



Testimony of Susan Gobreski, Board Director for Government Policy
Pennsylvania House State Government Committee
Congressional Redistricting
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The work of the League of Women Voters is informed by foundational principles, beginning with the understanding that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. For over a century, the League of Women Voters has fought to protect the rights of eligible voters and expand access for those who have been left out of our democratic process.

To that end, LWVPA supports laws that ensure that elections are accessible, transparent, fair, secure and promote universal voter participation, and provide voters with meaningful choices when they go to the polls.

A key imperative of that must be that the voters pick the legislators rather than the legislators picking the voters. This is a foundation of both republican and democratic governance.

The League of Women Voters has been a leader in the fight for a redistricting process that follows principles, including advocating for legislation that would provide legal principles for redistricting. We remain concerned that no such guidance exists.

As a matter of principle, the League of Women Voters does not believe that the political process is a war, and “to the victor go the spoils.” Gerrymandering is quite simply, so cynical that it is toxic to a free and fair society; it is a form of corruption. And it is not Constitutional.

Pennsylvania is one Commonwealth, not two teams. We work together, we play Little League together, we shop, we drive on our roads together. We all pay the same prices for groceries and gas, we breathe the same air and drink the same water.

Every person in Pennsylvania should believe that every member of our Congressional delegation is likely to fight for us - for a responsive federal government. Right now, you are the people with the most power to make sure that Pennsylvania is a stronger state regardless of which party has control of Congress.



The Court struck down the previous map because it prioritized partisan factors over neutral factors. The 2011 map drawing was an egregious mockery of the process. It was also an egregious case of “sore winning” - where political advantage was abused. The losers were Pennsylvanians - our votes, our right to fair representation, our hard earned dollars and our trust. We do not want that to happen again and we will be passionate champions for a fair process and a fair outcome.

Here is what we believe should guide the process:

- Transparent and objective principles should be expressed and evident.
- Maintain reasonable compactness; minimize the division of existing boundaries, like townships and municipalities.
- Start with a blank canvass: the interest of voters requires that you ignore incumbents. We know that isn't easy for anyone, but it is the job.
- Don't draw maps to lock in advantage for one party or person; avoid partisan bias.

What we will be looking for in proposed maps:

- That it follows the imperatives stated and suggested by our Constitution
- That the geography of maps make sense, with minimal division of existing governance structures (i.e. townships and municipalities);
- Districts that reflect the proportion of registered voters - i.e. we will look for evidence of cracking and packing
- That communities of people of color are not divided and diluted (nor “packed”)
- That there is no discriminatory effect (intended or not) on voters for their political affiliation or preferences
- That there is no punitive effect on voters for their political preferences or affiliations
- A clear reliance on expert and citizen input.
- Maximizing the number of competitive districts

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. What stakeholders seek is fairness, to see key ideals take shape in the form of modern policy, to shift away from partisanship that has taken a hold of genuine discussion and debate and to have a chance to decide on our representation.

Susan Gobreski