



**For Immediate Release**  
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**Citizens Union And The League Of Women Voters New York State  
Commend Achievement On Lasting Structural Redistricting Reform**

**Good Government Groups Believe LATFOR's Rigged System  
Is Precisely Why Reform Is Needed**

With the State Legislature passing a constitutional amendment and accompanying statute, redistricting reform will finally be a reality as opposed to an aspiration. We commend Governor Andrew Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, their staffs, and members of the State Legislature for reaching agreement on establishing lasting structural reform to the state's redistricting process.

Given the long standing resistance to enacting redistricting reform and the high stakes involved, we applaud them in finding common ground on an issue that is at the core of political power in Albany and results in the legislature giving up power in the drawing of lines.

Though this is a substantive victory for reform, it is tarnished because the process that produced this welcomed outcome occurred during a night where in typical Albany fashion nothing was agreed to until everything was agreed to. Achieving reform through middle of the night voting and limited debate on such an important issue is not the way we would have wanted to see redistricting reform realized.

New Yorkers only need look at how this year's redistricting process unfolded and what it produced to see once again how unfair and rigged the current process is and why it needs to be reformed. This redistricting reform is not perfect, but it is clearly a substantial improvement over the status quo and worthy of support. For the first time since the 1970s, the redistricting process will be taken out of the direct hands of the legislature and placed with an independent commission.

Citizens Union and the League of Women Voters New York State have produced a set of Frequently Asked Questions to educate the public about the proposed constitutional amendment.

The important reform elements include:

- The six-member, majority party-controlled LATFOR on which self-interested legislators sit is replaced by a ten-member commission on which no legislators will sit. The prohibitions on appointment will be similar to the recently formed Joint Commission on Public Ethics. For the first time, majorities and minorities from each house will be equally represented and there will be two members who belong to neither major party.
- New and better criteria that include:
  - an anti-gerrymandering provision prohibiting the favoring or disfavoring of incumbents, challengers or political parties;
  - recognizing communities of interest;
  - requiring that any deviation from the mean population in districts will need to be explained; and
  - minority voting rights protections mirroring the current federal law will be enshrined in our constitution, providing needed protection should there be a pullback on the federal level.
- Commission approval of the plan will require a super majority vote of seven of the ten members, ensuring minority party participation in securing the needed votes.
- In order to protect against one-party dominance in the drawing of lines, if one party controls both houses of the State Legislature, approval of a plan requires a 2/3 affirmative vote in each house.
- Required hearings across the state ensure public input into line-drawing. It also requires the provision of maps and data to the public in a form that allows for independent analysis and the development of alternate redistricting plans.
- The State Legislature must vote twice up or down on the approved commission plan before it can make any amendments.
- Amendments made by the State Legislature if it fails twice to pass the commission plan must adhere to the criteria in the constitutional amendment, including the anti-gerrymandering provision, and the statute will further rein in the State Legislature by preventing changes of more than two percent to the population of any district.

We support this reform because we have no confidence that a State Legislature left off the hook this year and angered over a gubernatorial veto would subsequently find religion and enact reform. To believe that ignores the reality of New York's political history for the past forty years on this issue and the broken promises of many of the 184 legislators who pledged to create an independent redistricting commission for 2012.

Ample opportunities have been squandered over the past several years to achieve this reform. When the executive branch and both houses of the State Legislature were controlled by one party during the 2009 and 2010 sessions, redistricting reform bills passed committees for the first time, but ultimately were bottled up in each house's Rules Committees and died. When a new 2011 split-controlled legislature convened after 184 members pledged to enact reform in time to draw 2012 lines, they did not keep their word.

We must finally break the cycle of inaction. We must seize this moment when public attention and advocacy have created the opportunity for reform, and secure the change that is achievable.