



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 6, 2011

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Asian American Institute Submitted Community of Interests Maps at Senate Redistricting Hearing

Chicago, IL- Asian Americans from around the Chicago area testified for a second time in front of the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee on Wednesday, April 06, 2011. This time the Asian American Institute, member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, submitted maps containing three different areas in northern Cook County that are cohesive communities: the Des Plaines area, Skokie area, and northern Chicago (West Ridge and Albany Park) area. These three proposed maps represent unified communities with significant Asian American populations that are fragmented among several Illinois House and Senate Districts. Like Chicago's Chinatown area, the West Ridge/Albany Park area is divided amongst five House districts and three Senate districts.

"It is imperative that Asian Americans input is taken into consideration during the process of redrawing the new legislative boundaries," said Sung Yeon Choi-Morrow, Asian American Institute's community organizer. "Over the last decade, we have significantly increased voter registration, voter turnout, and overall civic engagement, but fragmentation of our communities across different districts has prevented us from electing the candidate of our choice."

The Wednesday hearing is the second public hearing scheduled to solicit input for the upcoming redistricting process. Four members of the Chicago area Asian American community traveled to Springfield to testify and visit with legislators.

"The new Illinois Rights Act of 2011 provides us with a powerful tool to protect the voting rights our community. Even though we may come from different countries, there are many cultural and social similarities between our groups," commented Kiran Siddiqui, executive director of the Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services. "Our community is united by our common immigrant histories, income levels, and access to services."

"We want to continue in our participation at the Redistricting Committee hearings so that we can encourage transparency and consideration of our interests," said Ahlam Jabara, interim executive director at Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago.

The Asian American Institute calls on state leaders to listen and respond to Asian American voices during the redistricting process and beyond, keep the Asian American community whole, and make the entire redistricting process transparent.

Redistricting testimonies and community maps can be found on AAI's Website at aaichicago.org.

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The Asian American Institute (www.aaichicago.org) is one of the leading pan-Asian nonprofit organizations in the Midwest, dedicated to empowering the Asian American community through advocacy, by utilizing research, education, and coalition-building. Asian American Institute, Asian American Justice Center, Asian Law Caucus, and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center are members of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.

