



**Testimony of José Antonio Oyola, Jr. for LatinoLines
Before Philadelphia City Council's First Public Hearing on Redistricting
August 16, 2011 Council Chambers, City Hall Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

www.LatinoLines.com

I am Jose Oyola of LatinoLines and also the marketing director for the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights.

LatinoLines is a coalition of non-partisan civic activists, devoted members of the Latino community, and longtime Philadelphians. Testifying with me today is Jose Perez, Esq. of Latino Justice of New York. His organization is expert in voting redistricting and will discuss some of our major concerns.

As the recent census numbers have confirmed, Philadelphia finally reversed five decades of losing population thanks mainly to growth in the Asian and Latino communities. An impressive gain has been registered in the Latino community of over 59 thousand residents and almost all of that growth was in the Latino population center in and around Philadelphia's Seventh Councilmanic District and areas that ***used to be*** the Seventh Councilmanic District.

It has also been widely reported by numerous authorities that the Seventh Councilmanic district is one of the most gerrymandered districts in both the city and in our nation.

For too long, the Latino community has been gerrymandered, diluting its voting strength and in many instances, eroding its viability as a community of interest.

For years, voting districts in Latino neighborhoods have been 'cracked,' "fractured," "packed" and diluted, costing residents their true power and place at the table. LatinoLines is respectfully asking that our growth in the city's census be reflected with a natural, logical 60% Latino population for the Seventh Councilmanic District.

Look, if you just enclose the current areas of new Latino population growth, it naturally fits in the Seventh District and the city would have a reasonable, healthy and economically viable Seventh District.

We are respectfully asking the Philadelphia City Council to draw new and proper lines to reflect the viable and growing Latino communities in our city, with the ultimate goal of allowing their political voices to take their natural course among the leadership of the City of Philadelphia.

For more of the history on this entire matter, attorney and former city councilman Angel Ortiz will detail the trail and trajectory of gerrymandering that put the current lines of the 7th District in conflict with the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He will show how this 'community of interest' is having their civil rights violated under those terms. Attorney Jose Perez of LatinoJustice – PRLDEF will discuss the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and how it prohibits the dilution, and fracturing so noticeable in the current Seventh Councilmanic District and our colleague civil rights historian, Wynne Alexander will summarize our points and look to future.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to look at this longstanding civil rights problem.

Latino Lines

WHEN YOU PURPOSEFULLY DILUTE OUR VOICE, YOU TAKE AWAY OUR RIGHT TO HAVE A CHOICE