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CONTACT: Emily Stack Davis
517-803-3745
PR@hillsdale.edu

Hillsdale College Submits Memo to Independent Redistricting Commission

The memo encourages the commission to view citizens as individuals, not as members of special interest groups

Hillsdale, Mich. — Recently, Hillsdale College submitted a memo to the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC). The memo highlights the serious deficiencies of a report similarly submitted to the Commission by the University of Michigan (UofM) that argues for a “new theory of representation” based, not on individual, voting citizens, but on “communities of interest.”

[The Hillsdale memo](#), 25-pages in length, was written by Stephen Markman, Hillsdale College Professor and retired Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice. Professor Markman points to a series of issues within the UofM report, most notably that it encourages the drawing of representative districts according to “interest,” which can be “racial,” “ethnic,” or “religious,” among others. This, according to Markman, will likely result in “gerrymandering,” or partisan redistricting, and will make representatives more responsive to special interest groups than to the needs of individual citizens — “We the People.”

Professor Markman has written [a piece for *The Wall Street Journal*](#) titled, “The University of Michigan Guide to Gerrymandering.” It details the memo and its recommendations and he states:

The Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission can do the public a great service by uniting behind an electoral map that curtails gerrymandering, partisanship and self-dealing. Or it can continue these same abuses, albeit in a camouflaged manner, by transforming the people of Michigan’s towns, cities and townships into a mere assemblage of favored and disfavored interest, identity and affinity groupings.

Markman observes in [another piece for *The Detroit News*](#) titled, “Redistricting Michigan depends on definition of ‘community’” that:

UM’s report encourages politicized decision-making by imposing upon the commission a broad range of decisions concerning which among uncountable numbers of interest, affinity and identity groups should be favored with “community of interest” status, and which should not.

The better alternative, the memo suggests, is to follow Michigan’s long history of relying upon county, city, and township lines when possible. Counties, cities, and townships, the Hillsdale

memo states, “are where the people reside; where they sleep, play, relax, worship, and mix with families, friends and neighbors... In short, these places are meaningful to every Michigander, for they serve to define what we call ‘home’ and they signify to the rest of the world where we are ‘from.’”

The Hillsdale memo also reminds the Commission that they are bound by the state and federal Constitutions, as well as related court precedent. “The [UofM] Report,” it points out, “incorrectly states that the concept of ‘communities of interest’ is an entirely ‘new’ concept in Michigan law. It is not.” As proof, it cites a unanimous decision by the Michigan Supreme Court in 1982 that addressed the redistricting process and identifies “communities of interest” most often with cities and townships.

The Hillsdale memo concludes with numbered recommendations to the commissioners and for redistricting. These recommendations will help commissioners understand their role under the Michigan Constitution and establish good precedent in Michigan and across the nation for decades to come.

The full text of the Hillsdale memo can be accessed [here](#) and is available to the public. Link: <https://info.hillsdale.edu/redistricting>

Professor Markman will be attending an ICRC public hearing in Muskegon on Tuesday, June 29, where he will present to the commissioners his memo and offer to answer any questions they might have.

Hillsdale College commissioned the report because of its interest in preserving “the blessings resulting from civil and religious liberty” in Michigan and across the nation. To do so, it encourages a right understanding of the Constitution and the system of representative government it enshrined into law.

Professor Stephen Markman has taught constitutional law at Hillsdale College for nearly three decades. He served on the Michigan Supreme Court for 21 years, including two as the Court’s Chief Justice. As a member of the state’s highest court, Professor Markman is experienced, well-respected, and well-known for his sound, fair, and sharp legal reasoning. As illustrated by his years of public service, he takes the well-being of his fellow Michiganders to heart.

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 5.7 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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Updated on July 8, 2021, to include information about Professor Markman’s Detroit News article.