



The League of Women Voters of Virginia

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Delivered by 1st Vice President, Lynn Gordon on December 2, 2010 to the Senate P&E Committee hearing at Tidewater Community College, Portsmouth, VA.

Chairman Howell, Senators Deeds, Northam, Blevins, and Quayle, Mayor Krasnoff, and fellow citizens, my name is Lynn Gordon and I live in Virginia Beach. I am here on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Virginia to advocate for a bipartisan approach to redistricting and reapportionment. First, thank you for holding these public hearings and for your efforts to engage the public in this process. Thank you, too, for the leadership you have shown in attempting to get a bill passed for a bipartisan redistricting commission during the past three regular sessions of the General Assembly

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports 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 commission should consist of an uneven number of members.

Such a bipartisan 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, the League of Women Voters of Virginia is concerned that Virginia 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.

I have only lived in Virginia since early 2003 but during that time I have had the opportunity to speak with and hear from elected officials on both sides of the aisle. From what I have learned, it seems that whoever is in power at the beginning of each decade has wanted to essentially stick it to the other party simply because the other party stuck it to them previously. As we were taught growing up: two wrongs do not make a right. It is time to put an end to this practice.

The League of Women Voters of Virginia asks that members of this committee continue your attempts to pass a bill for a bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission despite the brick wall you keep encountering with the other house. Perhaps with significant encouragement the governor will act to see that it is established.

Bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment will protect voters from unfair partisan gerrymandering and help ensure that every Virginian's voice is equal in Richmond. Working in a bipartisan manner to accomplish redistricting in Virginia might even help to ease the lack of civility we have been experiencing in recent election cycles.

Members of the League of Women Voters of Virginia are among the many voters who are 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.