

# Our View: Pointes lose 14th District

*By GPN Staff on April 29, 2021*

The release this week of state population numbers — Michigan had just a hair under 10.1 million people, as determined by the 2020 Census — makes the start of the reapportionment process very real. That means it's time for people in the Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods to put together a strategy they can deliver to Michigan's new Citizens Redistricting Commission.

The goal: to keep the communities together within the new districts formed for the U.S. House of Representatives, the Michigan House and the Michigan Senate.

Michigan's population growth of 2 percent over the last decade was not enough to prevent the loss of a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives to states in other regions that are growing much faster. The state will now have 13 representatives, losing the designation of the 14th District to which this area belongs.

**The census data needed to apportion districts is not expected to be available until August**, but the Redistricting Commission already is taking comments. The next step is 10 public hearings around the state beginning in May, which are designed to precede any district mapping efforts.

The five Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods currently are divided into two state House districts. They've lost whatever clout they should have been able to exercise together as relatively small cities tucked between the behemoth that is Detroit and the natural boundary that is Lake St. Clair. On its face, that makes an immediate case to keep this part of Wayne County in one state House district under the "community of interest" guideline.

The redistricting commission has other guidelines it must follow first, according to speakers at a recent League of Women Voters forum. First and foremost, all districts must be of similar size and adhere to rules in the federal Voting Rights Act. They must be contiguous. Only then, can the commission consider the needs of diverse populations and communities of interest.

**While it's not the first priority**, the community of interest guideline certainly gives residents and groups here an opportunity to emphasize how important it is to keep the cities together.

Local residents may also want to make a case for belonging to a community of interest that influences how the bigger districts are drawn for the state Senate and Congress. As discussed at the League forum, factors can cover a wide range: historical or economic interests, ethnicity or culture, municipal or school district boundaries, natural resources or other environmental concerns and so on.

For example, residents of this area might want to argue that the towns and neighborhoods stretched along the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair form a community heavily invested in Great Lakes-related issues. Such a district might encompass stretches of both Wayne and Macomb counties, for example.

That would certainly be a pleasant change from the status quo. The 14th Congressional District, for example, is considered one of the most gerrymandered districts in the entire country, according to the League presentation. As a result, this area — and the part of Detroit that lies along the river — have been represented by someone from Oakland County for the past decade.

Other common interests may be worth considering — but they're meaningless if residents don't name them and speak up for them. And the process needs to start now.

**League members stand ready to help** prepare presentations for the Redistricting Commission. They can be reached by email at [lwvgrossepointe@gmail.com](mailto:lwvgrossepointe@gmail.com). Further information is available by watching the recording of the League forum, with a link available at the group's website, [lwvgrossepointe.org](http://lwvgrossepointe.org).

The Citizens Redistricting Commission is already taking comment by email at [redistricting@michigan.gov](mailto:redistricting@michigan.gov).

**Hearings to take testimony** are tentatively scheduled June 8 and 10 in Oakland County, June 15 and 17 in Detroit, and June 24 in Warren. (Time and place not yet available on the commission website, [michigan.gov/micrc](http://michigan.gov/micrc).) The commission also holds weekly meetings on Zoom; recordings also are available.