



CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
THOMAS M. MENINO

September 6, 2012

TO THE CITY COUNCIL

Dear Councilors,

I thank you for the work you have devoted to the redistricting effort. All of you have given much to the process: perspective, deliberation, debate, and ultimately your vote. I appreciate that you addressed these challenging issues, led by your Chair and your President.

I am returning, with disapproval, your ordinance even though I recognize your efforts. My central objection is my concern that the plan concentrates our many citizens of color into too few districts, and in doing so may limit their equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.

Below and attached, I reference a number of suggestions in the spirit of cooperation and hastening the presentation of a plan that I can sign:

1. Avoid the over-concentration of protected groups in any district;
2. Provide reasonable opportunities for voters of protected groups to achieve proportionality in representation on the City Council;
3. Use a group's voting age population (or citizen voting age population where available) within a district as a percent of the total voting age population in that district as a basis of your evaluation of potential voter strength;

As you continue in this work, my administration is ready to assist. I recognize that the difficulty of more change isn't just political: people in your current districts don't just vote for you, they count on you. Nonetheless, I am optimistic that working with the constituencies and communities affected, you can arrive at a better plan sufficiently in advance of the November deadline. I will make available whatever tools, technical expertise, and personnel that might be helpful in your efforts.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor, City of Boston

ATTACHMENT

Over-concentration

The concentration of black voting age population and non-white voting age population in District 4 is of particular concern. Under the map passed, almost 70% of the district's voting age population is Black and almost 95% is Non-White. In a city where diversity is found broadly, I ask that you endeavor to avoid over-concentration of minority voters.

Proportionality

Voters from protected groups should have the opportunity to elect their candidates of choice in numbers that are proportional to their voting strength in the city, where reasonably possible. Almost 50% of the city's voting age population is Non-White. Though the task is not to guarantee the election of minority representatives, a plan should reasonably provide equal opportunities for protected groups to elect their candidates of choice.

Voting Age Population/Voting Strength

Voting Age Population (VAP) or, if available, Citizen Voting Age Population (CVAP) are the most accepted data on which to base a redistricting plan. The VAP in Boston according to the 2010 census is 513,884. In evaluating potential voter strength in any new plan, a group's VAP (or CVAP) within a district as a percent of the total VAP (or CVAP) in that district should be reviewed.