



The League of Women Voters of Virginia

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Delivered by V.P. Lynn Gordon, September 22, 2010 to the HofD P&E Committee RD hearing Roper Performing Arts Center, Tidewater Community College

Delegates, Mayor Fraim, fellow citizens, my name is Lynn Gordon and I live in Virginia Beach. I am here on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Virginia to advocate for a bipartisan approach to redistricting and reapportionment. First, thank you for holding these public hearings and for your efforts to engage the public in this process.

The League of Women Voters of Virginia supports the creation of a bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission composed of individuals who are not elected officials and who represent the geographical distribution and demographic diversity of the state. Ideally, this bipartisan commission should consist of an uneven number of members.

Such a bipartisan commission would be charged with creating a redistricting plan for submission to the legislature as specified by the Virginia constitution. The charge of the bipartisan commission would also include consideration of natural geographic boundaries, jurisdictional boundaries, and competitiveness in addition to the requirements of equal population, contiguous and compact districts and the requirements of the Voting Rights act.

Without a bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission, the League of Women Voters of Virginia is concerned that Virginia will retain the current system in which elected officials in effect choose their voters instead of the voters choosing their elected officials. A bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission can stop the cycle of gerrymandered protection of seats that has been occurring in this state.

I have only lived in Virginia since early 2003 but during that time I have had the opportunity to speak with and hear from elected officials on both sides of the aisle. From what I have learned, it seems that whoever is in power at the beginning of each decade has wanted to essentially stick it to the other party simply because the other party stuck it to them previously. As we were taught growing up: two wrongs do not make a right. It is time to put an end to this practice.

Some may claim, as you have heard tonight, that it is too late now to make a difference. It's never too late – the governor came out in support of such a commission during his campaign last year. In the 2010 legislative session, the State Senate passed a bill to establish a bipartisan redistricting commission. That bill was blocked from consideration in the House of Delegates by the Privileges and Elections Committee. The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that if members of this committee were to change their tune and express support for a bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission, the governor would act to see that it is established.

Bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment will protect voters from unfair partisan gerrymandering and help ensure that every Virginian's voice is equal in Richmond.

As we have already heard tonight, members of the League of Women Voters of Virginia are not the only voters who are sick and tired of partisan wrangling and whining from both sides of the aisle. It appears that every issue comes down to the best interests of the party and not the best interests of the citizens. Please! A bipartisan redistricting and reapportionment commission may not stop all of that, but it would certainly be a step in the right direction.