

League of Women Voters of Deschutes County Speaks Out on Redistricting

Chair and members of the Redistricting Committee:

In the weeks since the November 2020 election, state lawmakers across the country have filed more than 100 pieces of legislation to limit voter access. These include imposing more aggressive voter ID laws and voter-purging policies, and throttling back on vote-by-mail options, no-excuse absentee voting, and automatic voter registration. In addition to this flurry of legislation, all states, including Oregon, are preparing a redistricting plan based on the 2020 Census data. Planning and forming voting districts is yet another way state governments can legally restrict and/or dilute your vote.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization and believes responsibility for redistricting should be vested in an independent special commission with voters choosing their representatives, not the representatives choosing their voters.

A report prepared by the City Club of Portland entitled, *Lines That Don't Divide*, stated, "In 2011, the Oregon Legislature completed plans for redrawing the lines of legislative and congressional districts for the first time in a century without the help of the Secretary of State or changes ordered by the courts. Legislative observers attribute this achievement to the close balance between Republicans and Democrats in both chambers and the personalities of the leaders who chaired the redistricting committees." "The recent [2011] success of Senate and House members in Salem, however, masks what has been one of the most contentious and partisan activities of Oregon's elected lawmakers. While legislators exhibited bipartisan cooperation and openness during the 2011 redistricting process, more typically, charges of bias, unfairness and gridlock characterize redistricting efforts. Many see redistricting as exacerbating excessive partisanship in Salem." Excessive partisanship has not waned in the past decade.

Since it appears that the 2020 Census data will not be ready in time for the state legislature to meet its constitutional deadline of July 1 for district maps to be drawn, the next step will be to select a judicial panel to draw the maps. This is a temporary fix that is written into our constitution for just such a case as this. However, this is a great time to refer a constitutional amendment to voters for a permanent, nonpartisan citizens' advisory committee to draw voting maps.

*This is respectfully submitted by the League of Women Voters of Deschutes County
March, 2021*

References:

<https://www.pdxcityclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Lines-That-Dont-Divide.pdf>

<https://www.lwv.org/redistricting/people-powered-fair-maps-overview>

<https://www.lwv.org/redistricting/lwvus-position-redistricting>

<https://fab67f44-53c0-4d55-8f3f->

38f29e9a1504.filesusr.com/ugd/54a310_2da152868263459fbd4da5541bf46159.pdf?index=true