



CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Testimony to the Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and
Reapportionment (LATFOR)
Re: Demographic Makeup of Queens
and the Need for an Independent Redistricting Commission
September 7, 2011

Good morning members of LATFOR. My name is Rachael Fauss and I am the Policy and Research Manager of Citizens Union of the City of New York, an independent, non-partisan, civic organization of New Yorkers who promote good government and advance political reform in our city and state. Having previously testified to you in Albany, I would like to present some research that Citizens Union has prepared regarding the demographic makeup of Queens. Citizens Union, however, believes that our demographic analysis further supports our position that an independent commission should be established this fall to draw impartial district lines, and we have asked the legislature to return in a special session to enact this important reform.

In examining 2000 and 2010 Census data, Citizens Union believes that the current system of redistricting prioritizes incumbent re-election and maximizes the seats the party in power holds at the expense of representation of growing minority groups. To the extent that partisan gerrymandering benefits those currently in power (historically white males) the redistricting process has been slow to reflect the changing demographics of the state. The tables below summarize our findings in Queens.

QUEENS DEMOGRAPHIC MAKEUP¹				
	2010 Census Population	Percentage of Population, 2010	2000 Census Population	Percentage of Population, 2000
White	886,053	39.7%	982,725	44.1%
African American	426,683	19.1%	446,189	20.0%
Hispanic or Latino	613,750	27.5%	556,605	25.0%
Asian	511,787	22.9%	391,500	17.6%
Total	2,230,772	n/a	2,229,379	n/a

QUEENS REPRESENTATIVES		
	State Legislators	Percentage of Delegation
White	15	60%
African American	7	28%
Hispanic or Latino	2	8%
Asian	1	4%
Total	25	n/a

We are concerned by the disparity between the Queens population of Asian Americans and Latinos and the proportion of state legislators who are Asian or Latino. We recognize that there are a number of factors that contribute to the election of candidates to office – the ability to raise campaign funds and groups’ participation in the political process, for example – but believe that a major contributor to the lack of equitable representation in Albany is the current redistricting process. The lack of fair and objective criteria in the drawing of district

¹ It should be noted that Hispanic and Latino as presented is of any race, as categorized by the U.S. Census.

lines has allowed the protection of incumbent legislators, while not requiring the protection of communities of interest.

In Queens, 22.9 percent of the population is Asian (up from 17.6 percent in 2000) yet only one seat of 18, or 5.6 percent, representing the Queens Assembly delegation in the state legislature is held by an Asian, Grace Meng of Assembly District 22 in Flushing. This disparity exists despite the fact that 10 Assembly Districts clustered together have an Asian population of 20 percent or larger, suggesting that if the lines were drawn differently Asian representation may be increased. Citizens Union's detailed analysis of legislative districts in New York City and Asian American populations that was released earlier this year is attached with my testimony.

In the State Senate, there are no Asian Senators from Queens despite Asian Americans being 22.9 percent of the population. This disparity exists despite the fact that 3 senate districts clustered together have an Asian population of 22 percent or larger, with two districts 37 percent or larger, suggesting that if the lines were drawn differently Asian representation may be increased.

Likewise, the Latino or Hispanic population in Queens is 27.5 percent (up from 25 percent in 2000) yet only one seat of 18, or 5.6 percent, representing the Queens assembly delegation in the state legislature is held by a Latino, Francisco Moya of Assembly District 39 in Jackson Heights. One state senator (Jose Peralta, representing Senate District 13) out of seven state senators serving Queens, or 14.3 percent, is Latino despite a population of 27.5 percent.

We recognize that there are many competing interests in establishing fair districts for communities. This is why Citizens Union supports the enactment of fair and sensible redistricting criteria that would ensure more equal sized districts, the protection of communities of interest, and the drawing of districts that would not discourage competition. Criteria such as these, as well as the formation of an independent redistricting commission, if enacted this fall in a special session would go a long way to ensuring that the state legislature better reflects the diverse people it serves.

Thank you for the opportunity to present Citizens Union's testimony today. I am available for any questions you might have.