

Public Submission to the West Virginia Legislature Joint Committee on Redistricting

Date Document Received: October 5, 2021

Description: 4 Pages

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[REDACTED]

From: Howard Gorrell [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, October 5, 2021 3:46 PM
To: Joint Redistricting
Subject: Final Plea from Gorrell
Attachments: Final Plea from Gorrell.pdf

Could you kindly put the attachment in the record?

Thanks.

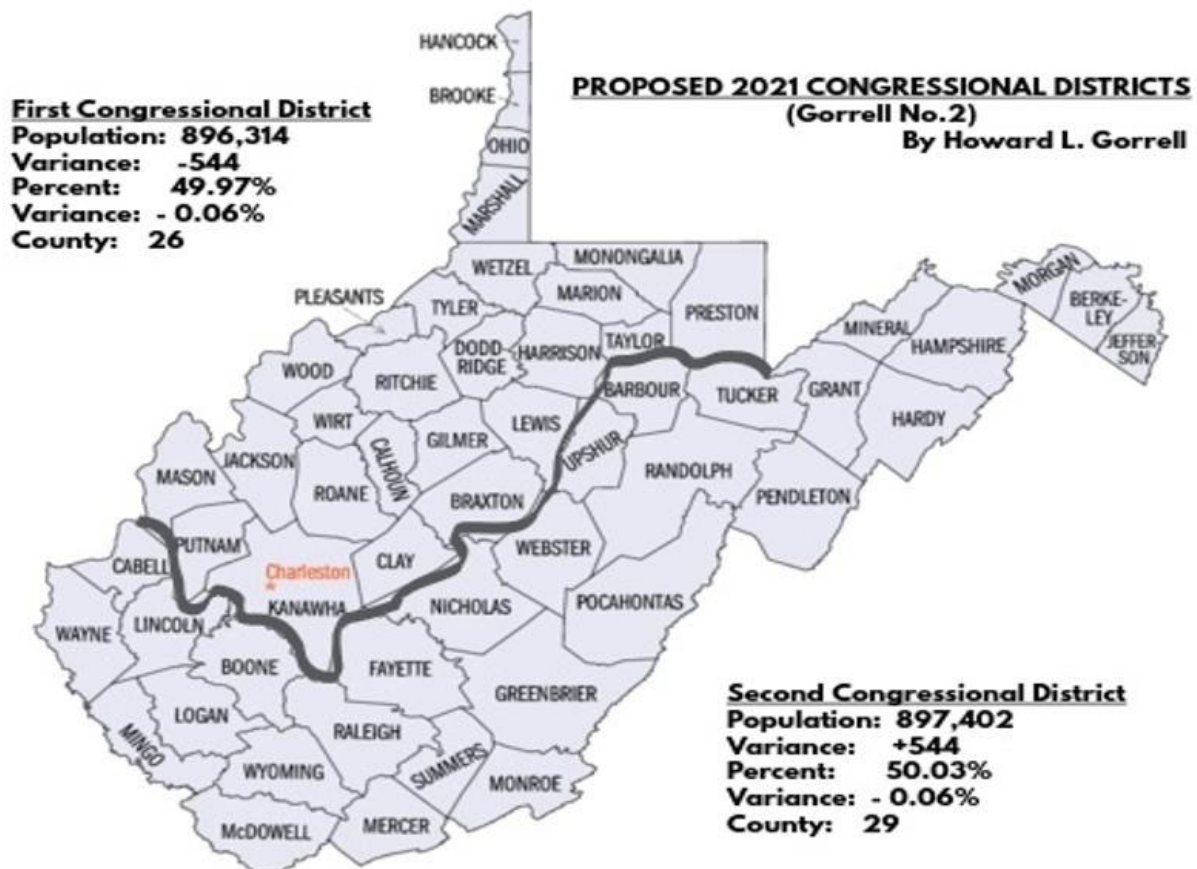
Howard Lee Gorrell (he/him/his)
Non-paid Political Commentator for [Maryland Matter](#), [MarylandReporter](#), and [The Fulcrum](#).

October 5, 2021

Dear Chairs and Members of the West Virginia Legislature Joint Committee on Redistricting:

My name is Howard L. Gorrell, originally from Point Pleasant, WV. I was the last registered speaker at the Parkersburg Hearing. There I delivered my “[Gorrell](#)” Congressional District Plan to your Committee. The Senate Committee submitted my plan as “[Trump 2](#),” but the House Committee has not yet turned it in.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you to forget this “Gorrell” Plan but to consider my new “[Gorrell 2](#)” Plan seriously. The Senate Committee submitted it as “[Jeffries 2](#).” Also, the House Committee turned it in as “[House 4](#).”



I created the “Gorrell 2” Plan after reading *The Parkersburg News and Sentinel’s* [Editorial: “Redistricting: Morgantown, Martinsburg should be kept separate.”](#) It recommends:

“A better idea — one that would be fairer for all residents, in the long run — is a line that includes most of the Eastern Panhandle and then makes its twisty turny way across the state in a not-quite-so horizontal manner. Maps drawn to show this possibility include Wheeling, Morgantown, Parkersburg, and Charleston in District 1; and Martinsburg, Beckley, and Huntington in District 2.”

Below are the reasons that the “Gorrell 2” Plan could be an excellent choice for all West Virginians:

Two Federal Requirements for Drawing Congressional Districts: This “Gorrell 2” Plan is quickly compiling with two requirements: (1) To draw its congressional districts to be approximately equal in population, *Wesberry v. Sanders*, 376 U.S. 1 (1964); and (2) To comply with Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

West Virginia Constitution Requirement: The “Gorrell 2” Plan could quickly meet the constitutional requirement that congressional districts be formed of contiguous counties and that they be compact.

No splitting between Putnam and Kanawha Counties: House Redistricting Committee Chairman Gary Howell (R-Mineral) said that “Putnam County — sandwiched in between Cabell and Kanawha counties — is also a growth area. It’s the only growth area in Southern West Virginia, due to being a bedroom community and commuter area for businesses in Charleston and Huntington. Think of it as the Long Island of West Virginia.”

According to *The Weirton Daily News*, Sen. Dave Sypolt (R-Preston) told the Senate Committee on September 29th that “Although I am somewhat partial to [my map](#), I would tell you that I like [Jeffries](#)’ [Gorrell 2] better and would support that map. They’re very similar. Not being disparaging about any of the other maps, but (other maps) each place the growth areas of the state together in one district, which causes a logistic problem going forward for the next 10 years. If those areas continue to grow, you’re going to see a change in population between the two districts that is disproportionate.” **Note:** Sypolt’s map shows the population deviation of 5.557, while Jeffries’s map has only 554.

Interstate-79 Corridor: Sen. Mike Caputo (D-Marion) has favored keeping the Interstate-79 corridor together in the process. He told *MetroNews ‘Talkline’*, “I-79 I believe was built to connect Charleston to Pittsburgh and it has done that. We have a lot of high-tech industries through there. I am more inclined to support an East-West type map.”

Sen. Glenn Jeffries (D-Putnam) mentioned in *The Parkersburg News and Sentinel* that “The Interstate 79 corridor is a divide that keeps the Martinsburg area, the Eastern Panhandle area, divided from the Morgantown area. That way, you have two areas that are growing that can filter the southern parts of West Virginia.”

And, Communities of Interest: West Virginia is one of 23 states that does not have a criterion for preserving communities of interest, so it could be time for your committee to consider this criterion.

As you know, the US Senate is considering a federal voting right bill called the "Freedom to Vote Act." This bill requires states to draw districts within communities of interest.

SEC. 2403. CRITERIA FOR REDISTRICTING.

(a) Criteria.—Under the redistricting plan of a State, there shall be established single-member congressional districts using the following criteria as set forth in the following order of priority:

(4) Districts shall respect communities of interest, neighborhoods, and political subdivisions to the extent practicable and after compliance with the requirements of paragraphs (1) through (3). A community of interest is defined as an area with recognized similarities of interests, including but not limited to ethnic, racial, economic, tribal, social, cultural, geographic, or historic identities. The term communities of interest may, in certain circumstances, include political subdivisions such as counties, municipalities, tribal lands, and reservations, or school districts but shall not include common relationships with political parties or political candidates.

If enacted, the “Gorrell 2 Plan” will not face any legal action because it is the most substantial map having communities of interest among the other maps (except the “Gorrell” Plan.)

Keeping Gas & Oil Producing Counties Together (16 counties including Monongalia down to Lincoln): Except for Lincoln County, the [top 10 oil-producing counties and the top 10 gas-producing counties](#) are located in the First District of the “Gorrell 2’ Plan.

Keeping Majority of Coal-Producing Counties Together (16 counties including Monongalia down to Lincoln): They have been found in the Second District for many years.

Keeping All Counties in the National Park and Forest Lands together (16 counties from Morgan to Greenbrier): They are based in the Second District.

At the Parkersburg Hearing, Ritchie County Commissioner Randall Riggs cried, “We are going to try to get people back into the county. To do that, we need to keep the oil and gas counties together. We need the same legislators. If they stick with us, we can make the counties grow.”

I hope that the “Gorrell 2” Plan will enable the Mountaineer State to regain one more congressional seat for the next census decade.

I thank you for your serious consideration.

Sincerely Yours;

-----/s/-----

Howard L. Gorrell

