



**TESTIMONY BY THE ASIAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES, RULES AND ETHICS AT
PUBLIC HEARING ON THE CITY OF CHICAGO'S 2011 REDISTRICTING PROCESS
NOVEMBER 14, 2011**

Submitted by:

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The Asian American Institute (AAI), which is a member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, with affiliates in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Washington D.C, is a pan-Asian non-profit with its mission being to empower the Asian American community through advocacy, research, education and coalition building.

Over the past two decades, the Asian American community in Illinois has doubled in size to 668,694 (2010 Census), numbering 166,770 in Chicago. Despite Chicago's overall population decreasing by about 7% according to the 2010 Census, the Asian American population in Chicago grew by 17%, or more than 25,000¹. We are one of the fastest growing groups in Chicago, growing at an even faster rate than Latinos.

In previous testimony, AAI urged the City Council to prevent any new ward lines from further fracturing long-defined and well-known Asian American neighborhoods, such as those in West Ridge, Albany Park, Uptown and Chinatown. We go one step further today. Given the fact that Asian Americans currently comprise at least 15% of the population in 5 different wards, any fair redistricting process that is led by the principle of keeping communities intact - and accounts for the Asian American community's growth in Chicago - should easily yield at least 7 wards in the new map with at least 15% of each ward being Asian American. In addition, there is simply no defensible reason to continue to split the Chinatown community between 2 separate wards. There is one Chinatown community in Chicago and it should be contained in one ward, comprising safely over 40% of that new ward's population.

To be clear, AAI does not advocate that the interests of the Asian American community take priority over other groups in this redistricting process. AAI stands in solidarity with other minority communities whose voting rights must also be protected during this redistricting cycle and we seek to work with others to ensure that all of our communities are fairly represented by the new ward map. As part of this goal, AAI has also requested that when the new map is finally released to the public, the Committee also makes publicly-available the demographic data on the racial makeup for each of the proposed new wards and the electronic "shape file" version of the new map. Without this information, the public will not be able to fully understand the impact the new ward map will have on their communities. Finally, while AAI reserves all options available to it in advocating on behalf of the Asian American community, we are fully committed to making a good faith effort in this redistricting process. Thank you for your time.

¹ Updated from the number provided in AAI's previous testimony on November 8, 2011 to include Census respondents who identified as Asian American along with another racial group.