



Redistricting Matters

March 30, 2015

To: House Rules Committee
Representative Val Hoyle, Chair

From: James Ofsink
Chair, Redistricting Matters Coalition
Chair, City Club of Portland Redistricting Committee

Re: HJR 29

The Redistricting Matters Coalition is a group of organizations that recognizes the importance of protecting and strengthening fundamental government structures. We advocate for changes that enhance the fairness, transparency, and efficiency of Oregon's redistricting process.

Although the Legislature did an excellent job completing redistricting in 2011, our study of the process indicates that the success was due in no small part to the personalities, talents, and commitments of the specific legislators and staff members involved. Political factors such as the split House also contributed to the first un-modified, legislatively passed redistricting plan since 1911.

Through considerable research and deliberation our coalition has come to support the idea of creating an independent commission to perform redistricting. Creating a clear separation of duties follows national and international best practice and avoids real or perceived conflicts of interest of legislators drawing the districts in which they themselves will run. Independent commissions can be constructed to be insulated from partisanship, while reflecting the diverse geographic, demographic, and cultural character of the state.

HJR 29 represents a new idea in Oregon redistricting with numerous new contributions to the dialogue surrounding redistricting reform. As part of our research we reviewed prior proposals involving panels of retired judges and had concerns about the number and diversity of individuals who would be eligible to serve. Additionally, some aspects of the

resolution may be better placed in statute instead of the Constitution. Although we have some different ideas about the specifics, we support the general concept of creating an independent commission and commend Representative Buehler's vision and leadership in putting this forward.

As proponents of good government we strongly believe that in the long term, good processes benefits both political parties and all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time considering this important matter.

