



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF OREGON**

March 4, 2013

To: House Rules Committee  
Representative Chris Garrett, Chair

Re: HJR 17 and HB 2686 Independent Redistricting Commission

The League of Women Voters is a 93-year-old grassroots nonpartisan, political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. The Oregon League conducted a study on Redistricting in Oregon in 2007 <<http://voteoregon.org/issues/study-reports/study-report-library/#2>>, and after a consensus process among Oregon members, the study concluded with the Redistricting Position that is attached. Based on the League's study and position, a nonpartisan independent redistricting commission is the "best practices" for drawing representative political districts, and we can whole-heartedly support HJR 17 and HB 2686.

I would first like to impress on you the urgency of these proposals. The closer we get to the next redistricting in 2021, the harder it will be to accomplish these changes to the redistricting process, because of the political considerations involved.

Secondly, we would like to suggest that the criteria for drawing districts in HJR 17 could be rearranged into two logical groups:

- The first group is those criteria that are **mandatory**, such as contiguous, equal population, district nesting and adherence to federal law (Voting Rights Act) and court decisions.
- The second group is those criteria that should be co-equally considered together with other criteria to the extent practicable, but are **not mandatory**. Criteria in this group could include geographic boundaries, political boundaries, communities of interest, transportation links, and moving voters between districts.

To this second group the League would add "partisan competitiveness" based on our study and position, which would allow voters to more likely choose their public officials, rather than the other way around.

Finally, we would like to impress on you the importance of this legislation. Without it, our voters and districts could be susceptible to the distortions of democratic representation that we have seen in other states in 2011.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Robin Wisdom  
LWVOR President

Norman Turrill  
Redistricting Portfolio

**LWV of Oregon  
Redistricting Position  
Adopted 2007**

*Congressional and legislative redistricting should advance the fundamental purposes of representative democracy and a republican form of government by affording the people a meaningful choice in electing their representatives and holding the government accountable to the people.*

*The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that the Oregon legislative and congressional redistricting system should be efficient, adequately funded, based on well-defined criteria, subject to a reasonable and effective timetable, and have an open and public process.*

*A. Any redistricting plan should assure that voters are effectively able to hold their public officials accountable, responsible, and responsive, and be based on the following criteria:*

- Adhere to all federal constitutional and legal requirements, such as that every district should have equal population, be contiguous, and meet the requirements of the Voting Rights Act;*
- Promote competitiveness and partisan fairness;*
- Consider other criteria, such as respect for political subdivisions, communities of interest, and geographic barriers.*

*B. Any redistricting plan should be developed independently of the Legislature in a nonpartisan manner with substantial public input. The Legislature may be afforded an opportunity to review the plan and accept or reject it.*

*C. The Oregon Supreme Court should promptly review and rule on any challenge to a redistricting plan and require adjustments if the criteria have not been met.*

*D. Oregon should conduct redistricting only once during each decade following the federal census.*