

Elements of a Community of Interest Testimony

A community of interest testimony should give the redistricting entity a clear picture that your community shares too many common traits and characteristics to be divided and placed in different districts. When writing your testimony consider that you are speaking to someone that may have never visited your community. Be as descriptive as possible.

There are four main elements to a community of interest testimony: a map, anecdotal data about your community's experience, social and economic characteristics, and relation to other communities. Each is explained below and some examples are listed but remember that there is no one way to describe a community of interest. **Each community is unique and so be creative and comprehensive in describing your community of interest.**

- 1. A Map – Your testimony should include a map that shows your community of interest.**
 - a. Be specific in identifying your north/south and east/west boundaries; include distinctive features such as street names, rivers, highways, a mountain range, etc.
 - b. This is not a district map it is simply a map showing the outline of where your community is located. You can use a Thomas guide and draw in your street boundaries, draw a simple picture, use Google or Mapquest maps, etc.
- 2. Your community story – Use anecdotes to describe that your community is united**
 - a. Has your community worked together to achieve a common goal? (Examples can include, investments in redevelopment, organizing an annual festival or parade)
 - b. What are the common activities that your community participates in? (Examples can include, a soccer league, a shared religious congregation, a common shopping area)
- 3. Social and Economic characteristics – Use data and statistics to describe common traits of your community**
 - a. What is the common language spoke by your community?
 - b. What is the common ancestry?¹ Mexican, Salvadoran, Puerto Rican, etc (we are more than just Latino, let the redistricting entity know of our community's rich ancestry)
 - c. Is there a common income level to the community? What is the educational level?
 - d. Use publically accessible data such as that provided by school districts, or the US Census at <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/>
- 4. Relation to communities around you – Identify which communities are most similar to you and most different from you**
 - a. Share which communities around share your experience or social and economic characteristics
 - b. Share with the commission which communities around you are different

¹ A community of interest cannot be described on race alone. We cannot say we are Latino/Hispanic. We need to demonstrate that our community shares many common traits, economic and social and that we need to be kept in a single district. A strong testimony for a community of interest must share all of these elements.

A Written or Verbal Testimony

Introduction:

My name is _____ and I am from (state community) _____ (if applicable include how many years you have lived in this community) _____

State Your Goal/Purpose:

I am here today to request that my community of interest is kept together (or identify any other goal that your community of interest has identified) _____

Define your Community Boundaries: Identify street names, highways, landmarks, mountain ranges, rivers, etc

Provide a Community Map: (Thomas Guide, Mapquest, Google Maps, sketch drawing with labeled boundaries)

Describe Your Community: Anecdotes of your shared experience personal stories are an effective way to show that there is unity in your community _____

Describe Your Community: Shared Social and Economic Characteristics use demographic data to show common characteristics _____

Distinguish Your Community:

My (our) community is similar to _____

And it is unique/distinct/different from _____

Conclude Your Statement: Re-State Your Goal/Purpose and thank you for hearing our input and we urge the Commission to _____

NEXT STEPS

- Identify a large group to present this testimony at public hearings, bring copies of your testimony to share with the redistricting entity and staff
- Learn about upcoming hearings (review newspapers, or the redistricting entity's website for announcements)
- Identify a large group to write in written testimony to support this community of interest
- Follow the process at each stage to support redistricting plans that keep your community of interest together or speak against redistricting plans that divide your community of interest
- For more information or support contact NALEO Educational Fund at agarcia@naleo.org or at (213)747-7606 ext 4434 or visit our redistricting website at www.latinosdrawthelines.org