



2019 ACTION PAPER - REDISTRICTING AND CENSUS

The League is committed to transparent, accountable, redistricting processes that reflect the full diversity of our state and that uphold the bedrock principle of “one person, one vote”. Voting is our basic and fundamental right that lets us decide the choices of our future. We must ensure that our election maps reflect the will of the people and uphold the integrity of our vote.

LWVTX urges the 86th Legislature to support an autonomous, Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission and a state redistricting process and standards that promote fair and effective representation with maximum opportunity for public scrutiny. Our priorities include:

Redistricting: What’s wrong with the current process?

Partisan battles over redistricting have been occurring for decades. The current redistricting process gives the majority party the upper hand and often the minority party is shut out of the map-making process. Maps are drawn to ensure the reelection of incumbents, making a challenge very difficult.

Therefore, it is the League’s strong belief that the power of redistricting should be vested in the people by creating an independent citizens commission, with membership that reflects the diversity of the unit of government, including citizens at large, representatives of public interest groups, and members of minority groups. Furthermore, decision-makers should be free of conflicts of interest.

Support

- Passing proposed plans by the redistricting authority with more than a simple majority vote,
- Using clear criteria for establishing districts—not only abiding by the U.S. Constitution and the federal Voting Rights Act, but also recognizing communities of interest and the political boundaries of cities and counties.
- Extending outreach to communities and public access to redistricting tools, proposed plans and data used to allow meaningful participation,
- Increasing transparency by implementing full public disclosure throughout the redistricting process with meetings that are subject to open meeting laws,
- Creating a specific, public timeline for the steps leading to a redistricting plan,
- Creating plans that demonstrate due consideration of public input, which is to be collected at public hearings.

CENSUS: An accurate census count is vital to the well being of all Texans?

If we cannot accurately size our population, we cannot effectively govern our state. Not only does a scientifically accurate census count ensure full representation to all people living in Texas, it also is used as the basis for the allocation of billions of dollars in federal funds and grants. These funds pay for projects and services that keep our economy robust and Texas secure in the face of crisis. An accurate census count is also crucial to the private sector, which uses this data to plan for future development and market expansion.

Support

- A full and accurate census count of everyone living in the U.S., regardless of age, citizenship, immigration status, and ability or eligibility to vote,

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- The removal of barriers to full participation in the census, including questions based on country of origin,
- The creation of a Complete Count Commission that would be tasked with developing strategies to ensure full participation in the census,
- Strengthening cyber-security and data collection for the census,
- Counting incarcerated or detained persons in their place of residence or their family's residence, rather than at their place of incarceration, for purposes of reapportionment and redistricting.

Did You Know?

Recent research by Boston College and the Federal Reserve Board of Governors shows that in gerrymandered districts, constituents are likely to lose access to credit, putting small business owners and low-income borrowers at a disadvantage. That same research showed that this effect was not present in states that used nonpartisan commissions and/or criteria to draw their district maps. The political scientists involved in the research attributed this effect to politicians being insulated from risk of defeat at the polls.

Freely choosing their representatives is an issue of deep principle for voters of all political stripes. In the first-ever bipartisan survey on partisan gerrymandering and the Supreme Court:

- An overwhelming majority (71 percent) of Americans want the Supreme Court to place limits on lawmakers' ability to manipulate voting maps. This includes 80 percent of Democrats, 68 percent of Independents and 65 percent of Republicans.
- 62 percent of voters are less likely to support a candidate who supports partisan gerrymandering.
- 73 percent of voters support removing partisan bias from redistricting, even if it means their preferred political party will win fewer seats.

Campaign Legal Center (2017, September 11). Partisan Redistricting – New Bipartisan National Poll. <https://campaignlegal.org/document/partisan-redistricting-new-bipartisan-national-poll>

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