/2021 4:53:02 PM

Name: Carol J. Burger
Stakeholder Type: Private individual
Email: cjburger@vt.edu
Locality: Blacksburg, VA
Region: **Southwest**
Type of comment: General comment about the conduct of the Commission
Topic(s) of interest: Committee makeup
Community of interest name: Blacksburg
Community of interest description: TOWN

VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC INPUT REPORT – SOUTHWEST REGION

October 7, 2021

COMMENTS:

Why would anyone include legislators on this redistricting committee is beyond my understanding. My town has been cut up into 3 pieces for as long as I've lived here. I do not feel as if I have any representation in Richmond or D.C. We need a truly NON-PARTISAN committee to have any equity in the voting districts. All citizens...NO legislators!!!!

DATE: 10/2/2021 5:07:22 PM

Name: Dr. Richard D. Shingles
Stakeholder Type: Organization volunteer
Organization: Sierra Club New River Valey Group of the Virginia Chapter
Email: shingles@vt.edu
Locality: Newport Virginia
Region: **Southwest**
Tyle of comment: Comment on the community in which I live
Topic(s) of interest: Voting rights and political participation, Communities of interest
Community of interest name: Roanoke-Blacksburg
Community of interest description: central city and suburb

COMMENTS:

Objection to draft redrawing of Senate District 21
The proposed redrawing of Senate District 21 is fundamentally flawed. Severing the Town of Blacksburg from Roanoke City and placing them separate districts may appear sensible because they are in two separate valleys, but the logic is faulty. Geography is not necessarily a good indicator of community.
The two municipalities connected by I-81 are one community (in the sense of central city and suburb). People commute daily in both directions between home and work. Many of them are healthcare workers employed by Lewis Gale and Carilion, which have divided their facilities in both locations. Higher education is linked through the regional association and direct relationships among faculty and students. Folks in Blacksburg and Christiansburg rely on the city for shopping, the arts, entertainment and good restaurants Soon we will be linked again by rail (Amtrak). The NRV's small Black community's best chance for representation lies in remaining in the same election district as the much larger Roanoke African-American community.
Richard Shingles
Sierra Club NRV Group Chair

DATE RECEIVED: Friday, August 13, 2021 9:09:03 PM GMT-04:00
FROM: Julie Smith <jsmith@dls.virginia.gov>
NAME: Eric Young
EMAIL: Joericanddarrah@verizon.net
REGION: **Southwest**
LOCALITY: Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, Tazewell
SUBJECT: House of Delegate's Electoral Districts

COMMENT:

I respectfully ask that the Commission consider including the entirety of all four Cumberland Plateau counties, Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell, in single House District. The counties share a common, unique culture and common community. The commuting patterns of all four counties are primarily among each of these counties. Geography isolates these four counties on the Cumberland Plateau. Their residents share employers, churches, and schools. They are all served by a single community College. They compose all four counties of the Cumberland Plateau planning district. They are all rural. They have a similar racial,

VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC INPUT REPORT – SOUTHWEST REGION

October 7, 2021

educational, religious, and age demographic profile. They also have economies built on timber, beef grazing, coal, and manufacturing. Lastly, I believe the new census numbers suggest the populations of the four counties combined could compose a single House district. Based on all of these factors, I believe they should be contained in a single district. Thank you for your consideration.

DATE RECEIVED: Friday, August 13, 2021 11:25:05 AM GMT-04:00
FROM: Julie Smith <jsmith@dls.virginia.gov>
NAME: Jim Baldwin
EMAIL: jimbaldwin@bvu.net
REGION: Southwest
LOCALITY: Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, Tazewell
SUBJECT: coalfields community of interest

COMMENT:

Dear Commissioners – Please accept these comments in the spirit of making sure that the four counties of the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission (Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell and Tazewell) are recognized as communities of interest in that they share many things in common and have worked together for decades in many different ways to address their many challenges. The same could be said for our neighboring PDC, Lenowisco, which is home to 3 coal-producing counties. Of the 19 counties in Southwest Virginia, the coalfield counties have a history of working together on many different initiatives. A good example is the recent creation of the Cumberland Industrial Facilities Authority (CIFA) by Buchanan, Russell and Tazewell Counties (Dickenson County is considering joining as well). The Authority members have entered a Revenue Sharing Agreement in support of perhaps the largest single economic project in the Cumberland Plateau - Pure Salmon. This aquaculture project, known locally as Project Jonah, will create 200 new good paying jobs with a capital investment of \$228 million. The three member counties each committed \$1 million to the project and will share in the revenues. This is just one example of many regional efforts that illustrate the cohesiveness of the 4 Cumberland Plateau counties. Others include: (1) Cumberland Plateau Regional Industrial Park; (2) Cumberland Plateau Regional Opportunity Program (CProp); (3) Cumberland Plateau/Lenowisco Revolving Loan Fund; (4) Cumberland Plateau Regional Broadband Project; (5) Cumberland Plateau Regional Outdoor Recreation Initiative; and (6) Cumberland Plateau Regional Water and Sewer Roundtable. After 53 years of working together on a regional basis to solve local problems, we hope the Commission will keep these counties whole in the redistricting process as a number of new initiatives, including universal broadband coverage, are currently underway. Thank you. James A. Baldwin, Executive Director

DATE RECEIVED: Thursday, August 12, 2021 1:50:07 PM GMT-04:00
FROM: Julie Smith <jsmith@dls.virginia.gov>
NAME: Tommy Wright
EMAIL: Tommy.Wright@SW.edu
REGION: Southwest
LOCALITY: Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, Tazewell
SUBJECT: Support for Community of Interest

COMMENT:

As President of Southwest Virginia Community College, I would like to reinforce the importance of the Redistricting Commission maintaining the “community of interest” that we have here in Southwest Virginia. My college’s service region encompasses Buchanan, Dickenson, Russell, and Tazewell Counties. Since being named SWCC’s president, I have been struck by how

VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC INPUT REPORT – SOUTHWEST REGION

October 7, 2021

much each one of these counties supports our college and our students. There are solid cultural and social relationships here. In fact, I like to set up opportunities so that we at SWCC give back to these communities which give us so much, and organize events where we gather volunteers to help organizations with clean-ups, renovations, repairs and overall enhancements. At SWCC, we also support any and all regional efforts and partnerships to help this region develop and diversify the economy. For these reasons, I encourage the members of the Redistricting Commission to consider our strong community of interest here in Southwest Virginia so that we can maintain our voice and identity as you recommend the new districts.

DATE RECEIVED: Friday, August 13, 2021 1:48:53 PM GMT-04:00
FROM: scottywampler@bvu.net
REGION: Southwest
LOCALITY: Lebanon

COMMENT:

Yes, I did attempt to re-submit. Thanks for taking care of this for me.

Scotty Wampler, Economic Recovery Coordinator

Cumberland Plateau PDC

P.O Box 548

224 Clydesway Drive

Lebanon, VA 24266

276-889-1778

www.cppdc.org

From: jsmith@dls.virginia.gov <jsmith@dls.virginia.gov> On Behalf Of VA Redistricting

Sent: Friday, August 13, 2021 1:29 PM

To: scottywampler@bvu.net

Subject: Re: redistricting comments

Hello again,

We just received another blank form, and I suspect it was yours. I do apologize for this oddity. I've posted the remarks you attached earlier with the others online. And you can certainly email them directly to the commissioners, too, if you like.

We appreciate your interest.

Virginia Redistricting Support Staff

Division of Legislative Services

On Fri, Aug 13, 2021 at 1:20 PM <scottywampler@bvu.net> wrote:

Will do. Thanks a bunch!

Scotty Wampler, Economic Recovery Coordinator

Cumberland Plateau PDC

P.O Box 548

224 Clydesway Drive

Lebanon, VA 24266

276-889-1778

www.cppdc.org

FROM: jsmith@dls.virginia.gov <jsmith@dls.virginia.gov> On Behalf Of VA Redistricting
REGION: Southwest
LOCALITY: Lebanon

COMMENT:

Mr. Wampler,

VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC INPUT REPORT – SOUTHWEST REGION

October 7, 2021

We occasionally get a form submitted that is blank, and those do not get posted. I wonder if that may have happened in your case. If you don't mind, try submitting a comment again. In any case, your email will be posted online now with the others.

Thank you.

Virginia Redistricting Support Staff

Division of Legislative Services

On Fri, Aug 13, 2021 at 1:07 PM <scottywampler@bvu.net> wrote:

Good afternoon.

Upon submitting my comments to the Virginia Redistricting Commission webform, I noticed the comments did not post to the website (I did verify the comments by email, as requested). I'm attaching my comments here to make sure they're included for the record.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Scotty Wampler, Economic Recovery Coordinator

Cumberland Plateau PDC

P.O Box 548

224 Clydesway Drive

Lebanon, VA 24266

276-889-1778

www.cppdc.org

DATE RECEIVED: Friday, August 13, 2021 5:32:18 PM GMT-04:00
FROM: Julie Smith <jsmith@dls.virginia.gov>
NAME: Ernie McFaddin
EMAIL: ernie@russellcountyida.org
REGION: Southwest
LOCALITY: Russell County, Russell, Tazewell, Buchanan, Dickenson
SUBJECT: Southwest Virginia redistricting

COMMENT:

As the economic developer for Russell county I have developed relationships with our neighboring counties through regional projects that we have worked on. In looking at the current makeup of Cumberland Plateau Planning District and the Cumberland Industrial Facilities Authority I believe the basic framework for this district is well defined. The counties of Russell, Tazewell, Buchanan and Dickenson have a number of similarities that have allowed us to work well together. Russell County has revenue share agreements with Tazewell and Buchanan county on two economic development projects and have a good overall working relationship. Another area that ties these four counties together is the 19/460 corridor that will connect to the coalfield expressway. In my opinion these four counties (Russell, Tazewell, Buchanan and Dickenson) should be together in one district to allow better continuity with our representatives. Thank you for the opportunity to share our opinion on this matter.

DATE RECEIVED: Friday, July 9, 2021 1:58:27 PM GMT-04:00
FROM: Sharon Kilpatrick <rappedit@earthlink.net>
REGION: Southwest
LOCALITY: Washington

COMMENT:

I live in Rappahannock County, Virginia. I do not expect to ever feel truly represented because the folks around me are far more conservative than I am. However, I do not feel Rappahannock County should be in either the Congressional District or State Senate District we are currently in.

VIRGINIA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

PUBLIC INPUT REPORT – SOUTHWEST REGION

October 7, 2021

We are the only county in our State Senate District on the East side of the Blue Ridge mountains. We should be in a district that is east of the mountains. In te 5th Congressional seat, we are in the extreme North of a district that mostly slumps on the North Carolina border. We Have been in the 7th and 10th before, and either would make more sense than this.

Sharon Kilpatrick

Washington, Virginia 22747