



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

Column: Make Your Voice Heard in New York's Redistricting Process

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You can help make history. New York's redistricting process has started and for the first time, you – and not the government – will help determine new district lines for

the State Senate, Assembly and Congress. You have the opportunity to make your voice heard in this once-in-a-decade process to provide fair and equitable representation for you and your community.

Once every 10 years, New York State is required to draw new district lines that reflect population and demographic changes reported in the latest Census. A 2014 constitutional amendment overwhelmingly approved by New York voters gave a new Independent Redistricting Commission the responsibility for drawing district lines. This was done to make the process more open and transparent, and to ensure that no region, special interest, or party has an unfair advantage.

The Independent Redistricting Commission relies on your input to make its recommendation. The Commission is holding several virtual hearings this summer to hear from individuals, groups and communities. In the 54th District I represent, those hearings are scheduled for August 9 at 2:00 p.m. for the Southern Tier and Central New York regions, and August 12 at 2:00 p.m. for the Finger Lakes and Western New York regions.

Visit www.nyirc.gov to either sign up to attend a meeting and testify, or to submit written testimony through the commission's website.

Why should you participate? Because you want you, your family and your community to be fairly represented in government. Because you care about equitable funding for your local schools, law enforcement, hospitals, roads and bridges, and vital community services. Because you want to ensure that the needs of your rural community are addressed, and not just those of major cities.

This is not about *who* represents you, but about *how* you are represented when it comes to the allocation of resources, and the development of legislation and policy that impacts you, your family and your community. It's about the next decade of decision-making in New York State – and you should have a say in that.

I encourage all of you to participate and take an active role in the redrawing of New York's district lines. This historic change puts the power of redistricting where it belongs – in the hands of the people. But it will only work if you get involved and share the issues and priorities that matter most to you. Please make your voice heard.