

2019 LWVWA Resolution Submittal Form

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Short Title for the Resolution:

FINAL VERSION: Washington Deserves Better for 2031 Redistricting

1. The proposed Resolution (include specific action requested and who will take the action):

FINAL VERSION AS 5/5/23 at 10:15 after conversation with Resolution Committee

Whereas the Washington State's redistricting process (RCW 44.05) and the structure of the Washington State Redistricting Commission (WA State Constitution, Article 2 Section 43) that were created in 1983 are outdated, and

Whereas The 2021 Washington State Redistricting Commission failed to be transparent, produce timely maps, have adequate public review, or produce district lines that that reflected the stated interests of communities, and

Whereas more than 40% of the people in Washington State do not identify with either major party and are not represented in the current Commission structure, and

Whereas the commission has historically been under resourced in staffing, training, technical expertise, and infrastructure, and

Whereas significant statewide demographic changes now and in the future, demand extra attention and representation, as an example sufficient Latino representation in central Washington to warrant a majority Latino Legislative District, and

Whereas the LWVWA Statewide Redistricting Reform Taskforce has met since November 2021 and has developed a preliminary redistricting reform strategy and budget, and

Whereas the League of Women Voters of Washington (LWVWA) Board of Directors has included the statement: "Deploy a redistricting strategy" in its approved 2023-28 Strategic Plan, and

Whereas this project is intended to be self-funded and the LWVWA previously raised money for political advocacy under the IRS 501c(4) designation, and

Whereas the Boards of ten (10) LWVWA Local Leagues in Washington State have agreed in writing to support the Redistricting Reform Campaign in their communities and Local League will be involved in determining the final proposal, and

Whereas the LWVWA is well suited to lead this effort due to its mission, its long history of leadership, its nonpartisan reputation, and its democracy advocacy, and

Whereas the League of Women Voters of the United State continues to prioritize the "Make Democracy Work" campaign and the "People Powered Fair Maps Campaign, and

Whereas reforming the structure, processes and procedures of the Washington State Redistricting

Commission will require at least eight years of significant effort because a State Constitutional Amendment is required, and

Whereas the Redistricting Reform Campaign is a unique opportunity to grow LWVWA to achieve many important goals in the future; and

Whereas the people of Washington deserve better,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the League of Women Voters of Washington fully supports the Redistricting Reform Campaign in the goal of passing a state constitutional amendment to create an independent people first commission as affirmed in the 2023- 2028 Strategic Plan line item: "Deploy a Redistricting Strategy."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the LWVWA Board support the Redistricting Reform Campaign in these ways in the 2023-2025 biennium:

1. Ensure there is a LWVWA Board liaison to the Redistricting Reform Campaign, preferably a Director, for the full biennium of 2023-2025.
2. Support the Redistricting Reform Task Force fundraising efforts in coordination with fundraising staff and other campaigns as specified by the LWVWA policies and procedures on pages 21-22.
3. Support a 'democracy survey' to set a benchmark from which to measure success.
4. Prioritize building a strong network of local and statewide partners and allies actualizing the DEI policy in support of Redistricting Reform.

2. Background information on the Resolution:

There is little doubt that The Washington State Redistricting Commission must be revised.

- Opponents will say Washington's system is good enough. The people of Washington State deserve better.
- The Legislature has no incentive to change the system unless their constituents make it a priority.
- LWVWA must prioritize redistricting reform now because of the challenge of passing a state constitutional amendment.

The 2021 Washington State Redistricting Commission failed to create timely, well thought out maps. A good outreach process was muted. Partisan interests prevailed behind closed doors, resulting in Commissioners rushing to approve maps they had barely seen. Incumbent protection and partisan tradeoffs dominated district line decisions. The State Supreme Court let the negotiated maps stand. Since there was little time to perfect maps - even noncontroversial modifications were not made. The people of Washington State deserve better. The people deserve district lines that best represent the people of the state and give voters the best chance to elect the representatives of their choosing.

LWVWA proposes to lead a multi-year, statewide campaign to reimagine and reform the Washington State redistricting process. In keeping with League positions and the current Protect Democracy campaign, LWVWA will plan and execute a campaign to reform the structure and procedures of the Washington State Redistricting Commission before the 2031 redistricting cycle through a state constitutional amendment and statutory changes.

The campaign will consist of four stages to include:

- (1) Building a broader network of support;
- (2) Speaking out about needed reforms;
- (3) Passing the necessary legislation;
- (4) Overseeing the creation and implementation of the new commission.

A Statewide Redistricting Reform Task Force will lead the effort in coordination with Local Leagues, LWVWA and LWVUS and our local and statewide coalition partners.

This campaign is estimated to be an eight-year effort and cost approximately 1.4 million dollars. Resources for this effort will come from many different fundraising activities and will be used to pay for events, additional staff, travel, and a series of statewide polls. The Taskforce commits to only spending what we can raise.

When successful, this campaign will achieve its objective of a new people first redistricting commission for Washington State and will significantly enhance the reputation and capacity of the League of Women Voters of Washington.

3. The essential LWV position(s) on which the Resolution is based:

This resolution is based on both LWV Statement of Position on Redistricting in Impact on Issues 2022-2024, as adopted by concurrence, June 2016 page 32, and LWVWA Program in Action 2021 -2023 Redistricting and Reapportionment position on page 17.

4. Rationale, including pros & cons, for proposing resolution at this time:

1. Washington needs reform: There is little doubt that Washington's redistricting commission must be revised. LWVWA would seek to move from a two-party commission to a new model, creating the best, most equitable, most secure, and most engaging election system that responds to people rather than party. The daunting task of passing a state constitutional amendment should not weaken the League's resolve. Opponents will say Washington's system is good enough. The League says: the people of Washington State deserve better.

2. Washington's best option is an independent people first commission: Using Washington State commissions' lessons learned and the example of other state's successful implementation of independent citizen redistricting commissions, Washington needs to embrace the most up-to-date thinking on equitable representation. Combined with other noble democracy reforms, an independent people-first commission will set Washington on a path to expand engagement, advance democracy and let Washington's residents thrive.

3. LWVWA is well suited to lead this effort: The League of Women Voters of Washington's long history of leadership in redistricting sets it apart from any other organization in the state. A dedicated and knowledgeable Task Force has been working for a year and a half and will continue to guide and integrate the efforts along the way. The Redistricting Reform Campaign fits in well with the Defending Democracy campaigns at the national and state level. The LWV has the reputation and respect in democracy advocacy to surround itself with partners, to gain the respect of legislators and ultimately to be successful. If not the LWVWA, then who?

4. LWVWA will realize benefits by fully committing to this campaign. The Redistricting Reform Campaign is a unique opportunity for the LWVWA to expand the League's impact. When successful, this campaign will actively engage Local Leagues, grow League membership across the state, expand partnerships, gain media attention, and solidify our positive reputation. This campaign will permanently expand LWVWA's capacity to take on large projects and fulfill the League's mission: "Empowering Voters! Defending Democracy!"

5. Why Now? We recognize that the LWVWA Board has included the commitment to "Deploy a Redistricting Strategy" in the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan. The effort must start now to lay the necessary groundwork and build the network of support needed to win. Because the redistricting process takes place once every 10 years, it is a challenging issue to bring to people's attention. Redistricting is invisible until the process is ready to begin, and then there is little time to make changes. For many: "it is too early until it is too late." LWVWA must prioritize redistricting reform now because the challenge of passing a state constitutional amendment is a heavy lift. Those in legislative power don't have an incentive to change the process unless their constituents, the people of Washington State, make it a priority. This is designed as an eight-year campaign because that is the projected time needed to build constituent support, to gather partners and ally support, and finally, build legislative support.

6. This resolution can be accomplished with existing resources. This resolution asks the League and Board to support the campaign and allow fundraising. The Redistricting Reform Task Force acknowledges that resources need to be raised during the campaign and is pleased that the Board has included both Revenue and Expense line items for this campaign in the 23-25 biennium 501c4 budget. The Redistricting Reform Task Forces is committed to raising the funds necessary while not impacting other priorities. The Task Force commits to only spending the funds that can be raised for this effort. In fact, the Task Force is committed to work with LWVWA fundraising staff and other campaigns to ensure that redistricting efforts will not cannibalize any other fundraising efforts. The Task Force will enhance the total LWVWA fundraising efforts by talking about the full needs of LWVWA in addition to the redistricting campaign.

5. Evidence that issue is a current priority:

This resolution lines up with the top priority campaign of LWVUS: Making Democracy Work®. It also supports the ongoing LWVUS Women Power Democracy campaigns of the Democracy Defense Fund

and People Powered Fair Maps.

Redistricting reform has continued to be a legislative priority for the LWVWA Lobby Team since 2017. Fundamental to the design of Washington's election processes, redistricting affects all other issues. Ten Local Leagues have each submitted a letter endorsing the Redistricting Reform Campaign and have agreed to some or all of this list of actions:

1. Select a representative to join the State Redistricting Task Force.
2. Identify a committee to manage local redistricting campaign activities – a standalone committee or one integrated with other democracy work.
3. Support the Defending Democracy survey in our local area by understanding the results and advertise the results in coordination with local redistricting awareness events where appropriate.
4. Build relationships with legislators and make them aware of the League's objective.
5. Build relationships with local organizations who will also support redistricting reform.
6. Create local districting events in cities and counties to educate residents and push for any needed reforms.

6. Evidence that the issue is time sensitive and requires state governmental action:

The Washington redistricting process is defined within the Washington State constitution. Ultimately, this Campaign requires state government action because fundamental change requires passing a constitutional amendment. Steps must begin now to be successful. There is a lengthy timeline to achieve this result and this Resolution is a necessary step to engage members.

Therefore, the Task Force and LWVWA have much work to do. Between January 2023 and November of 2031, this major advocacy campaign will require a large effort from LWVWA members who must:

- Strengthen the LWVWA's field organizing capacity.
- Develop a robust network of allied organizations and individuals.
- Collect and analyze statewide data on redistricting reform support.
- Create strong policy and constitutional language.
- Lobby the legislature to pass a state constitutional amendment.
- Manage a statewide get-out-the-vote effort to pass the amendment at a general election.

We urge the League to BE BOLD and fully embrace this campaign.

Comments or Questions for the Committee:

This is the final draft of the resolution as modified after a meeting with the Resolutions Committee (Shelly Kneip, Myra Howrey and Julie Ann Kempf) at 10:15am on 5/5/23.

A copy of your submission will be emailed to you, the Resolution Committee and all LWVWA local League presidents.