

## Koy Kunkel\_SC

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**From:** applications.administrator@capitol.local  
**Sent:** Monday, February 22, 2021 5:05 PM  
**To:** Senate Redistricting  
**Subject:** INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input  
**Attachments:** AAPI Congressional District Map Central TX.pdf

Date: 2021-02-22  
First Name: Ashley  
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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Senate

### Message:

Hi, I'm Ashley Cheng, representing the Texas AAPI Redistricting Coalition. I'm a graduate student in social work at the University of Texas at Austin. My request to each of you on the committee today is to establish a fair and open process for these maps -- not one that diminishes the ability of any minority group to elect a candidate of their choice or that manipulate maps for racial or partisan gain.

This country is built on the promise of immigrants and on the value of each of our differences. My family moved to Austin in 1969 and opened one of the first immigrant- owned Chinese restaurants in this city. We have a decades long strong AAPI community we've been involved in throughout our area. Fun fact. My dad actually trained under the chef in Taiwan who invented General Tso chicken. What would this country be without lo mein and all of our favorite Chinese American takeout dishes? Don't you think people like my family have earned a real, collective voice in our government as well? To be honest, my father and I hold vastly different political views, but we have a lot in common when it comes to the interest of AAPI communities and the value of equal representation. We need to prioritize keeping ethnic and language minority groups together and neighborhoods whole in these maps -- not just because it's the right thing to do to ensure these communities are effectively heard but because, thanks to the Voting Rights Act, it's the law.

It will not only make the process of government more representative for those who share a common language and culture but more efficient for those in power. Right now the area where I and most of my family members live in North Austin that has the highest AAPI density, is cracked into three US Congressional districts...just a few miles apart yet spread out as TX 10, TX 31 and TX 17. There is another large swath of highly concentrated AAPI communities in Southwest Austin, which is represented by yet another two different Congresspersons.

We go to the same restaurants and grocery stores. We attend the same churches, mosques and temples, and yet our voices are divided and minimized into further minoritization -- practically rendering us invisible when it comes to political power. In non pandemic times, my mother, who lives in TX 25, and I, in TX 10, would have each driven less than

10 minutes from our houses to come together to go to the same buddhist temple called Fo Guang Shan Xiang Yun, near the 360 bridge, to pray and enjoy the Lunar New Year festivities, like dragon and lion dances and firecrackers and handing out red envelopes to children. This temple is almost exactly on the dividing line that separates us.

AAPIs represent the fastest growing community in Texas. According to 2018 data, the AAPI community comprises more than 1.5 million Texans. As Mr. Potter mentioned in his presentation, we're seeing large growth in our AAPI populations, which is expected to continue with the new census. After English and Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Hindi and Tagalog are the next most common languages spoken in this state. And yet, despite these numbers, Texas has never sent an AAPI person to Congress. There are unique needs for AAPI communities, such as language accessibility for important government resources and voting rights within our districts.

Finally, representing AAPIs is nuanced and complicated. AAPIs make up a tremendous diversity in language, culture, education, and socioeconomic needs. While data needs to be disaggregated to understand the true picture of who we are as a community, we also deserve the opportunity to band together to receive fair representation and visibility.

Please continue to hold virtual committee hearings throughout the entire session and especially ones after we have Census Data, so we can get public buy in and the communities' voices heard. Research from Blind in 2006 and Hetherington in 2004 have shown that when citizens have more confidence in the fairness of our democratic systems, they are more likely to have trust in those institutions, be civically engaged, and abide by their laws. Doesn't that sound like stuff we all want?

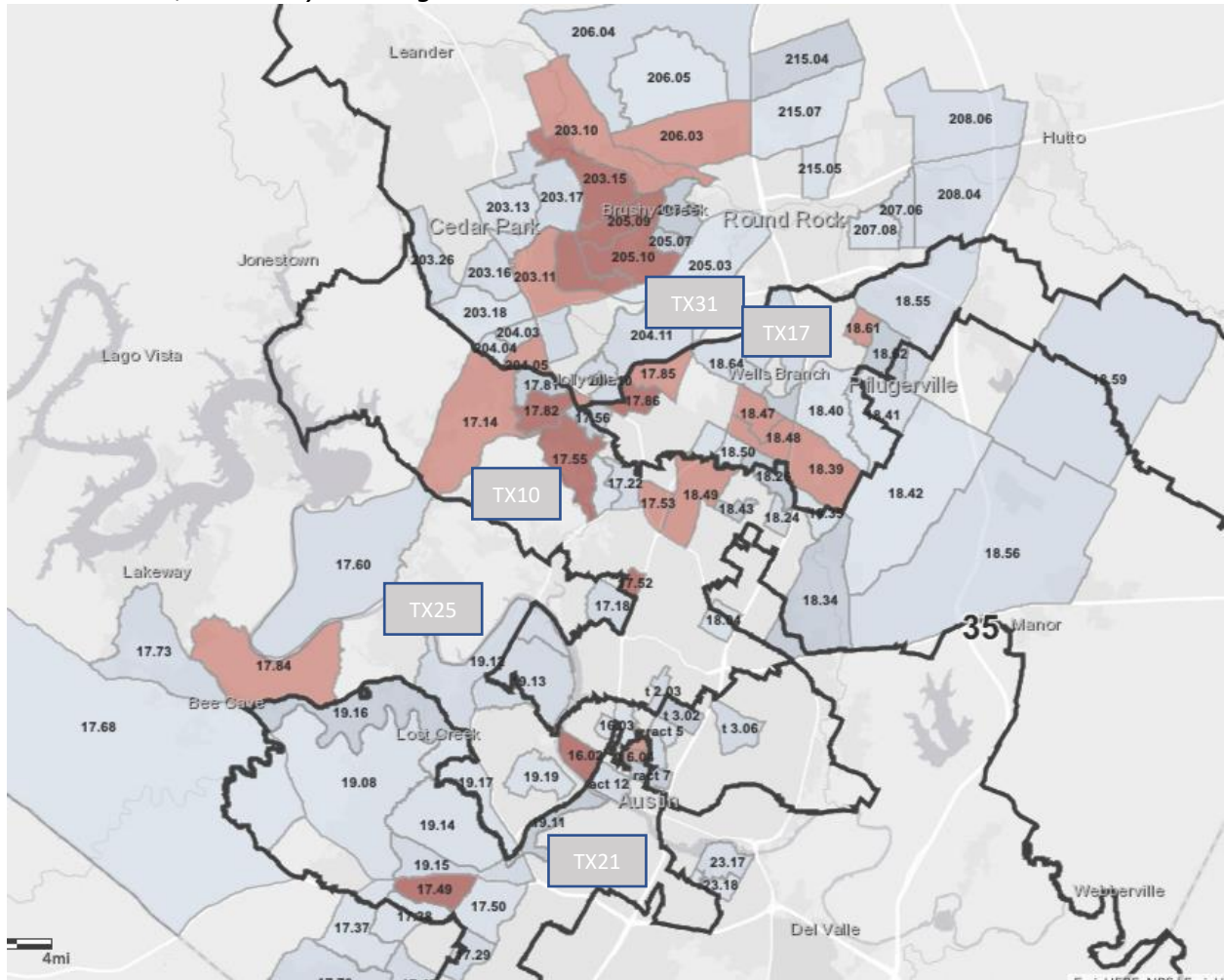
The lack of accessibility and maps openly on display for the public were cited as one of the major criticisms in the 2011 redistricting process from a US District Judge. Let's not make that same mistake again. Let's honor the Voting Rights Act instead. Please Guarantee that you will hold public hearings at least 14 days before any bill with new maps is passed out of committee, as well as after once the maps are drawn, and allow adequate time of at least 5 days to review any changes to proposed times.

I hope you'll consider these words as you draw the maps that will ultimately decide how our collective voices are heard in government. I hope that you'll create a fair and open process.

Thank you.



## Highest AAPI Density Census Tracts (2010 data) Central Texas, divided by US Congressional District



### ACS race and Ethnicity and electoral districts

