

Talking Points for Coalition members/organizations at P&E Committee hearings

- **For speaking at public hearings, pick 1 or 2 points, and shape them in your own words. People can't remember more than two (a third if you're lucky), so keep your comments focused on the core message you want the P&E Committee (and the press) to hear.**
 - **Use them for letters and e-mails to your delegates and senators, too.**
 - **And letters to the editor or online comments in your local paper.**
1. It's time the public had a meaningful voice in the process. Listen to these public hearings. Take the work of the Advisory Commission and the Student Competition seriously. Show us you're not just going through the motions here. Don't rush back to Richmond and vote without time for constructive review and changes.
 2. Don't hide behind the clock. We understand that Virginia is under more time pressure than other states because of our state elections this fall, but "Not enough time" is not an excuse anymore. The mapping software is so much better than it was 10 years ago that what used to take days now takes hours or minutes. Besides, the Advisory Commission and the College Competition have put alternatives on the table for you.
 3. The student maps prove that it's possible to make sensible, understandable, non-gerrymandered districts. Have you looked at them? You should consider them.
 4. The Bipartisan Advisory Commission maps also show that more sensible, understandable, non-gerrymandered maps are possible within all the legal guidelines. In addition, the Commission took into account what it heard in public hearings around the state. Have you looked at those maps? Have you read the account of the Commission's public hearings? Have you considered the Commission's recommendations as to preserving regional and economic communities of interest, making districts compact, keeping city and county lines intact? You should.
 5. Don't just tweak the distorted district boundaries as they exist now. It's time for a fresh start (and the software mapping tools make it possible).
 - a. Basic district boundaries go back several rounds of redistricting. Adjustments every 10 years have made it a confusing patchwork, with odd-shaped districts that split cities, counties and even precincts. It's time to start over, rather than put on more patches. For the sake of citizens and accountability, make districts compact and understandable – respect regional and city/county boundaries as much as possible.
 - b. Current boundaries disrupt or distort geographic communities of interest and economic communities of interest. Virginia has recognizable regions, which ought to be reflected in political district boundaries. So don't mix Hampton Roads' ports with Northern Virginia's high-rise offices. Or Richmond with Northern Virginia or Hampton Roads. Or coal country with the Roanoke Valley. Respect citizens' interests and differences in regional economies.
 - c. The flip side of disrupting communities of interest is unreasonably joining communities that don't share interests, or whose interests conflict with each other. Don't mix urban with rural with suburban more than necessary. It divides constituents and muddles accountability.
 6. Keep cities and counties wholly in districts as much as possible. That helps citizens understand the districts, preserves communities of interest and helps representatives by not splitting their accountability.
 - a. The U.S. Supreme Court allows House of Delegates and Senate districts to differ in population by plus-or-minus 5 percent (although Congressional districts must be

- precisely equal in population). Use that flexibility to keep cities and counties intact as much as possible.
- b. Learn from the maps presented by the Bipartisan Advisory Commission, which significantly reduce the number of county-city splits.
 - i. The current state Senate districts divide cities and counties 110 times. At a population deviation of +/-2 percent, one Commission map reduces that to 79 (28 percent fewer). At a deviation of +/- 3 percent, splits are reduced to 41 (62 percent fewer).
 - ii. The current House of Delegates districts divide cities and counties 194 times. One Commission map reduces that to 157 (20 percent fewer).
 7. The maps presented by the Bipartisan Advisory Commission and the maps in the College Redistricting Competition make districts more compact – less rambling and distorted. That’s more understandable, encourages citizen participation, preserves communities of interest and reinforces accountability to citizens.
 8. We in Virginia have the opportunity to be the model for the country if you have the courage to put the people ahead of party needs.