

February 6, 2012

The State of New York Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment Group that is responsible for setting the new district lines for the State Assembly and Senate have released their eagerly awaited redistricting maps. Floral Park's representation remains relatively unchanged by the senate redistricting, with the proposed State Senate District 7 mostly following the contours of our present State Senate District. Therefore, every constituent within the Village of Floral Park will be represented by the same Senator under the proposed maps.

The senatorial senate lines were primarily drafted by the Republican controlled senate, which is led by State Senator Dean Skelos of Rockville Centre. State Senator Jack Martins' hometown of Mineola will remain in the same district as Floral Park. Long Island may even pick up an additional senatorial district, making 9 of the 63 senatorial districts located on Long Island.

The State Assembly redistricting maps lines, which were primarily drafted by the Democratic controlled assembly led by Assemblyman Shelly Silver of New York City, could be of much greater concern to Floral Park voters. Floral Park is currently represented by two Assembly Districts with Floral Park residents in the Town of North Hempstead, north of Jericho Turnpike, being represented by Republican Assemblyman Tom McKeivitt, while the vast majority of Floral Parkers in the Town of Hempstead are currently represented by Republican Assemblyman Ed Ra.

We were hopeful that the redistricting process would result in the reunification of the Village of Floral Park within one Assembly District. Not only will that not happen under the Democrat's redrawing of the Assembly Districts, but the vast majority of Floral Park will be placed into an entirely new district number 22, which joins Floral Park with the communities bordering the Cross Island Parkway to our south. The proposed Assembly District 22 roughly includes Floral Park south of Jericho Turnpike, Belmont Park, Elmont, North Valley Stream, Valley Stream and Lynbrook. While our current Assembly Districts tend to follow Jericho Turnpike east through our sister LIRR Mainline communities, the proposed 'new' Assembly District 22 tends to follow the Cross Island Parkway south in the areas roughly between Jericho Turnpike and Sunrise Highway.

The Department of Justice's required demographic profile for the proposed 128,931 resident Assembly District 22 will have 43.15% Non-Hispanic White; 25.01% Non-Hispanic Black; 18.13% Hispanic; 10.65% Non-Hispanic Asian; and 242 Non-Hispanic American Indian, making up .19% of the new district. If Proposed Assembly District 22 as crafted by the Democrats' task force members is approved, our current Assemblyman Ra will no longer live in our 'new' district. In fact, Proposed Assembly District 22 currently has no Assembly Member living within this newly created district. Therefore, whoever may ultimately represent Floral Park's interest in Albany is truly a mystery.

Please be assured that Floral Park's elected representatives are closely following this process. Our objective is to simply request that our legislative districts be fairly drawn to include other sister communities that have similar legislative concerns and needs. While our current senate and assembly districts are in keeping with that goal, whether the 'new' assembly district will cause a dramatic change in the legislative objectives of the representatives in the Assembly is of some significant concern.

We hope that the State Assembly map makers are not trying to gerrymander this new district in order to disenfranchise and maybe even punish Floral Park for our proud tradition of letting our elected representatives know and hear our concerns loud and clear. Obviously, should a new Assembly District including Floral Park be created, Floral Parkers in this year's elections will need to make sure that anyone who wishes to become our elected representatives in Albany will continue to put our needs at the top of their priorities. While presidential election results in New York this year may be a forgone conclusion, our local elections, which have a more immediate and direct impact on our community, certainly are not. Therefore, please be sure to register to vote and exercise your constitutional right to vote. Your Floral Park neighbors are depending on you like no other time in our long and proud history!