



**TESTIMONY BY THE ASIAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE
BEFORE THE ILLINOIS HOUSE REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
APRIL 25, 2011**

Submitted By:

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I. INTRODUCTION

Asian American Institute (AAI) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony during the 2011 redistricting process. We urge the Illinois General Assembly to give meaningful consideration to the input of Asian Americans, not just at these initial hearings but also after draft maps are released.

AAI is a pan-Asian, non-profit, non-partisan organization located in Chicago whose mission is to empower the Asian American community through advocacy, research, education, and coalition-building. AAI testified at the Committee's hearing on April 21, 2011 about why redistricting matters to our community, legal protections of our voting rights, current demographics of Asian Americans in Illinois, the need for transparency throughout the redistricting process, and our commitment to working with other minority groups. We refer to and incorporate our April 21 testimony, which is available upon request from AAI and is also posted at the following website:

http://aaichicago.org/images/LegalAdvocacy/testimony_2011-04-21_aai_combined_testimony.pdf.



II. NORTH CHICAGO, SKOKIE AREA, AND DES PLAINES AREA CLUSTERS

You are all by now familiar with the example of the Greater Chinatown area in Chicago, a cohesive community that has experienced unfair fragmentation. We are also here, however, to bring your attention to three other compact but fragmented Asian American communities whose residents have common ground in terms of history, ethnicity, language, and social concerns.

The maps attached to this testimony show the boundaries of these three community clusters – called North Chicago, Skokie Area, and Des Plaines area – that should each be kept intact and not fragmented during redistricting. As can be seen on attached maps, not only is there a high concentration of Asian Americans in these areas, but there is also a plethora of institutions in the area that are vital to our community members, including non-profit organizations; religious institutions; schools; and ethnic media, retail, and commercial outlets. The demographics of these clusters appear in a chart attached to this testimony, and this provides a striking illustration of the concentration of Asian American communities and the corresponding fragmentation that they face. The clusters contain between 24% and 31% Asian Americans and are currently each splintered into three to five Illinois House districts. It should be noted that the cluster lines are not district lines proposals; each cluster makes up less than an entire district and should be incorporated into a district.

In order to determine these specific cluster boundaries, AAI has spent significant time consulting community leaders who live, work, and serve residents in these areas, including but not limited to Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment, Cambodian Association of Illinois, Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services, Indo-American Center, Islamic Circle of North America – Chicago, Korean American Resource and Cultural Center, Muslim Women’s Resource Center, Nepali Pariwar, and South Asian American Policy and Research Institute.



AAI also has discussed and is continuing to discuss these boundaries with other minority communities, including Latino and African American communities represented by Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations, and Draw the Line Illinois. Through such collaborations, AAI demonstrates its commitment to protecting the voting rights of all minorities.

As shown by recently released Census data, the districts in this area (namely, Illinois House Districts 15, 16, 17, and 57, and Illinois Senate Districts 8, 9, and 29) all faced loss of population or their population stayed the same between 2000 and 2010.¹ However, each of these same areas experienced significant growth of Asian population, ranging from 10% to 32% growth.² This demographic trend points to the need to protect the voting rights of these Asian Americans and consider their input when redrawing these lines.

The residents in the areas represented on the attached maps have common ground not just in terms of race, but also in terms of history, ethnicity, language, and social issues.³ Most of the Asian Americans in this area are Asian Indian, Korean, or Filipino.⁴ There are also clusters of Pakistani, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other Asian American residents in these areas.⁵ Languages spoken in the area include Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Malayalam, Bengali, Telegu, Nepali, Tagalog, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cambodian. Even though there is diversity within these communities, Asian

¹ U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, CENSUS 2010. It should be noted that AAI inadvertently made an error in its March 28, 2011 testimony regarding the overall change in population in the specified districts; the statement in the text of today's testimony contains the corrected statement regarding the specified districts.

² U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, CENSUS 2010.

³ *See, e.g.*, WEST RIDGE COMMUNITY SURVEY, University of Illinois Extension - Cook County (Oct. 2007) (research study analyzing data and collecting input from over 90 residents of West Ridge as well as several community organizations, over the course of eleven one-hour focus groups and over 700 comments about life in West Ridge); U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2005-2009 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATE.

⁴ U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2005-2009 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATE.

⁵ *Id.*



Americans are a cohesive group that share many common concerns, such as the need for linguistically and culturally appropriate social services, as well as concerns about education, affirmative action, immigration, discrimination, hate crimes, and racial profiling. Residents of these particular areas of Chicago and suburban Cook County face similar social problems, including limited access to public transportation; low income; and limited English proficiency and linguistic isolation.⁶ People in these areas also have other unique concerns that unite them, including concerns about small, minority-owned businesses; commercial corridors and business development; cultural diversity and demographic change; residential development and public spaces; government services; crime; and education.⁷ These areas are a gateway for many immigrants and new citizens who are in the process of adjusting to the United States.

III. NORTH CHICAGO CLUSTER

The Asian American community that we have defined as “North Chicago” contains people of Filipino, Korean, Indian, Vietnamese, and Pakistani backgrounds. These groups vary in terms of population, and Filipino Americans and South Asians (Indian Americans and Pakistani Americans included) reside in the largest numbers. As it is seen on the attached map, this contiguous area is currently split into five different Illinois House districts and three Illinois Senate districts. The specific cluster boundaries are a result of input from community leaders who live, work, and serve residents in these areas. For example, the North Chicago cluster includes Muslim Community Center (located near the intersection of Montrose Avenue and Pulaski Road) and Cambodian Association of Illinois (located near the intersection of Lawrence Avenue and California Avenue), institutions that provide services and are social centers for marginalized members of the Asian American community in West Ridge and Albany Park.

⁶ See, e.g., WEST RIDGE COMMUNITY SURVEY, University of Illinois Extension - Cook County (Oct. 2007); U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, 2005-2009 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY 5-YEAR ESTIMATE.

⁷ *Id.*



We are providing a few examples today to illustrate the cohesiveness of this geographic area. Many of Filipino residents in both in the West Ridge neighborhood and Albany Park neighborhood feel strong connections to each other, and the same is true for the South Asian residents of the respective neighborhoods. Many of the Filipino residents in West Ridge go to Albany Park for Filipino groceries and other retail outlets. Also, many Filipino residents in West Ridge are members of Catholic parishes in Albany Park. Similarly, the South Asians living in West Ridge frequent Albany Park to visit places of worship. Many West Ridge residents send their children to religious school in Albany Park. Major South Asian media outlets are located both in Albany Park and West Ridge, all addressing similar issues in the collective community.

Asian American residents in the North Chicago cluster have similar social issues and interests, as many of them are recent immigrants who have working-class lifestyles. Thus, it is natural that over the past several years, there have been pan-Asian coalitions formed with members of these communities to work on civic engagement and voter participation programs. For example, for the 2010 Census, organizations in Albany Park and West Ridge, among others, came together to conduct Census outreach in 10 different languages, making it the most accessible Census campaign in history for the local Asian American population. For the 2011 mayoral election in Chicago, many of the same Asian American organizations came together to educate voters in Albany Park and in West Ridge, and many of the residents in these neighborhoods united at the first ever Asian American Mayoral Candidates' Forum. Over 1000 Asian American Chicagoans attended this forum to hear what the candidates had to say about issues that mattered to their community such as public safety, public education, funding for immigrant integration social services, and support for small businesses.

The Asian Americans in North Chicago identify as one unified community of interest and will be better represented when they are not broken up into five Illinois House districts and three Illinois Senate districts. AAI has provided and will continue to provide information about all three clusters in future testimony.



VI. CONCLUSION

The Asian American community is deeply concerned about having an equal opportunity to elect representatives of our choice. Many community leaders and organizations have testified or are testifying today with details about our cohesive communities and the great harm that we face as a result of unfair vote dilution. Asian American Institute urges the Committee to remain mindful of our rights and give us a meaningful opportunity to review and respond to draft maps.



Demographic Breakout of Clusters: Total Population

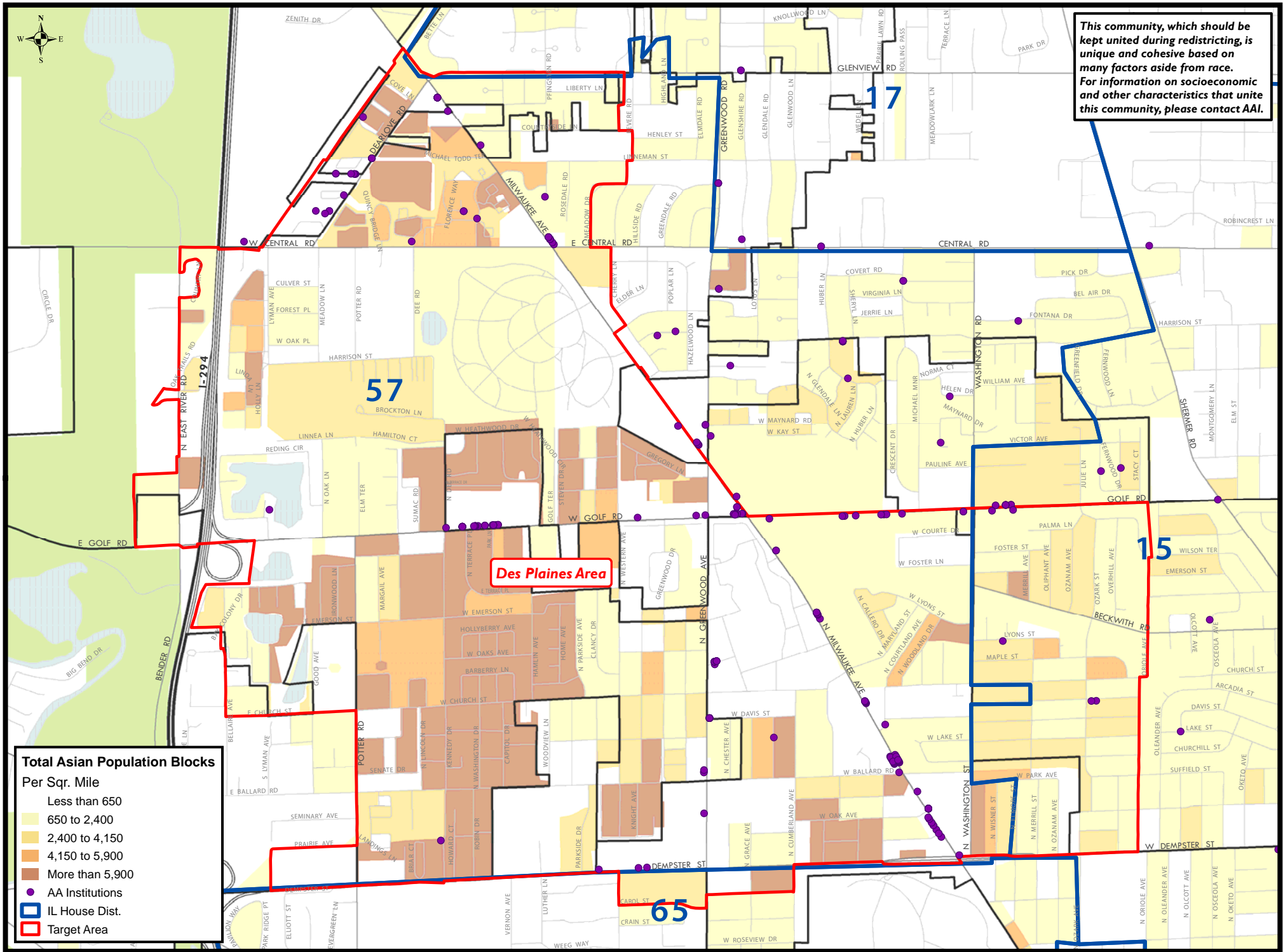
	Total	Latino	%	White	%	Black	%	Asian	%	% Total Cook County Asian Population	IL House	IL Senate	Total Sqr. Miles	Asian Pop. Per Sqr. Mile
Des Plaines Area	41,949	5,889	14%	20,127	48%	1,849	4%	12,805	31%	4.0%	57, 65, 15	29, 33, 9	4.1	3,123
Skokie Area	40,541	3,777	9%	20,671	51%	2,617	6%	12,094	30%	3.8%	15, 16, 17	8, 9	4.1	2,950
North Chicago Area	91,546	24,395	27%	33,618	37%	7,921	9%	22,344	24%	7.0%	11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 40	6, 7, 8, 20	3.9	5,729
Greater Chinatown Area	89,903	27,074	30%	24,763	28%	9,353	10%	27,420	30%	8.6%	1, 2, 5, 6, 9	1, 3, 5, 13	6.6	4,155
Total	263,939	61,135	23%	99,179	38%	21,740	8%	74,663	28%	23.4%				

Demographic Breakout of Clusters: Voting Age Population

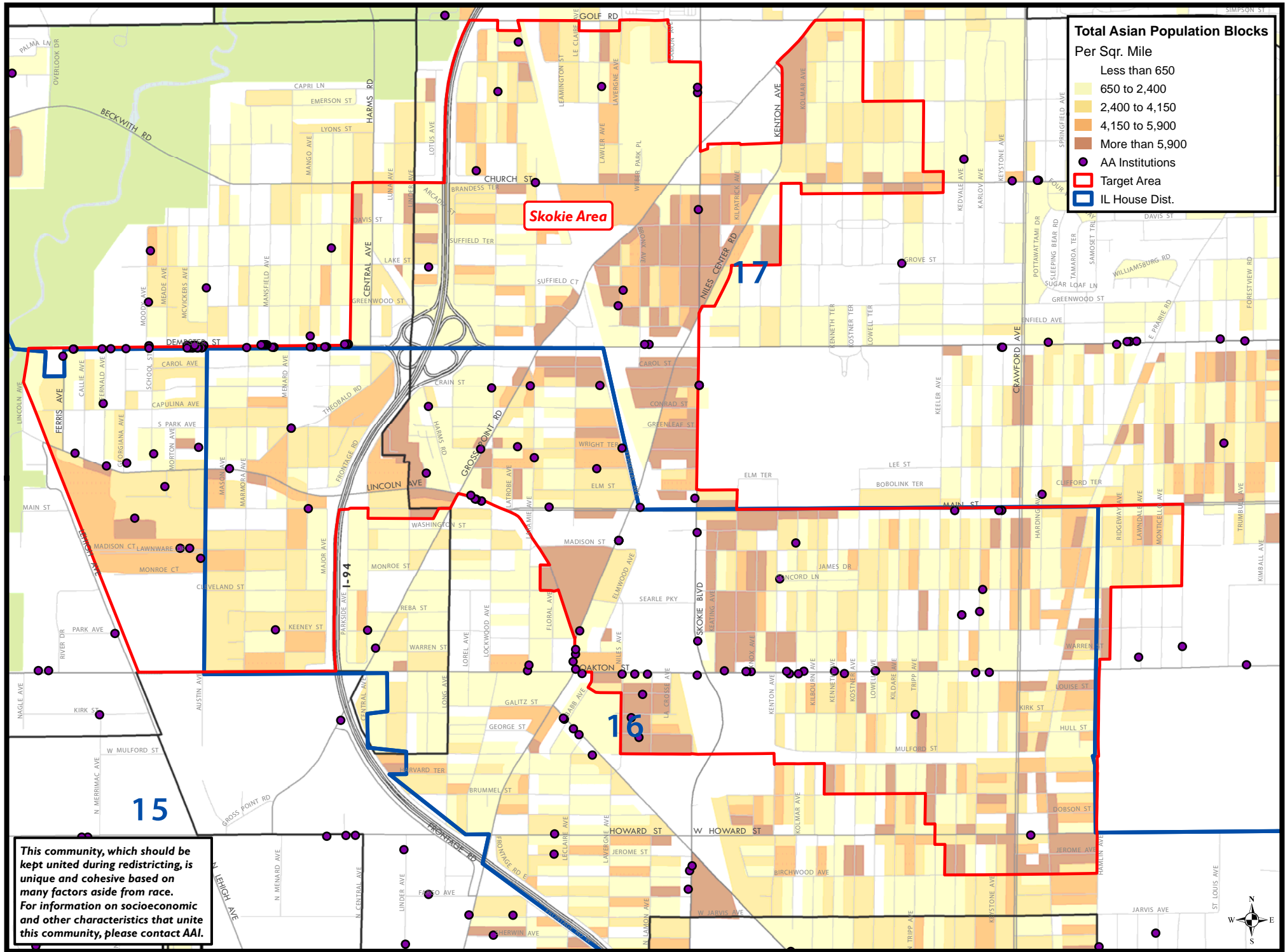
	Total	Latino	%	White	%	Black	%	Asian	%	% Total Cook County Asian Population	IL House	IL Senate	Total Sqr. Miles	Asian Pop. Per Sqr. Mile
Des Plaines Area	33,457	3,858	12%	17,390	52%	1,335	4%	9,957	30%	3.1%	57, 65, 15	29, 33, 9	4.1	2,429
Skokie Area	31,853	2,528	8%	17,393	55%	1,745	5%	9,341	29%	2.9%	15, 16, 17	8, 9	4.1	2,278
North Chicago Area	69,540	16,513	24%	28,105	40%	5,579	8%	17,191	25%	5.4%	11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 40	6, 7, 8, 20	3.9	4,408
Greater Chinatown Area	71,183	18,210	26%	21,993	31%	7,674	11%	22,411	31%	7.0%	1, 2, 5, 6, 9	1, 3, 5, 13	6.6	3,396
Total	206,033	41,109	20%	84,881	41%	16,333	8%	58,900	29%	18.5%				

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

Des Plaines Area Map



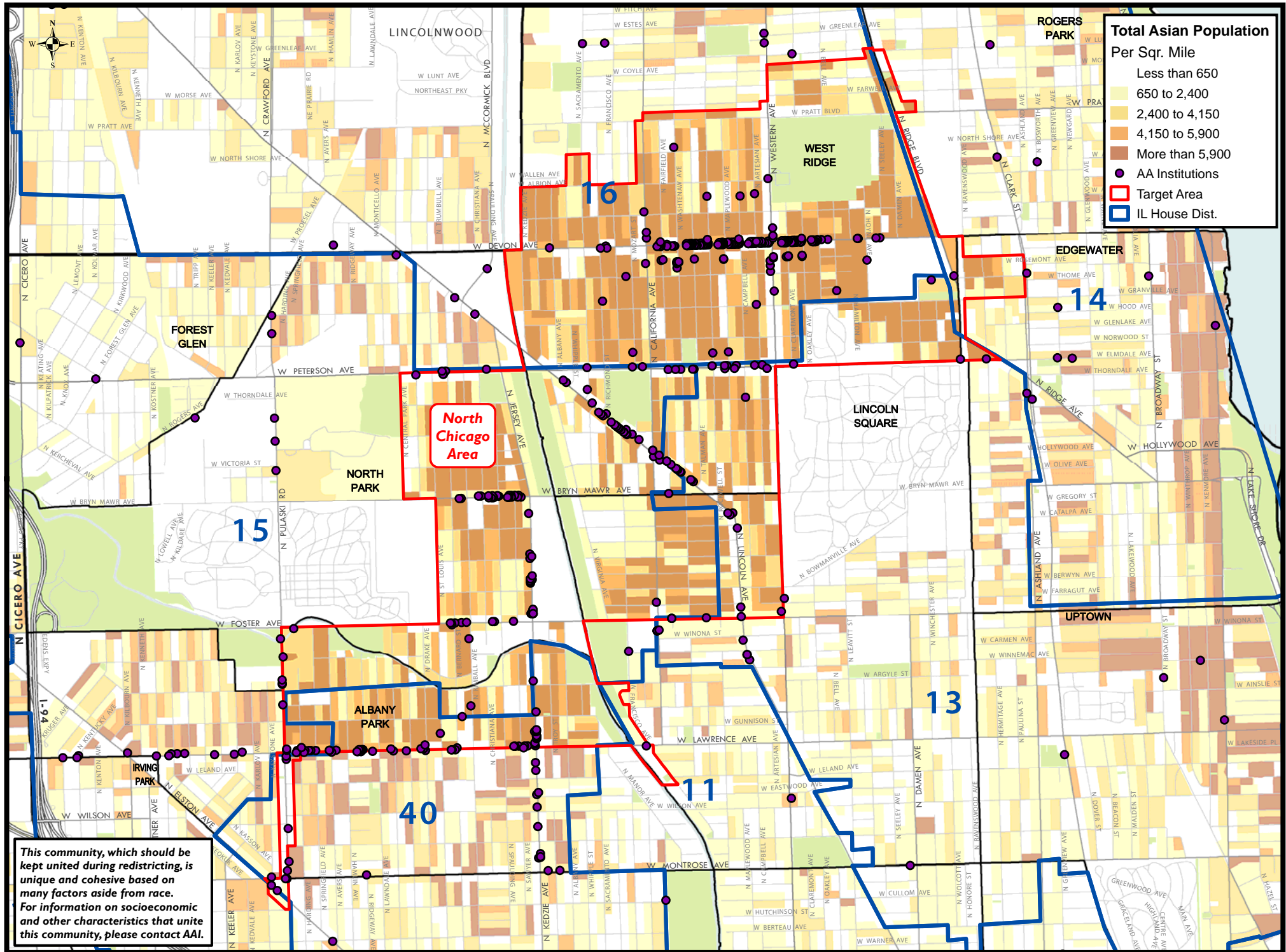
Skokie Area Map



This community, which should be kept united during redistricting, is unique and cohesive based on many factors aside from race. For information on socioeconomic and other characteristics that unite this community, please contact AAI.



North Chicago Area Map



This community, which should be kept united during redistricting, is unique and cohesive based on many factors aside from race. For information on socioeconomic and other characteristics that unite this community, please contact AAI.

Testimony to Illinois House Redistricting Committee
Rabya Khan, Community Member Rkhan44@gmail.com, 630-437-0069

April 25, 2011

Good afternoon Chairman Barbara Flynn Currie and Representatives. Thank you for holding this hearing and giving us the opportunity to speak today. My name is Rabya Khan and I am a community activist. I am here today on behalf of the Asian American Institute and the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago.

There is a growing Muslim and Asian population in Illinois. The Muslim American community contains significant percentages of minorities from the Arab-American, African-American, Latino American and Asian-American populations.

There is cohesiveness within the Asian American community at large. We come from different countries and religious backgrounds, but we share many cultural and social similarities. The Asian American Institute is also testifying today about the growing population of Asians in the Greater West Ridge area of Chicago, as well as the growing Asian population in nearby suburbs such as Skokie and Morton Grove. It is important and imperative that our voice and vote not be diluted.

Division of our community through redistricting will erase our voices, and make it even more challenging to organize and unite on common issues. This will in turn affect our ability to conduct voter registration campaigns, mobilize registered voters, and educate our community members about the electoral process. Our social and religious institutions such as mosques, temples and churches are built within already established communities and serve to help disseminate critical information relating to social services like English/citizenship classes, job training programs, social events, political events, and youth events. Our communities face a host of common issues such as the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate social services, especially for people with limited English proficiency and people new to this country.

One area with such concerns is the portion of Skokie that will be outlined today by Asian American Institute. This area of Skokie has long been and continues to be a home for Asians and other minorities, particularly people of Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, Filipino, and Korean descent. The residents of this area share many similar cultural, religious, social, political and economic concerns, including immigration, the need for culturally sensitive social services, ESL classes, citizenship classes, voter registration workshops, and healthcare reform. This area must remain united during the 2011 redistricting process, not only because of the high concentration of Asian Americans in the area, but also because of common social and economic concerns that are shared by residents of all races, including education opportunities, job development, improved transportation as well as assisting fellow community families through a food pantry program.

In Greater West Ridge and portions of nearby suburbs, there is a high concentration of Asian Americans as well as many institutions that are vital to our community, including non-profit organizations; religious institutions; schools; and ethnic media, retail, and commercial outlets. If the district lines divide these integral community institutions, it will be an additional challenge for our community to overcome.

District lines will have a direct effect on how responsive elected officials will be to our needs. For example, we already have established relationships with State Senators and Representatives near the Devon community in Chicago. They understand our needs for protecting undocumented students, language access to social services, citizenship classes, and English classes. An elected official who has a united, unique community within his or her district is more likely to understand this community well and be responsive to its needs. We have only begun to organize ourselves and increase our involvement with the electoral process. I hope our testimony today and our years of activism and organizing is taken into account by this committee in the redistricting process. I also request you to show community groups such as ours your draft maps so that we can give you specific input in response to draft district lines. Thank you.