



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Calls for Transparent, Independent Redistricting Process that Puts Community Needs over Incumbent Protection

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY August 22, 2011

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Legislative redistricting task force holds public hearing in Buffalo Thursday

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Timothy M. Kennedy, D-58th District, reiterated his call for a transparent, independent redistricting process that focuses on community and neighborhood needs, rather than incumbent protection at a press conference Wednesday in Buffalo’s Lovejoy neighborhood.

“This year, New York witnessed the most productive legislative session in a generation, but the clock is ticking on a glaring piece of unfinished business that must be addressed,” Senator Kennedy said. “We need to end the incumbent protection program known as political gerrymandering.”

Prior to the 2010 election, 54 of 62 state senators signed the “N.Y. Uprising” pledge to enact independent redistricting reform before the 2012 map is redrawn. Earlier this year, Governor Andrew Cuomo introduced an independent redistricting program bill that would have drawn fair lines for 2012, but the Senate’s Republican Majority has blocked efforts to bring it to the floor for a vote.

“I’m calling on all of my colleagues to keep their word and pass independent redistricting for 2012 as they pledged they would,” Senator Kennedy said. “Let’s turn this campaign promise into progress delivered.”

Governor Cuomo has stated that he will veto any gerrymandered plan that is drawn unfairly to protect incumbents. Senator Kennedy has vowed to help sustain the Governor’s veto, if it should come to that point.

In the past, all of Lovejoy was inside the 58th Senate District, but when the Senate lines were redrawn 10 years ago, the neighborhood was cut in two. Half of Lovejoy sits in the 58th District, and the other half is in the 60th.

“Strong neighborhoods have always been a hallmark of life in Western New York. Letting out-of-town politicians split neighborhoods apart just isn’t right,” said Buffalo Councilman Rich Fontana, who represents the Lovejoy District. “The process of remapping the State Legislature and Congressional Districts needs to be open and transparent, and the public

would be best served by an independent process that focuses on neighborhood needs first.”

“A politically-motivated redistricting process does nothing to strengthen neighborhoods,” Senator Kennedy added. “Rather than tear neighborhoods like Lovejoy apart, the reapportionment process should be about building districts that unite neighborhoods which share a common vision for progress and growth.”

As the Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment (LATFOR) – which redraws the legislative map – prepares for its public hearing in Buffalo Thursday, Senator Kennedy encouraged Western New Yorkers to make their voices heard by getting engaged in the process and attending the public hearing.

“This is Western New York’s opportunity to remind Albany that when they redraw the map, they need to focus on protecting communities and neighborhoods, rather than protecting incumbents and majority party control,” Senator Kennedy said. “I encourage the public to make their voices heard.”