

Public Submission to the West Virginia Legislature Joint Committee on Redistricting

Date Document Received: August 26, 2021

Description: 4 Pages

Disclaimer of Liability and Endorsement: The attached document was prepared by a private citizen or organization and submitted to the West Virginia Legislature Joint Committee on Redistricting as part of the information-gathering process. The views, content, and opinions expressed in this document are solely those of the third-party preparers and do not reflect the views, legal opinions, or in any way represent official action of the West Virginia Legislature Joint Committee on Redistricting, the West Virginia Senate, the West Virginia House of Delegates, the West Virginia Legislature, or their members (collectively, "the West Virginia Legislature"). The attached document is provided for information and convenience of the public. Reference to any specific redistricting plan, map, district, or process does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the West Virginia Legislature. The West Virginia Legislature makes no claims, promises, guarantees, or warranties about the contents, errors, or omissions in the content of the attached document. The West Virginia Legislature expressly disclaims responsibility for the content of the attached document.



Statement Prepared for the **League of Women Voters of the Huntington Area**

WV Public Hearings on Redistricting, August 26th, 2021

My name is Nyoka Baker Chapman and I have been appointed to make a statement on behalf of the League of Women Voters of the Huntington Area where I am on the Board of Directors.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan volunteer organization that supports informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate, but is engaged in local, state, and issues of importance to our communities. The League works to influence public policy through advocacy and education. League membership is open to all men and women age 16 or older.

One of the most important issues for our organization at this time is fairness in the process of redistricting.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to speak out as advocates for fair maps in this public setting before members of the WV Joint Redistricting Committee.

In order for the one person one vote rule to truly work we must see an end to the unethical practice of all forms of gerrymandering. Current WV district maps are confusing and so often appear to defy West Virginia Constitutional requirements. Yet, Article I, Section 4 & Article VI, Section 4 very clearly instruct how apportionment is to be enacted.

1-4 'Every citizen shall be entitled to equal representation in the government, and, in all apportionments of representation, equality of numbers of those entitled thereto, shall as far as practicable, be preserved.'

4-6...'That districts shall be compact, formed of contiguous territory, bounded by county lines, and, as nearly as practicable, equal in population, to be ascertained by the census of the United States.'

We want to see county lines, contiguous perimeters, and communities kept whole in compact districts.

Defining a community of interest may relate to a geographical area that shares cultural, historical or economic interests. Another example would be school districts or an area that depends on the same water source and shares the same public services. Proximity to polluting industries may be at issue. With the exception of communities of interest that are contained in adjacent municipalities, the division of incorporated cities and towns which have their own unique personhood could be at issue.

Our state has not passed legislation to support an independent commission, but that doesn't mean that the current redistricting committee is not capable of drawing fair maps. The WV Joint Redistricting Committee is fully capable of prohibiting the cracking and packing we so often see in examples of gerrymandering.

We want to be able to see newly drafted district maps before they are attached to a bill and signed into law. This would allow for genuine transparency and authentic public input into the redistricting process. The time to hear potential criticisms of new maps should be before they are attached to a redistricting bill. No one wants to see the kind of ongoing litigation that happened 10 years ago or complaints taken to the WV Ethics Commission.

Redistricting tools/Apps are readily available for citizens to create their own maps. We would like to know what tools/applications the WV Joint Redistricting Committee are using and who are the experts in charge of actually drawing the maps. We need to be able to zoom in on the new district maps to street levels to make accurate district assessments.

WV is facing serious issues going into this decade and we have to be prepared to work together to do a lot of creative problem solving to increase our national rankings in almost every area of governmental concern. We have no time to waste.

Accurately drawn electoral maps will allow the needs of citizens to be most accurately communicated to their representatives. Local solutions can become state solutions.

We are dependent on the integrity of our WV Joint Committee on Redistricting to perform their job to the highest ethical standards with respect to guidelines set forth by the WV Constitution and the one person one vote rule promised to WV citizens. Our new WV districts can set a shining example to other states by having some of the fairest maps in the nation.

You can do this!

Thank you.

Population of WV: $1,784,787 / 100 = 17,847.87$ voters per delegate district

Cabell County/Population

$91,945 (2019) / 17,768 = 5.17$ delegate districts

$1,784,787 / 17 = 104,987.47$ people per senate district

When lines must be adjusted to accommodate districts, there should be consideration of the areas of commonality and mutual interests that are shared between counties.