



City of Bowie

15901 Excalibur Road
Bowie, Maryland 20716

January 23, 2012

The Honorable Michael E. Busch
Speaker of the House
Maryland House of Delegates
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our very serious concerns with Governor O'Malley's Proposed Legislative Redistricting Plan. I appreciate the time and the candor. It was good of you to take time to review both the plan and our recommendations to improve it.

As I indicated during our discussion, we appreciate the challenges associated with this task but we remain very disappointed by a proposal that arbitrarily divides District 23 into two sub-districts, with confusing boundaries that bisect our city, local neighborhoods and even several precincts. A sub-district that stretches from Bowie State University to near Joint Base Andrews does not appear to have the best interests of those who live there at heart.

We would strongly repeat our request for an amendment to the proposal that would remove the division of District 23 into sub-regions A and B and make the district whole with three delegates representing all of District 23. As you are aware, District 23 was split into A and B sub-districts ten years ago to create a majority minority district in 23B. Since the entire District 23 now has a population that is majority minority, the need for the sub-districts would no longer seem to exist. Or, if the division must stand for a purpose that is not clear to us, we would strongly suggest that the division make 23B the single-member district and return 23A to a two-member district. In this way, the legislature could accomplish what the Redistricting Task Force and the Governor both aimed to do with this redistricting proposal – that is keep communities, with common interests together in single districts or sub-districts. We have heard the arguments against this idea but quite frankly, we do not believe they justify the continued division of the fifth largest city in the state.

Letter to Speaker Michael Busch
Re: Legislative Redistricting
January 19, 2012

We have enclosed two documents. The first is a letter from former Delegate Joan Pitkin that we believe very eloquently represents our position. The second is a rough example of how 23A and 23B could be redrawn to include the bulk of the City of Bowie in one sub-district, and still result in two sub-districts that are majority minority.

If there is anything we can do as this matter proceeds forward that will help us achieve our goal, we await your advice. Thanks again for your thoughtful consideration and your hospitality.

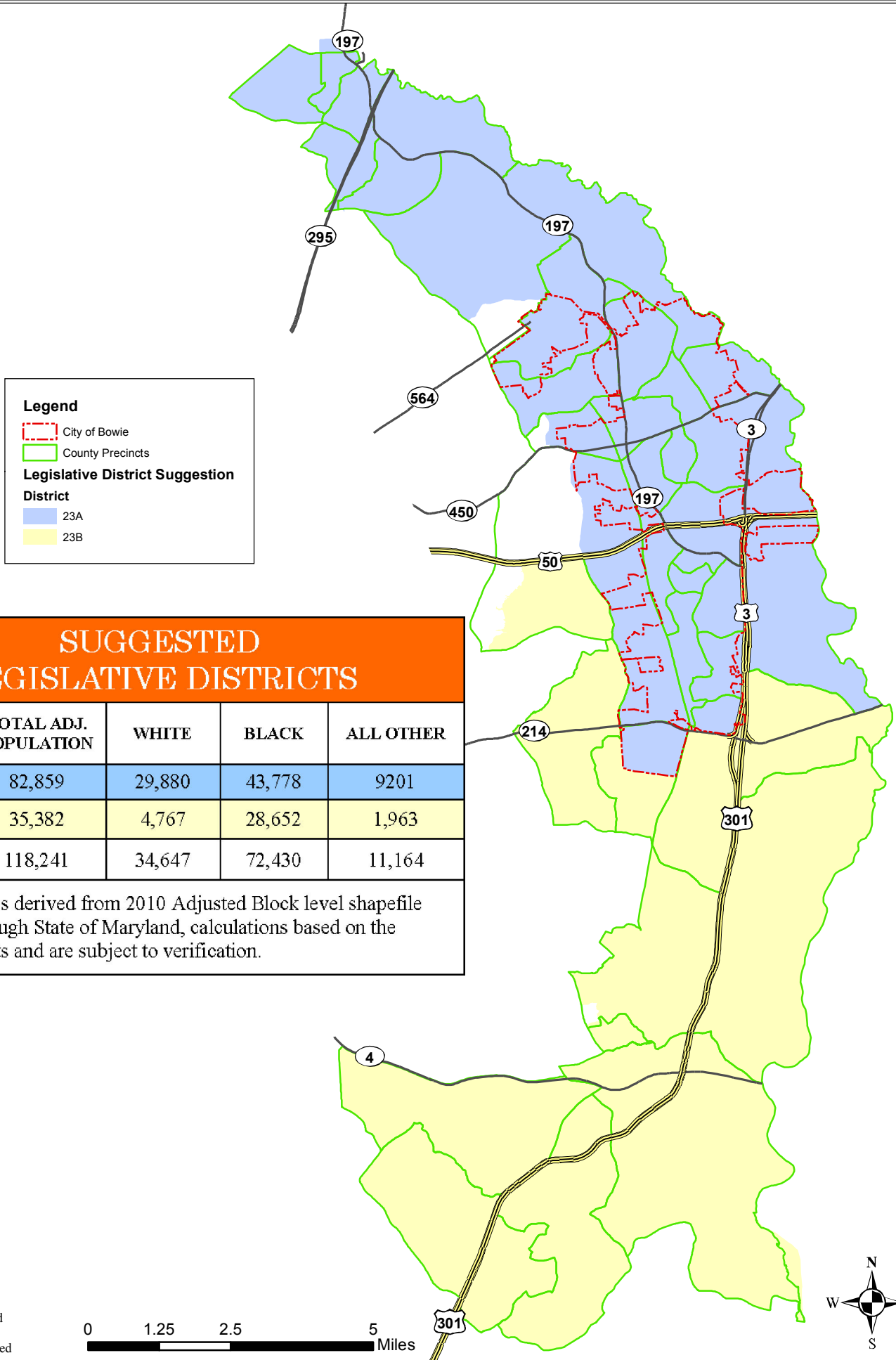
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Frederick Robinson". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bowie City Council
G. Frederick Robinson
Mayor

cc: 23rd District Delegation

Suggested Districts 23A & 23B



Legend

- City of Bowie
- County Precincts

Legislative District Suggestion

District

- 23A
- 23B

SUGGESTED LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS

DISTRICT	TOTAL ADJ. POPULATION	WHITE	BLACK	ALL OTHER
23A	82,859	29,880	43,778	9,201
23B	35,382	4,767	28,652	1,963
Total	118,241	34,647	72,430	11,164

Population figures derived from 2010 Adjusted Block level shapefile downloaded through State of Maryland, calculations based on the suggested districts and are subject to verification.



Ms. Linda C. Janey
Assistant Secretary of Communications
Maryland Department of Planning

Dear Ms. Janey,

As a resident of Bowie, since 1961 and a former state delegate, who represented the 23rd District in the General Assembly for 24 years, until the 2000 Redistricting Commission and the court forced the three incumbents into two seats, I take great umbrage at the new division proposed by the Commission of my wonderful City. While I lost that 2002 election, at that time I joined with the City in supporting the division of District 23 into two subdistricts to increase minority participation in the electoral process. That 2000 goal has more than been achieved, as District 23 is almost 70% majority minority population today.

Bowie is a uniquely integrated, and diverse community, politically, culturally and spiritually, and we happily live our lives here. We are a united multi-cultural citizenry, many of whom volunteer on the City's Advisory Committees, and all other aspects of spiritual, social, educational, civic, political and recreational life of our community. This is what makes Bowie the great city it is. Our City is strong because we are united in our community of interests, very involved, ethnically diverse and color-blind. I suggest that to divide us as your Redistricting Plan does, would do us great harm. It would weaken us, dilute our community efforts, our civic pride and create real tensions where there appear to be none now.

The Governor and the Lt. Governor will remember that Bowie enjoyed the highest voting turnout in the State of Maryland in Early voting in the last Primary election and it was no accident. Indeed the Governor chose to have his final rally after the Early Primary Voting in front of the Bowie Library to acknowledge this accomplishment. The cohesiveness and community spirit embodied in our local elected officials' participation made that happen.

Bowie prides itself on its economic development, its civic accomplishments, its community amenities, its environmental benchmarks, as well as its very family friendly culture. Bowie has proven to be a singularly unique community where many of its young people, raised here, come back as parents, to raise their own children here because of the community- cohesiveness and the amenities the city provides. Bowie is a terrific community where I raised and educated my own four children.

It seem more than appropriate to reunite the 23rd District, as the Commission Chair has lauded its own efforts to reunite many towns and municipalities across the state. We find it inexplicable that Bowie appears to be the only municipality so divided with no compelling justification. The parties that originally apparently sought this division I am told have called for the "line to be lifted". There seems to be no real value to any group nor compelling need to divide this diverse and family friendly community into separate voting districts.

I urge you to delete the arbitrary division of District 23 by making us "whole " again as it was in 1978 when I first ran for the House of Delegates. Please eliminate subdistricts 23A and 23B and unite the City once again into a single district with three at large delegates. This seems to be a most easy simple solution and would not appear to have a deleterious effect on any other districts. Reuniting Bowie in one Legislative District is of the greatest importance to the citizens of Bowie, many of whom have registered their opposition to the Commission's Plan. They and I see this as a common sense and reasonable solution.

I would strongly urge your support for this position.

Yours truly,

Joan B. Pitkin
Former State Delegate 23rd District