



The League of Women Voters of Virginia

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Delivered by Communication Director Karen Cronin, September 8, 2010 to the HofD P&E Committee RD hearing at Natural Science Center, VA Western Community college (Roanoke)

"My name is Karen Cronin and I live in Elliston, which is in Montgomery County. I am here to advocate for a bipartisan approach to redistricting and reapportionment. First I wish to thank the committee for holding these public hearings and for their efforts to engage the public in this process. So, thank you – and please keep up the good work in this area.

I support the creation of a bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission composed of individuals who are not elected officials and who represent the geographical distribution and demographic diversity of the state. Ideally, this bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission should consist of an uneven number of members.

Such a bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission would be charged with creating a redistricting plan for submission to the legislature as specified by the Virginia constitution. The charge of the bipartisan commission would also include consideration of natural geographic boundaries, jurisdictional boundaries, and competitiveness in addition to the requirements of equal population, contiguous and compact districts and the requirements of the Voting Rights act.

Without a bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission, I fear that we will retain the current system in which elected officials in effect choose their voters instead of the voters choosing their elected officials. A bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission can stop the cycle of gerrymandered protection of seats that has been occurring in this state. When the party in power shifts, they want to stick it to the other party who stuck it to them and on and on....As your mother said – just because they other guys did it doesn't make it right.

Some may claim that it is too late now to make a difference. It's never too late – the governor came out in support of such a commission during his campaign last year. In the 2010 legislative session, the State Senate passed a bill to establish a bipartisan redistricting commission. That bill was blocked from consideration in the house of delegates by Privileges and Elections Committee. I would think that if members of this committee were to change their tune and express support for a bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission, the governor would act.

Bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment will protect voters from unfair partisan gerrymandering and help ensure that every Virginian's voice is equal in Richmond.

I am sure that I am not the only voter who is sick and tired of partisan wrangling and whining from both sides of the aisle. It appears that every issue comes down to the best interests of the party and not

the best interests of the citizens. Please! A bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission may not stop all of that, but it would certainly be a step in the right direction."