

Statement of Steve Chung

United Chinese Association of Brooklyn
To the
New York City Districting Commission
Public Hearing, Aug 13th, 2012
Brooklyn, New York

My name is Steve Chung, president of United Chinese Association of Brooklyn (UCA). UCA was founded in 2002 and its goal is to improve the well being of the Chinese immigrants and families in Bensonhurst. UCA is a member of The Asian American Community Coalition On Redistricting and Democracy (ACCORD) and we will endorse one of our member organization's map, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund's (AALDEF's) proposed city council district map called the Unity Map.

Current Districts in Bensonhurst

According to the 2010 census data, Asians Americans (AA) have the fastest growth rate, 32%, among all the racial groups in New York City since 2000. The AA population has surpassed the one million mark and constitutes almost 13% of the city's total population.

My testimony will focus on the Brooklyn neighborhood which our organization serves, Bensonhurst. Currently, Brooklyn's Sunset Park and Bensonhurst, are known as Brooklyn's Chinatown due to the recent spate of increase growth rate of more than 50% of AA population. Currently, AA constitutes more than 40% of the population in Sunset Park and 32% in Bensonhurst. Despite all this significant increase of population, no Asian American has ever been elected as a public official from Brooklyn.

Dilution

Currently, Sunset Park is divided into three city council districts - 38, 39, 43 and Bensonhurst is also cut into four city council districts -- 43, 44,47 and 50. These district lines severely split up the Asian American community diluting their voting strength and preventing them from electing a single candidate that can represent them. This dilution will further discourage an already low turnout in AA voting engagement because their vote will not impact the final election result.

Propose New Re-districting

In 2011, the State Redistrict task force (LATFOR) created the first ever AA majority political district in Brooklyn - Assemblyman District (AD) 49. AD 49 is 51% AA and unites the similar communities of interest of Sunset Park East and Bensonhurst West. UCA would like to propose a new AA influential district which basically builds on AD 49's 130,000 population and simply extends its district lines to cover the entire neighborhood of Sunset Park East and Bensonhurst West. As such, the new city council district (CD) will reach the required city council district population of 160,000 with an AA population of 69,000 which constitutes 43% of the total population. Consistent with the Voting Right Act and communities of interests, the AA

community in Sunset Park and Bensonhurst should be grouped together in one district so that they can elect a candidate of their choice.

Propose New Council District:

Neighborhood Area	2010 Asian Population	Total Population	Asian % Chg from 2000	% Asian in 2010	% of Asian to Total CD 43's population
Sunset Park East	37,281	72,340	62%	52%	23.1%
Bensonhurst West	31,917	88,727	57%	36%	19.8%

Huge disparity in receiving legislative grants

In New York City, even though Asian Americans constituted 10% of the city's population in 2000, Asian communities received less than 1% of public funds. In 2011, after months of rallies, briefings, press conferences, and lobby visits from the 12% And Growing Coalition, (alliance of more than 40 Asian advocacy organizations in which UCA is one of the members), discretionary funding for Asian led groups was just under \$1 million dollars which represent 2.7% of the total \$36.4 million City Council Discretionary funding. This is still a significant disparity compared to the population ratio of 13% in New York City's population.

In Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, the city council legislative grants allocation are controlled by the four CDs of 43, 44, 47 and 50. According to the City Council 2011 budget data base , the four respective council members control an overall average of \$800,000 in legislative grants. Despite the AA population of 33% of the total population in Bensonhurst, all three AA nonprofit organizations in Bensonhurst receive a total of \$86,000 from the four council members. The \$86,000 grant represents 10.8% of the total legislative grants which is significantly under its population ratio of 33%.

Many of the nonprofit organizations like us rely heavily on legislative grants to sustain their operations. By creating an AA population majority or an influential district, the council members in this district will likely allocate legislative grants fairly to the AA nonprofit organizations since the AA voters can determine their election result.

Conclusion

In Bensonhurst and Sunset Park, the AA new comers continue to inject new economic liveliness into the declining business left behind mainly by the Italian American community. AAs turned many of the empty warehouses into supermarkets and restaurants. They pump in new business and bring in millions of tax income into our city. Their economic contribution cannot be denied but their political engagement needs to be encouraged. The new proposed CD should create an AA influential political district. This will motivate the Asian population to participate more eagerly in voting or even run for public positions since their involvement would finally impact the election results.