

From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
To: [Senate Redistricting](#)
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input
Date: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 6:29:26 PM
Attachments: [UnidosUS Letter on Redistricting Process.pdf](#)

Date: 2021-10-19
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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Congressional

Message:
Please see attached.

[REDACTED]

October 16, 2021

The Honorable Joan Huffman
Chair of the Senate Special Committee on Redistricting
P.O. Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Chair Huffman:

On behalf of UnidosUS (formerly the National Council of La Raza), the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization, I am writing to share our concerns regarding the current redistricting process—especially given Texas’s history of diluting the electoral power of Latino populations—and ensuring proper representation of Latinos in elected roles throughout the state and in Washington, DC.

There is an opportunity to ensure that traditionally marginalized communities in Texas are accurately represented, and I encourage you to consider the reality of what Texas looks like today and how it has grown over the past decade when finalizing the new congressional maps. Hispanic families in Texas have been disproportionately hurt by many of the state’s past policies; without proper representation and an equitable distribution of state resources, key indicators of a thriving Hispanic community—such as rising rates of homeownership, access to health care, high school graduation, voter turnout, and median household income—will likely worsen over the next decade.

UnidosUS has built a stronger country by creating opportunities for Hispanics for more than 50 years. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers at the national and local levels. The UnidosUS Texas-based Affiliates include 28 community-based organizations that invest more than \$775 million and employ more than 6,200 staff to provide direct services to approximately 240,000 Texans annually. UnidosUS is headquartered in Washington, DC, and has staff in Austin and San Antonio. Through partnerships, community investments, and state research and advocacy on housing, health, and education, UnidosUS advances opportunities for the more than 11 million Latinos who call Texas home.

Since the last time the Texas Legislature had the opportunity to redraw congressional maps, in 2011, the population of the state has grown by about 4 million, with people of color accounting for 95% of that population growth and Hispanics making up half of the growth.¹ The Hispanic population in the state grew the largest and now is about even with the non-Hispanic White

population at 39%, according to the latest Census which undercounted populations in various Hispanic-majority counties in the state. Typically, the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS) provides population numbers lower than the Census that follows the next year. This time, the ACS 2015–2019 population figures were higher than the 2020 Census countⁱⁱ for various Hispanic-majority counties including Cameronⁱⁱⁱ and Webb,^{iv} and in Nueces^v County where the final population count was more than 10,000 less than what the ACS indicated. In fact, two-thirds of South Texas counties had final Census population counts under their ACS estimates. Despite this severe undercount, thanks to the minority population growth over the past decade, Texas will now have two additional seats in Congress for the next decade, which in a fair redistricting process would create opportunity districts for those communities and new constituents.

The problematic history of Texas’s electoral processes—and officials placed in office as a result—is well documented in American legal history, particularly in the context of the Civil Rights Movement and the public record that informed passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). Since the original signing of the VRA, lawmakers from throughout the state have come together to redraw maps at least once each decade, repeatedly producing maps that have been ruled as a violation of the VRA. Time and time again, these maps have been found to be heavily biased, denying voters of color the equal opportunity to vote for a candidate of their choosing, in effect diluting the collective political power of these communities. This legacy—rooted in racism and xenophobia—must remain in the past and not be a device that is forced through legislative processes today. There is a massive problem in the democratic process when elected officials are choosing their voters, instead of the other way around.

With this new opportunity to redraw congressional maps, Texas is in a position to begin to address inequities in our state. All children and families should have the opportunity to lead a long and healthy life and pursue their version of the American Dream. However, too many Latino children lack access to health care, nutrition, education, and housing programs that help keep them out of poverty and ensure their social and emotional well-being.^{vi} Redistricting creates the opportunity to allocate due resources and outreach, resulting in meaningful outcomes for Hispanic communities in the state.

Below are key indicators to consider in the redistricting process:

- **Latino children in Texas are more likely to be uninsured.** Texas has the highest uninsured rate (17%) in the nation, and 26% of Texas Latinos are uninsured.^{vii} Furthermore, 14% of Latino children in the state are uninsured, compared to 11% of all Texas children.^{viii} Texas’s child uninsured rate is the highest in the country,^{ix} and Latino children in the state are twice as likely as their non-Latino peers to be uninsured.
- **Latino children in Texas are more likely to live in poverty.** In the state of Texas, 1.9 million Latinos live below the federal poverty line.^x This would include, for example, a Latino family of four earning less than \$25,750 per year. Latinos represent 30% of all Texas children living in poverty, while Whites represent 9% of all Texas children living in poverty.^{xi}

While no maps have been finalized yet, we are concerned that they will be drawn—once again—to dilute the voting power and voice of communities of color. The new count of the state’s population should increase opportunity districts for Latino communities as well as the number of officials elected by Latino Texans who believe represent them fairly. We adamantly oppose any process that results in maps that dilute Latino voter power via gerrymandering on racial lines and reduces already existing Hispanic- majority voting districts, which are already fewer than should exist. If the finalized maps show that the primary interest of the state’s leadership is in maintaining power and ignore the growth and influence of minority voters, it is a sign to the Latino community that our voices do not matter and that the systemic inequalities exacerbated by state policies will continue to cause harm.

UnidosUS appreciates the complexity of drawing congressional maps that will determine the results of elections over the next decade. Under your leadership, we ask that you create maps that not only protect the existing political power of minority voters, but also acknowledge the many voices in our democracy and provide everyone with opportunities to thrive. We should be collectively encouraging civic engagement from all of our citizens regardless of skin color, voting history, or what part of the state they live in. For a democracy to thrive, it is imperative that the vote is not stifled or diluted, and that citizens have the opportunity to elect representatives from within their own communities who best represent their needs and will fight for equitable state resources. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Manuel Grajeda
Texas Policy and Advocacy Strategist
UnidosUS

ⁱ Astudillo, Carla, et al. “People of Color Drive 95% of Texas’ Population Boom, 2020 Census Shows | The Texas Tribune.” The Texas Tribune, The Texas Tribune, 12 Aug. 2021, <http://www.texastribune.org/2021/08/12/texas-2020-census/>.

ⁱⁱ “TDC - Redistricting Data for Texas Counties, 2000-2020.” Texas Demographic Center, <https://demographics.texas.gov/InteractiveTools/2021/CBRedistrictingCounty>. Accessed 16 Oct. 2021.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Explore Census Data.” Explore Census Data, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05&g=0400000US48_0500000US48061. Accessed 16 Oct. 2021.

^{iv} “Explore Census Data.” Explore Census Data, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05&g=0400000US48_0500000US48479. Accessed 19 Oct. 2021.

^v “Explore Census Data.” Explore Census Data, https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?tid=ACSDP5Y2019.DP05&g=0400000US48_0500000US48355. Accessed 19 Oct. 2021.

^{vi} “Social Determinants | Healthy People 2020.” Healthy People 2030 | Health.Gov, <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/leading-health-indicators/2020-lhi-topics/Social-Determinants/determinants>. Accessed 16 Oct. 2021.

^{vii} “Uninsured Rates for the Nonelderly by Race/Ethnicity | KFF.” KFF, 23 Oct. 2020, <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/state-indicator/rate-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colld%22:%22Location%22%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7>.

^{viii} “KIDS COUNT Data Center from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.” KIDS COUNT Data Center from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, <http://datacenter.kidscount.org>. Accessed 16 Oct. 2021.

^{ix} Every Texan. “CPPP analysis of 2016 1-year ACS Table S2701 and 2008-2016 ACS 1-year, Tables B27001 & B27001B-I.” www.everytexan.org/images/KC2018_SOTCReport_web.pdf 16 Oct. 2021

^x Bureau, Census. “Current Population Survey (CPS).” Census.Gov, <https://census.gov/>, 7 Dec. 2020, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html>.

^{xi} “Children in Poverty by Race and Ethnicity | KIDS COUNT Data Center.” KIDS COUNT Data Center from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/44-children-in-poverty-by-race-and-ethnicity?loc=45&loct=2#detailed/2/45/false/871_870_573_869_36_868_867_133_38_35/10_11_9_12_1_185_13/324_323. Accessed 16 Oct. 2021.