



Legislative Priorities on Redistricting

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW MEXICO

The League of Women Voters believes that well-drawn districts provide voters with a greater range of candidate choices and permit them to hold their elected officials accountable at election time.

The 2011 state redistricting process has not yet been completed. Following the Governor's veto of Congressional, House, Senate, and PRC plans, the issue has gone before a special Governor-appointed judge. The judge's rulings so far have been to accept the Governor's plans, which had been drawn up with no citizen or legislative input, on the basis of different criteria than those used by the Legislature: the smallest deviation from ideal district size was the primary consideration in the court-ordered plans. This has set a disturbing precedent on how a Governor may effectively cut the Legislature and public out of the redistricting process by veto and lawsuit. To make matters worse, the ultimate dollar cost to New Mexicans will be staggering.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico believes that the state must do better next time around. At present, the New Mexico Constitution stipulates that *"the Legislature by statute may reapportion its membership"* (Article IV, section 3D). The League supports amending the Constitution to establish **an independent commission** to develop redistricting plans meeting criteria listed below. The redistricting effort must be adequately funded and provisions for resolving challenges outside of the courts clearly defined.

The public must have **access to all information** used in the redistricting process on a timely basis, and have the opportunity to comment and be heard on the proposed redistricting processes, criteria, and results.

The League believes that the **criteria** for preparing redistricting maps should require that districts meet all Federal criteria, including equal population and the provisions of the Voting Rights Act and should also, as far as is practical

- be contiguous
- be reasonably compact, in terms of travel time from one part of the district to another
- avoid crossing geographic barriers to travel, such as mountain ranges
- minimize the partition of major jurisdictions (counties, municipalities) to the extent possible
- not intentionally favor any political party.

Contact Information:

Cheryl Haaker

(505) 298-7415

redistricting@lwnm.orgs