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LWVSC Testimony, H.5683, Midterm Redistricting

We are here to address legislative and election processes and a potential outcome that are fundamentally at odds with representative democracy. The national League of Women Voters has said recently that “State legislatures redrawing their maps mid-cycle reflects political gamesmanship that erodes public trust in our democracy. Redistricting must be fair, transparent, and rooted in the voices of voters.” That ideal is not what is under consideration here. It is political gamesmanship in support of a demand for national power. It is not fair, it is not transparent, and it is not rooted in the voices of voters.

We know that South Carolina has been found to have a constitutional partisan gerrymander in both federal and state supreme courts. Our state is not in violation of *Louisiana v. Callais*. This midterm redistricting is therefore questionable under the Purcell Principle, which prohibits major election changes immediately before an election. Other states may justify last minute changes as needed to correct a constitutional deficiency. South Carolina cannot.

The damage that is being done by this attempt to minimize the congressional influence of more than 40% of the people of South Carolina will live on for a very long time. Members of this General Assembly know better than most of its citizens that this is not a “red” state that can be represented by a single party. It is a diverse state with complex social and economic issues. That diversity is reflected in statewide and national election outcomes.

Nevertheless, under pressure from Washington our General Assembly has cobbled together a legislative strategy and a radically altered primary election process that would diminish the ability of the state’s people to influence how they are governed. This lacks respect for all South Carolinians, regardless of their party. South Carolina and its people are pawns in someone else’s power game.

Most of the public doesn’t understand the arcane technical and legal issues surrounding redistricting. They do understand when they are told that they don’t matter to their government. They do not miss understanding this in the impact of major legislative changes rushed through in a week, in an election rescheduled, their districts and candidates altered, their candidate preferences and possibly their actual ballots that have already been cast no longer relevant. They will see the potential for their congressional representation distorted by districts that reflect none of the sound redistricting principles that have been developed over the years. They will understand that all of this is in the service of crafting an election outcome dictated from Washington before they have an opportunity to vote. Finally, they will understand that this is an abandonment of the most important underpinnings of our republic, the representation of its people in its government.

Please act with integrity for our state and its people. End this redistricting process now.

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