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## City of Lynchburg is a Single Community of Interest

1 message

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**Niro Rasanayagam** <niro\_r@hotmail.com>

Fri, Aug 6, 2021 at 3:46 PM

To: "varedist@dls.virginia.gov" <varedist@dls.virginia.gov>

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Dear Redistricting Commission Members,

My name is Niro Rasanayagam and I made the following comments at the virtual public hearing last night. I am concerned that not all the Commissioners are required to attend all the public hearings, and would like to share my comments via email here for their benefit.

I have lived and paid taxes in Lynchburg for 18 years. The City of Lynchburg is a small urban city. Lynchburg's social, cultural and economic interests are DIFFERENT from those of the more rural counties –to whom we have unnaturally been attached to since 2011. The rural counties currently dominate the portfolios of most of our legislators, diluting Lynchburg's community clout and diminishing our voice in Richmond.

In terms of taxes, infrastructure, economic development, the public school system, environmental and planning pressures, and public safety, the City of Lynchburg's needs and interests are best advocated by a single House Delegate and a single State senator for whom Lynchburg voters are the bulk of their constituents.

For example, Lynchburg has a significantly higher poverty rate, in some cases almost double the poverty rate, than our nearby rural counties. Our schools, transportation systems, medical care systems, and housing solutions must work for and serve this higher-needs population. We need legislators who understand

our urban strengths and challenges, and who will respond to and advocate for our urban interests.

The current “cracking” of Lynchburg into four districts, instead of two, is also confusing to voters and is impractical. Currently, many precincts even within the same election wards in Lynchburg are in different districts! This makes no sense and it also makes it more expensive for the City Registrar to administer and run elections.

The basic tenet of the Code of Virginia 24.2-305 which states *“each election district and precinct shall be composed of compact and contiguous territory and shall have clearly defined and clearly observable boundaries”* was not followed for Lynchburg during the 2011 redistricting process after the 2010 census. I urge you now to please rectify that and restore Lynchburg as a single community of interest.

Neighbors across the street, or a few doors down, could be in entirely different House and Senate districts! Even the savviest voters have a hard time keeping track of who their representatives are and what district they’re in—because it could be any two of a four-way combination! The only way to know for sure is if a constituent takes the time to put in their address and looks it up online! And even then they will need to know where to look and how to do this. This adds to voter confusion, frustration, and disengagement from the democratic process.

I want to stand with my fellow residents from all over Lynchburg on issues that impact us City residents, and right now I’m feeling a little powerless. For example, I care about downtown revitalization, but I have no say there with my Delegate because my Delegate does not cover downtown Lynchburg.

Instead of putting us with fellow Lynchburg residents in a single Senate district, we are lumped in with residents of Craig County, bordering West Virginia on one end, and with residents of tiny Goochland County almost near Richmond on the other end.

No offense to them, but I didn’t even know where these far-flung counties are located (Craig, Goochland, Buckingham, Louisa, Cumberland, Fluvanna). I’ve had to go look them up on a map of Virginia. I have no affinity with these distant

rural counties. It makes no sense to me that I've been lumped in with them rather than with my friends and neighbors right here in Lynchburg.

Please restore the City of Lynchburg into the single community of interest that we naturally are, with a single HOD and a single Senate district. Thank you for your service to Virginia and please be objective when drawing these maps!

Sincerely,

Niro Rasanayagam  
Lynchburg, VA

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unite Lynchburg!

*Melinda Wheeler*

To the VRC:

In Lynchburg, VA communities of color have long been under-represented. Racial and ethnic fairness must be considered as legislative districts are re-drawn. Our communities of interest must be preserved and not divided. Thank you,  
Melinda Wheeler  
Lynchburg, VA 24501

Dear VA Redistricting Commission,

I am writing to ask that you do not split Lynchburg into multiple sections. Please consider the city as an area of interest. As we have one fire department, police department, etc. etc. it only makes sense to be represented in the same way. All people of Lynchburg can have a chance of having their votes heard if we remain together as an area of interest.

Please end gerrymandering  
put all of Lynchburg in  
one House district and  
one Senate district in  
the legislature.  
Thank you.

Lynchburg has 1 school district, 1 police dept.  
and 1 government - centralized. Because of  
this, I believe that Lynchburg City should  
be 1 district. Gerrymandering undermines  
the votes of the citizens of Lynchburg.

TANVA Anderson  
City of Lynchburg resident  
24502