

RESOLUTION No. 2021-

RELATIVE TO EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR COMPACT, CONTIGUOUS, AND INTEGRATED CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

BY:

Council Chairman Kenny Tompkins
Council Member Frank Soda
Council Member John Spanbauer

WHEREAS, because of the federal decennial census, New York State must redraw district lines for the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission is presently accepting public comment on the redrawing of congressional districts in New York State; and

WHEREAS, since 2013, nearly all residents of the City of Niagara Falls have lived in the 26th Congressional District, which unites the cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda, Tonawanda, Buffalo and Lackawanna with contiguous towns and villages; and

WHEREAS, Niagara Falls' placement within this district has been wholly and entirely proper, given that the City of Niagara Falls and the City of Buffalo and the adjacent communities are integral components of the Niagara Frontier, a compact and contiguous region of New York State with an integrated economy and many shared interests; and

WHEREAS, the current 26th Congressional District, including the City of Niagara Falls, meets all of the generally accepted criteria for a good-government district, including compactness, contiguity, and preservation of communities of interest, as well as combining residents of shared interest throughout the district; the maintenance of this type of district with Niagara Falls included therein is essential to the growth and betterment of our City; and

WHEREAS, from 2003 to 2012, the City of Niagara Falls was situated within the so-called "Earmuff District," which rather than connecting Niagara Falls to Buffalo instead connected our community to metropolitan and suburban Rochester more than 80 miles to the east; and

WHEREAS, the so-called "Earmuff District" stretched from Niagara Falls north to Porter and Youngstown, then traversed across the shores of Lake Ontario, through portions of 10 towns in Niagara, Orleans and Monroe counties, including the City of Rochester and additional towns to that city's southeast; and

WHEREAS, inclusion in the so-called "Earmuff District" clearly violated the generally accepted criteria for good-government redistricting, particularly in terms of compactness and preservation of communities of interest; and

WHEREAS, draft maps have recently circulated in various publications which have suggested that – solely for partisan political purposes – the State of New York should re-establish an "Earmuff District" that would reunite the City of Niagara Falls, among other Niagara Frontier localities, with the City of Rochester; and

Kennedy_____ Soda_____ Spanbauer_____ Voccio_____ Tompkins_____

WHEREAS, the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission recently released two sets of maps, both of which removed Niagara Falls from being paired up with Buffalo in the same congressional district; and

WHEREAS, adoption of one of these maps drafted by the Independent Redistricting Commission would result in the first instance in decades wherein Niagara Falls is decoupled from Buffalo in a congressional district; and

WHEREAS, given the many similarities shared by Niagara Falls and Buffalo, it is unwise to place these two localities in different congressional districts; and

WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon the City Council of the City of Niagara Falls, New York to make its voice heard on behalf of City residents as critical decision-making lies ahead in terms of congressional redistricting; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that in the congressional redistricting process, the City Council of the City of Niagara Falls, New York does hereby encourage the City's inclusion in a congressional district with other densely populated municipalities within the Niagara Frontier, including, but not limited to the City of Buffalo, and does hereby discourage any effort to re-establish a so-called "Earmuff District" connecting any portion of the Niagara Frontier to the City of Rochester; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this City Council does hereby encourage the decision-making authorities, including, but not limited to the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission, the New York State Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment and/or the New York State Legislature to couple the City of Niagara Falls with the City of Buffalo, and to reject all efforts to re-establish a so-called "Earmuff District," or any district which seeks to similarly connect the Buffalo and Rochester metropolitan areas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this City Council does hereby encourage the decision-making authorities, including, but not limited to the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission, the New York State Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment and/or the New York State Legislature, to adhere to the *New York State Constitution, Article III, Section 1, Paragraphs 3 and 4* with regard to the requirement for the preservation of cores of prior districts when engaging in the congressional redistricting process; and be it further

RESOLVED, that certified copies of this Resolution be sent to the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission (250 Broadway, 22nd Floor, New York, NY 10007), the New York State Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment (250 Broadway, Suite 2100, New York, NY 10007), the Speaker of the New York State Assembly and the Majority Leader of the New York State Senate, and to the local offices of the Representatives in Congress in New York's 26th and 27th Congressional Districts.