



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

Senator Rivera Testifies at Albany Redistricting Hearing, Continues to Push for an Independent Redistricting Process

GUSTAVO RIVERA February 2, 2012

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Albany, NY – State Senator Gustavo Rivera (D,WF-Bronx) testified today, Monday, January 30, 2012 in front of the Legislative Reapportionment Taskforce (LATFOR) in a redistricting hearing in Albany. Senator Rivera is unable to attend the Bronx Redistricting hearing, which is occurring Tuesday at 3:00pm at the Bronx Museum of the Arts (1040 Grand Concourse) and is open for members of the community to express their opinion. Below is Senator Rivera's testimony:

"I am State Senator Gustavo Rivera and I represent the 33rd Senate District contained in the Northwest Bronx. The district includes the neighborhoods of Fordham, Kingsbridge, University Heights, Riverdale, Van Cortlandt Park, Bedford Park and East Tremont. Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the Bronx Redistricting Hearing tomorrow, Tuesday, January 31st at the Bronx Museum of the Arts.

I am here to testify about the continued need for an independent redistricting process. I am disappointed that there was not an independent redistricting commission established last year, especially given that so many of my colleagues are on the record supporting independent redistricting. I continue to believe that voters should pick their representatives, not the other way around. In order to have fair district lines, without partisan

gerrymandering, we need to take legislators out of the process.

Over the last week, we have seen that a bad process results in a bad product. Today's hearing is suppose to garner reactions to a proposal that shows a willingness to disenfranchise voters, especially Black and Latino voters, throughout New York to protect the interests of certain individuals or one conference over another.

There are two issues that stuck out to me as unconstitutional and unfair after having looked at the Republican redistricting proposal for the State Senate. The first is the proposed increase from 62 to 63 State Senate districts, which not only defies the New York State Constitution, but also defies all logic, as it comes as we are losing two Congressional districts and as New York's population has not grown as much as other states. The second is the issue of "packing," or seeing to it that minority communities are packed into a few districts through gerrymandering instead of being able to figure significantly in the election of representatives in a much larger number of districts. I believe this proposal does just that and moreover could lead to a potential violation of the Voting Rights Act.

While it may be too late for an independent commission to draw districts, it is not too late to demand an independent process this year. That is why I stand united with Governor Cuomo in calling for an independent process and am ready to uphold a veto from the Governor. I will continue to push to make independent redistricting a reality in New York."