

My name is Ardith Talbott. I live in Solebury, PA which is located in Bucks County where I've lived for 38 years. I live in the 10th Senatorial and the 178th House district. I'm the Bucks County coordinator for Fair Districts PA and have been deeply involved in working for redistricting reform for the past 5 years. I've written many editorials and letters to the editor on the subject of gerrymandering.

I'm here today to ask you to draw senatorial voting districts that will better represent the needs of the citizens of our county. Bucks County population is 628k, making it the fourth largest county in PA. Currently, 4 senatorial districts cover parts of the county, but given the target population of 256k for each state senate district, Bucks County should have 2.5 Senate districts. The organizing principle for such a map is clear once you know a little bit about the County. Let me explain.

The county is organized economically and socially into 3 regions, all bordering the Delaware River to the East. We refer to these regions as Lower Bucks, Central Bucks and Upper Bucks.

For example, there is a Lower Bucks Chamber of Commerce with about 1000 members; there is a Central Bucks Chamber of Commerce of similar size, and there is an Upper Bucks Chamber of Commerce. In regard to education: There is the Lower Buck campus, the Central Bucks campus, and the Upper Bucks campus of the Bucks County Community College. The county has 3 technical schools...you guessed it... There is a Lower Bucks, Central Bucks and Upper Bucks Technical School.

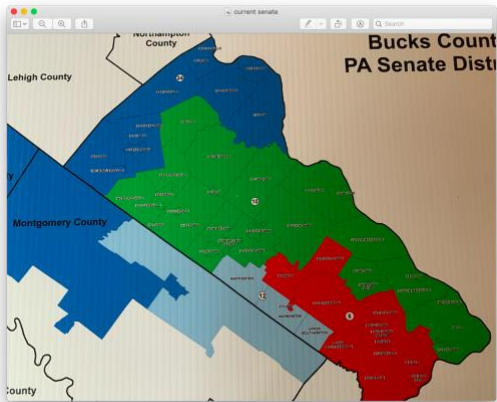
Lower Bucks borders Philadelphia to the South and Trenton, New Jersey to the East. Lower Bucks is more densely populated with older suburban communities like Levittown. It has issues of immigration, poverty and a resulting lower tax base. This part of the county is increasingly racially diverse. There are several underfunded school districts in Lower Bucks.

On the other hand, Central Bucks is relatively affluent and has well-funded public schools. Coincidentally the largest school district is called "Central Bucks School District". Newer suburban communities cover much of this region. However, there are issues related to an aging population, and a lack of public transportation.

Meanwhile, in Upper Bucks you'll find 4 state game lands for hunters, next to family farms, as well as new business startups. The lack of public transportation infrastructure is one of the issues here.

The Bucks County Dept of Economic and Workforce Development sites important differences by these 3 regions of Bucks County.

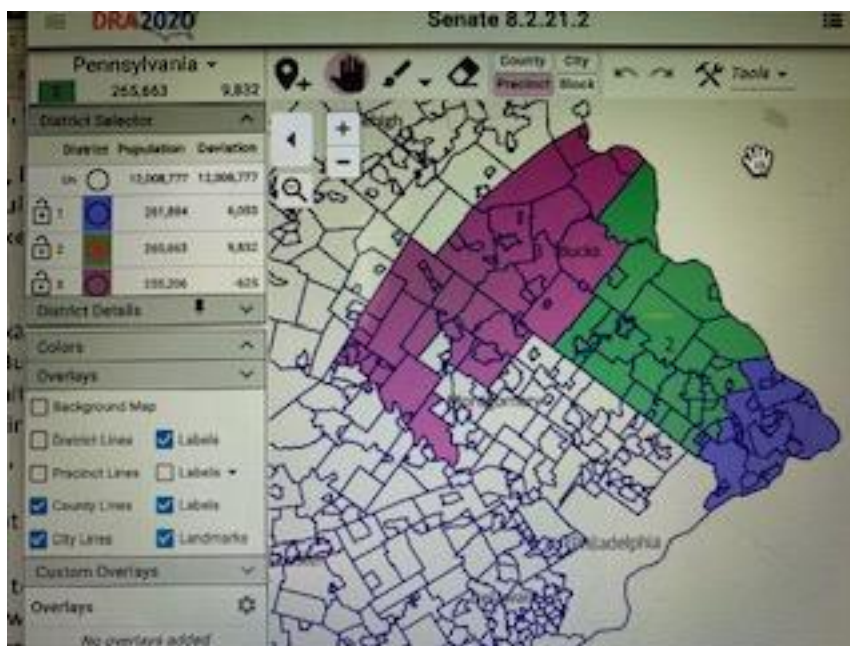
Now let me show you a map of the current senatorial districts.



As you can see, the 10th Senatorial district in green, where I live, covers a piece of Upper Bucks, a piece of Central Bucks and a piece of Lower Bucks County. The senator represents 3 very different socio-economic communities, which sometimes hold conflicting views on fundamental rights. Lower Bucks is divided between two senatorial districts, the 10th and the 6th, cracking the communities of Lower Bucks. Central Bucks is divided between the 10th, the 6th and the 12th Senatorial, and Upper Bucks between two. I haven't heard a good reason why the map was drawn this way, but looking at the historical maps, I suspect gerrymandering is behind much of it.

YOU, the LRC, can fix this.

As I said, Bucks needs 2.5 senators according to our population, and each of our senators could and should represent one of the three regions of Bucks County. Here's an example of a map that makes sense and meets the population requirements.



In this example, each region would have just one senator whose priority is that community. The Lower Bucks district would have a population of about 262K, and Middle Bucks in green would have 266K. Upper bucks would need to include similar communities in a bordering county to reach a target of 255K. As mentioned earlier, the population of the whole County only justifies 2.5 senators.

Note that this map is only intended to be an example of what is possible.

Just as a test for fairness, I checked to see what the partisan leaning of these 3 senatorial districts would be. The Lower Bucks district would lean blue; the Middle Bucks district “purple” (50:50), and Upper Bucks would lean red. Bucks County overall IS “purple”, so drawing the senate districts this way results in districts that would provide voters with proportional representation.

Thank you for providing citizens with the opportunity to have a say in their legislative maps.