



## League of Women Voters of Broome and Tioga Counties

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Women Voters of Broome & Tioga Counties



DATE: October 25, 2021

TO: NYS Independent Redistricting Commissioners

FROM: League of Women Voters of Broome and Tioga Counties

SUBJECT: Written Testimony, Independent Redistricting Commission Hearing  
October 25, 2021, Binghamton University, Innovative Technologies Complex

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for conducting this hearing for the Southern Tier Region. My name is Margaret Goodfellow. I am Co-President of the League of Women Voters of Broome and Tioga Counties. Founded in 1920, the League of Women Voters is a grassroots organization that is non-partisan. Our volunteers work to promote responsible participation by citizens in government. It has been our mission and strict policy since 1920 to neither support nor oppose political parties or candidates.

A primary objective of the census is to provide data for the purpose of delineation of district lines using equal population, compactness, geographic contiguity, and communities of interests. The public, politicians and political parties must accept district lines cannot remain stagnant into perpetuity.

Redistricting lines should be drawn in a manner fully complying with the U.S. Constitution and the Voting Rights Act. Redistricting should fairly and accurately reflect communities of interest, population demographics and safeguard racial minority groups. Not doing so dilutes and eliminates communities of interest and racial minority group ability to elect candidates of their choice.

Redistricting lines must never be drawn to favor any political party, or elected official. If partisan districts are drawn, therefore gerrymandered, it guarantees political parties and their candidate(s) repeated election and re-election for the next ten years, or longer. The democratic process is based upon choice. Efforts to corral political interests into contorted districts does not serve the public.

The 2020 census has shown that much of the country's growth over the last decade is attributed to the growth of minority group communities, including in New York State. Broome County has seen steady growth in minority population in the last decade giving rise to the opportunity for long deserved representation in local government and elected office.

Communities of and voices of interest come in an unending list of those heard and unheard in society.

- Agricultural.
- Education, school districts, colleges, trade schools and universities.
- Health care entities such as hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities.
- Persons with disabilities.
- Religious institutions, churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues.
- Trades persons, fire fighters, plumbers, police and non-profit entities.
- The unhoused and those recovering from addiction.
- The incarcerated.



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We all know New York State has lost one congressional seat and much handwringing has occurred about how that loss should be accounted for when redistricting maps. Should there be an effort to concentrate that loss on the NYC metropolitan area and Long Island, or should it be upstate and western New York where population growth has seen decline? We know whenever a change is made in one district line or block, it must be readjusted in *all* others.

I have both listened and read testimony by the public of fears district divisions so severe as to in the future, allies will be competing with each other for what before were common interests, goals, and objectives. Redistricting requires communities remain as whole and compact as possible.

Finally, as a co-signer of a letter sent to the Commissioners by the League of Women Voters of New York State via email on October 18<sup>th</sup>, we strongly object to the use of opposing political party maps as the initial submissions for public review and comment. Once released, it immediately sent the wrong message to the public that politics were more important than the public good. It sets the stage for what may come to fruition in January, which could be another set of competing political maps and an ensuing conflict that could result in a single entity determining the final lines.

Sincerely,

*Margaret M. Goodfellow*

Margaret M. Goodfellow

Co-President

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