



2024 Issue Paper: Redistricting Reform

Position Summary

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports a fully funded redistricting process with enforceable standards that promote timely, fair, and effective representation as well as equitable access and maximizing opportunities for participation. The Washington State reform effort is part of the national People Powered Fair Maps program, a national redistricting program of the League of Women Voters of the US focused on creating fair political maps nationwide in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Why Washington Needs Major Redistricting Reform

The current redistricting process in Washington State, which was created in 1983, meets many of the criteria that exempt it from the kind of criticism levied in recent years against some states where gerrymandering has been extreme and very partisan. Redistricting in Washington is proposed after each census by a Commission comprised of two Democrats, two Republicans and a nonpartisan chair selected by the Commission partisan members. However, this structure could be improved by making it all nonpartisan, increasing the size of the Commission to make it more representative of the citizens of Washington, and requiring all decisions to be made in open meetings, among other things.

In 2021 some issues arose that make these changes more compelling. In that year, the Commission missed the deadline for creating the needed maps and one of the districts created by the Commission was declared discriminatory by a federal court, causing certain boundaries to be redrawn in 2024.

Legislative Action Needed in 2024 and Beyond

League supports full-scale, effective redistricting reform that includes:

1. People First Commission: The 1983 structure is out of date. LWVWA seeks to have a Commission formed through a structured process to identify and select commissioners.
2. Permanent Staff: Create ongoing staff to support redistricting data collection, analysis, technology, and public communication.
3. True Transparency: Create process transparency to ensure the public wishes are considered and followed and through which Commissioners negotiate tradeoffs in open public meetings.
4. Stronger Accountability: Put into law the definitions of each redistricting mapping criteria and how they will be ranked. Assure that criteria are followed.
5. Universal Access: Ensure language and physical accessibility for public information and input.
6. Extensive Outreach: Guarantee a comprehensive and inclusive process for public outreach and input.

These changes will require extensive public and legislative education to achieve, and a multi-phase strategy has begun. First, there is an effort to establish a broad network of individuals and organizations who will work together to write the policy proposal based on successful models in other states. Next, that network will then seek publicity and widen support. Further, legislative champions will be identified to introduce and move the necessary legislation forward prior to the next redistricting cycle in 2031.

Getting Involved in 2024

The focus for 2024 is to continue to build the network of support through education and activation. You can get engaged by:

1. Joining a Local Area Action Team on Redistricting. Contact Alison McCaffree or your Local League action chair.
2. Get three friends to support redistricting reform and sign up for the redistricting mailing list. Ask those three friends to find more friends.
3. Educate yourself, your League and your neighbors on why redistricting reform is necessary.
4. Rally other local community organizations to support the redistricting reform campaign.

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