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Dominican group eyes gains in redistricting in 'Silk Stocking District'

BY FRANK LOMBARDI
DAILY NEWS UPTOWN POLITICAL COLUMNIST

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Bryan Smith for News

Proposals by Dominican Roundtable would alter Reps. Charles Rangel and Carolyn Maloney's current Congressional districts to favor Hispanics.

Advocates who dream of electing the country's first Dominican-American member of Congress want to do it at the expense of upper East Side Rep. Carolyn Maloney.

Known as "the Silk Stocking District," Maloney's 14th Congressional District (CD) currently represents portions of Manhattan and Queens. Its population is 65.7% white to 13.7% Hispanic, based on new Census figures.

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A redistricting plan crafted by the Dominican American National Roundtable would radically change the 14th CD's lines to take in Dominican-heavy [Washington Heights](#) and [Inwood](#) and then range through a Hispanic-friendly [Bronx](#) corridor into south Yonkers, [Westchester County](#), with a growing Dominican population.

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Just like that, the new 14th CD's population would flip, becoming 60% Hispanic to 16.2% white.

While Maloney, who was first elected in 1993, could still run in such a new district, she presumably could lose to a Dominican.

A spokesman for Maloney said, "Congresswoman Maloney has not seen the plan and therefore can't comment."

The Dominican Roundtable, a national advocacy group for the country's 1.4 million Dominican-Americans, will present its plan next Thursday at [Bronx Community College](#) to the state's Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment.

The proposed Maloney mauling is coupled with a major - but largely benign - redrawing of the 15th CD, long represented by [Harlem Rep. Charles Rangel](#).

Currently, Rangel's district is virtually all within [upper Manhattan](#), and includes Washington Heights and Inwood. The district has undergone a demographic transformation over several decades, and is now: 26.5% black; 46.1% Hispanic; 20.9% white and 4.2% Asian. At least half of the Hispanics are Dominicans, according to Census data.

Up to now, the Dominican Roundtable had favored a redistricting of the 15th CD that would have picked up some additional Hispanic constituents in the [South Bronx](#). But that version had the potential of pitting blacks and Hispanics against each other for political control.

Nestor Montilla, chairman of the Dominican Roundtable, said the new redistricting plan would preserve the 15th CD as an African-American district, while also crafting a new Hispanic-majority district with the 14th CD.

The 15th CD's new lines would pick up neighborhoods along the southern crescent of the Bronx to roughly Interstate 678, at the [Bronx-Whitestone Bridge](#). The lines would then proceed north through a corridor of Bronx turf along I-678, and pick up a chunk of the northeast Bronx (including [Co-op City](#)) and much of [Mount Vernon](#) in Westchester County, all areas with sizable African-American populations.

Again, just like that, under the Dominican Roundtable's proposed new lines the 15th CD's demographics would become 41.2% black, 23.7% Hispanic, 27.9% white and 4.7% Asian.

Ostensibly, the new lines would be more favorable to a post-Rangel African-American candidate. Rangel hasn't commented, but is said to view the proposal as basically a nonstarter.

Maria Teresa Feliciano, president of the Dominican Roundtable, said that based on population gains by Hispanics one or more additional new Hispanic-majority districts are warranted.

The state will lose two of its current 29 seats due to reapportionment after the new Census.

"We have two seats; we've had two for the past 20 years," [Feliciano](#) lamented. "Based on demographics, the Task Force will be hard-pressed to come up with a map that doesn't include at least one additional Latino-majority district, whether it's our or some other proposal."

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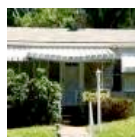
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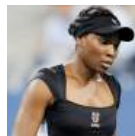
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