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It is an honor as well as a civic obligation for me to appear before you today. I am here because the task before is one that will set the course of this state and by extension this nation for the next decade. You as do I recognize the weight of the decisions that will be made. These decisions will impact each of us but in addition the future of our children, grandchildren and generations yet unborn.

While you are familiar and well versed in the mechanisms to be considered in re-districting:

- Compactness
- Contiguity
- Compactness
- Nesting
- Partisanship/competition
- Communities of interest

I will focus on two of them – Partisanship/Competition and Communities-Of-Interest

With the elections of 2008 and 2010, one thing stands out - - it is now time for elections to provide an opportunity for leaders who can think through the difficult problems that now confront us. President Obama was elected because he had a vision for the future. The recent election that changed the leadership in the house reflected in my opinion that people are looking for results for issues that are impacting them. When taken together, they indicate that good government calls for

people with strong values on either side but progress is made when there are elected officials that are less defined by party labels but are reflective of the middle ground that engenders debate and collaboration.

Yes, the redistricting process should encourage a competition of ideas. The objective is the have “competitive and swing districts” that allow for a healthy debate of issues. The past elections – 2008 and 2010- indicate that communicating effectively can cause dramatic changes. It is my hope that the elections in New York State because of your work will accomplish the same kind of exchange that leads to solid long term success of New York. We live in a competitive country and a competitive world. I live in downstate New York but it is as important to me that the state has a vision for Rochester and Buffalo and Burke New York where windmills are beginning to flourish. But even as progress is made, we must insist on a fair playing field where elected officials only represent the BEST interest of those they serve.

The other area of focus is community of interest. This is a difficult concept in America because of the remaining legacy of segregation. However, there is hope when recent reports indicate that America is less segregated now because as incomes have gone up, minorities are moving to the suburbs. On the other hand, inner cities are becoming more racially diverse as gas prices and access to services has more people moving back to the central city. Just look at Harlem and the transformation that has occurred.

The concept of community of interest must account for the current trends but also attempt to be predictive of the future. The diversity of the quality of education should be a criterion as well as diversity of housing stock. Let us not make the mistake of concentrating all of the people in a socio-economic class in single districts. Let there be diversity with careful attention being paid to one-man/woman-one vote and without diluting political strength of an race, class or social structure in order to disadvantage “a less informed” minority.

The guiding principle for communities of interest should be accountability. Encourage community involvement and participation. Build on the foundation of existing lines but be creative so that the results are improved. Go beyond stereotypes and move to empowerment. I am old enough to remember when the lines in New York State effectively split communities to minimize the power in minority communities. We cannot and shall not go back to that dark era. However, should move forward in a manner that builds on the concept of empowerment that assures equal access to resources. Communities of interest in a euphemism for empowerment - - a way for each community to have its needs met and have the same ACCESS to resources from financial, to infrastructure, to business development and beyond.

In closing, I support the legislative process for redistricting. I know my local elected officials and I am sure that will serve me and my communities well. Redistricting is not about drawing line although designing districts is the end results. Redistricting is building the foundation for the future. Neither failure nor self-serving are options. Our mission is bolder and broader.