2. Sumbission by: Michael Slade

-------- Original Message --------

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| **Subject:**  | [Latfor-info] (no subject) |
| **Date:**  | Sat, 23 Jul 2011 08:50:44 -0400 |
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LATFOR staff

As per the Task Force’s request to Nathan Jaschik, here is some background information on the redistricting maps he presented at LATFOR hearing in Rochester this week.

I am a retired physicist/software systems engineer who has been interested in the redistricting problem for over 40 years.

This year in addition  to this work I prepared a redistricting alternative for Monroe County Legislative redistricting and I believe this was the only alternative map presented to the County redistricting commission. I also worked with the Genesee Valley Chapter of the NYCLU on their challenge to the Orleans County districts which resulted in Orleans County changing their map and an informal investigation into the Cayuga County plan.

The maps that which were shown to you  were prepared using a free publicly available software page called ‘Dave’s Redistricting’ online at <http://gardow.com/davebradlee/redistricting/davesredistricting2.0.aspx> .

It was set to use the US Census 2010 data by VTD (Voting Districts). Using the total population for New York State of 19,378,074 and the appropriate number of Districts (ie. 27 for NYS Congressional seats), I happened to have worked roughly west to east creating districts of appropriate population.

The VTD data on the site was spot checked against a database built directly from the Census 2010 data files for New York State available on the Census.gov website.

While the dataset as part of the package now makes available 2008 vote totals for US. President, these were ignored in creating my maps. Since none of the areas covered by my maps were under Voting Rights Act jurisdiction, minority populations, although available in the dataset were also not referenced. I did not extend the State Legislature maps into counties where there are NYS Constitution requiring minimum numbers of seats.

This tool is an excellent way of demonstrating what can be done by practically anyone to create non-gerrymandered districts (I’ve shown it to 4th, 5th and 6th graders). However, it is limited to VTD scale data.

There are other free or low cost software that in combination with the data directly from the Census Bureau which can give finer gradation data.

In the 2000 redistricting, at least one State government made available online software for individuals to do redistricting. This time there are several projects that are doing this either independent of or with the cooperation of various State governments.

In at least one state, Virginia, there was a public contest to do redistricting and this software could be combined with the Census data and TIGER file maps for a New York State project.

I have also had the opportunity to test one of the expensive ($4800 PER year per seat) commercial packages against this online package in a Monroe County redistricting mapping. Everyone uses the same Census Data and TIGER file maps so the only differences in resources are the fineness of the data ( down to the block/tract level) in the expensive packages.

I have also used the full block/tract data and TIGER files in the free MapWindow software.

My purpose in doing these sample redistricting maps is to demonstrate that compact, none gerrymandered districts are quite easy to create; the hard part is having the political will to do it.

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Thanks
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