

June 13, 2011

MISSION

OneAmerica advances the fundamental principles of democracy and justice at the local, state and national levels by building power within immigrant communities in collaboration with key allies

**Testimony on Behalf of OneAmerica
Washington State Redistricting Commission**

On behalf of OneAmerica and its members, I write to urge the committee to consider redrawing the new 10th Congressional district lines to better reflect the growing presence and power of communities of color and immigrant and refugee communities in Washington State. We believe the Win-Win Network's "Unity Map" accomplishes this goal.

A member-based organization and the largest immigrant advocacy organization in the state, OneAmerica's mission is to advance the fundamental principles of democracy and justice through building power in immigrant communities, in collaboration with key allies. Our members are across the state, and include immigrants and allies from multiple communities including African, Latino, Asian, and many other ethnicities. What they all share, in spite of where they come from or where they were born, is a desire to participate fully in our democracy and to have their interests represented. They also share common stories of difficult journeys to get to America, similar challenges when they get here to fully integrate, and qualities of courage, perseverance and hard work.

Our members have participated in nearly every single public hearing held by the commission, including Vancouver, Renton, Bellingham, Everett, Pasco, Yakima, Seattle and, later this week we will be in Auburn. We have all been monitoring the redistricting process so closely, because we recognize that the redrawing of district lines across the state will have a profound impact on the representation of immigrant and refugee communities at different levels of government across Washington State.

The demographics of Washington State continue to change and the redistricting process must account for these shifts in population. One in four residents in Washington are people of color and about one in eight are immigrants. In fact, without the growth in Washington State's immigrant population and communities of color, the state would likely not have received an additional 10th Congressional seat. Despite representing a significant percentage of the statewide population and nearly all of its population growth, no single Congressional district is a majority people of color.

It has come to our attention that those who are currently in power do not approve of this concept, as they fear losing an integral piece of their base if these communities are moved out of their district and into the new district we are advocating for. The reality, however, is that all of us stand to gain tremendously from a majority-minority district such as ~~is~~ defined in our Unity Map. We all benefit when our communities can elect

Voting Rights Act



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leaders who fully understand, respond to and represent the issues important to the health and well-being of those communities. A majority people of color district will allow our communities, who share a tremendous amount in common as people of color, to elect someone who prioritizes these issues first and foremost on their agendas.

For too long our organization has fought to convince our members and immigrant and refugee voters that their votes count. In part, this is because the maps have not been drawn in a way that allows votes of people of color and immigrants to be kept together and garner enough weight. In part, it is also because our members do not see themselves represented in the state legislature and in the halls of Congress. In part, it is also because our state continues to make decisions that serve only to disenfranchise voters and marginalize communities for political gain. And in large part, it is also because voters in communities of color and immigrant voters have been taken for granted by those in power and relegated to the back end of agendas where support is given by a push of a button and not through leadership that fights for those priorities every day.

The Unity Map and the majority people of color district begins the path to changing all of this. It is what we need in this state. And it is what establishing true democracy requires.

Thank you for your consideration and please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.



Pramila Jayapal
Executive Director
OneAmerica