



**Testimony of Wynne Alexander 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 Wynne Alexander with LatinoLines, author and civil rights advocate.

Philadelphia's Latino community gained almost 60 thousand people according to the United States Census of 2010.

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 more economically viable Seventh District.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibits 'vote dilution' in redistricting.

I am now quoting the *American Civil Liberties Union Guide on Voting Rights and Redistricting* which I can make available to the Council:

"Two provisions of the Voting Rights Act, Sections 228 and 5-29, prohibit the use of voting practices or procedures, including redistricting plans, that dilute minority voting strength"

"Three techniques frequently used to dilute minority voting strength are "cracking," "stacking," and "packing." "Cracking" refers to fragmenting concentrations of minority population and dispersing them among other districts to ensure that all districts are majority white. "Stacking" refers to combining concentrations of minority population with greater concentrations of white population, again to ensure that districts are majority white. "Packing" refers to concentrating as many minorities as possible in as few districts as possible to minimize the number of majority-minority districts. All of these techniques may result in a districting plan that violates the Voting Rights Act, as well as the Fourteenth Amendment." End quote.

The extremely peculiar shape of the Seventh Councilmanic District, the obvious dilution, the fracturing, the fact that it combines communities with different interests and distant physical locations and is barely contiguous, all mark it as a classic example of gerrymandering.

And let's remember - not only were people removed from this district-but the economic engines and businesses were also removed from this district.

If you look at a map of the Seventh from 1960, the Sugar House Casino would have been in the Seventh Councilmanic District. All of that economically thriving waterfront would have been in the Seventh District.

And what a crushing irony - 'Sugar House' - named for an industry, chosen for its historic presence in this area of Philadelphia. "Sugar House," a name chosen because of all the sugar that came in from Jack Frost and other sugar companies to Philadelphia for refinement. And along with that sugar from Puerto Rico, came the Puerto Rican sugar cane workers, who built that industry, through hard work, expertise and remaining loyal Philadelphians. To think that we are separated from our community of interest, separated from our friends and neighbors, separated from the waterfront and the successful industry that we so diligently, painstakingly worked to develop --

This crushing irony can no longer be allowed to exist.
This *illegality* can no longer be allowed to exist.

In the name of the 1965 Voting Rights Act:
we want our district back
we want our neighbors back in our district
and we want the boundaries to include the economic engines that would make our district flourish in the future.

With a proper Seventh Councilmanic District, the Latino community of Philadelphia will finally have in this century what it should have had in the last.

LatinoLines looks forward to seeing the Council's maps and looks forward to testifying at that time as well. Sincere thanks to you for your time and consideration today.

LatinoLines

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