

Doris J. Turner
Alderman
Ward 3

May 26 2011

Honorable Barbara Flynn Currie
Chair, House Redistricting Committee
State House
Springfield, IL 62706


Dear Representative Currie:

I am writing to voice my strong support for the proposed 96th House district which would include parts of eastern Springfield and western Decatur. While the proposed House district is not self-contained within one municipal boundary; most of those who reside within these boundaries share a lot of the same culture, challenges, and concerns. Additionally, these constituencies both believe that they have not been adequately represented. Both of the communities are heavily urban areas; however, they continue to be represented by individuals with a strong agricultural perspective. Actually each of the four individuals who currently represent central Illinois has a farming background.

There has also been a concern with regard to low voter turnout and voter apathy. I believe our community and history has borne out the fact, that when the electorate feels they have a real opportunity to elect someone who will truly represent their concerns, they will participate in the process.

I had the opportunity to provide testimony before the Redistricting Committee in Springfield on Tuesday, May 24, 2011, and I am enclosing a copy of that testimony. Redistricting is a process that occurs every ten years, and this is an opportunity to provide true representation to these two communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Doris J. Turner, Alderman
2100 E. Lawrence
Springfield, IL 62703

Good morning. My name is Doris Turner and I reside at 2100 E. Lawrence, in Springfield. I am currently the First Vice Chair of the Sangamon County Democratic Party; Chair of the Sangamon County Democratic Minority Caucus, and Ward 3 Alderman representing the east and northeast regions of the City. I would like to thank you for holding a hearing in Springfield and allowing central Illinois to have input into the redistricting process.

I am speaking in support of the proposed 96th House District that includes the eastern parts of Springfield, communities along I-72, and western Decatur. While this proposed House District is not self-contained within one municipal boundary; most of those who reside within these boundaries share a lot of the attributes, concerns, challenges, and cultural mores. I would also add that they share media markets, hold joint events, and are the recipients of educational idea sharing through the actions of the respective school districts.

Currently, both of these communities are urban areas that continue to be represented by individuals with a very rural perspective. This dilemma speaks to our most fundamental right – appropriate representation by our government. Remember our elected representatives speak on our behalf and propose and vote on legislation that affects our everyday lives in a very real way. When concerns are not understood and appropriately addressed it leads to the disenfranchisement of an entire community. That's the situation currently being experienced by individuals residing in Springfield and Decatur.

There are those who say that Springfield should be represented by one individual; however, contrary to what some would have you believe, this proposed House District is consistent with the fact that the city of Springfield is currently represented by multiple House members. While that will remain the same, this new District does represent change – and that change is that the voiceless will have a voice in state government.

There was a lot of hand wringing when the current 17th U.S. House District was drawn. However, even though Springfield is, and has always been, represented by someone living approximately 200 miles away; the representation has been appropriate because of the shared culture, concerns, and issues.

After the April 5th election, as with most elections, there was a lot of concern with regard to the low voter turnout and voter apathy. I will tell you that

when voters believe they have a real choice and have an opportunity to elect representatives who will truly represent their interest; voters will come out and participate in the process.

And for those who say this is a manufactured issue being promoted by special interests in Chicago; the fact that I, and others, are before you today dispel that myth. We, the people residing within this community, want our voices to be heard and stand wholeheartedly in support of the proposed 96th House District. This House District will bring a new focus and energy to the many issues that continue to plague these communities, among them an increase in violence and declining educational outcomes, and it will increase voter participation in the election process.

Again thank you for your consideration of the urban communities of central Illinois and our right to true representation.