



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 1 Congressional Districting Plan

POSITION: Oppose

BY: Deborah Mitchell & Nancy Soreng, Co-Presidents

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland is a nonpartisan organization that has worked for over a century to empower voters by increasing citizens' understanding of public policy issues and advocating for transparency and best practices in our democratic system. The League believes that the decennial redistricting process, when done right, has the potential to reduce political polarization and build trust among communities of interest.

We acknowledge that Maryland's redistricting process has improved compared to 2011. The transparency and accessibility of the state-wide hearings was a significant step toward our 2004 position of "...maximum opportunity for public scrutiny."

The LWVMD's position further states: "An independent commission as the preferred redistricting body. The membership of the redistricting commission should:

- be multi-partisan
- include unaffiliated voters
- be geographically representative
- not include any current state elected official"

However, the membership of the Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission does not meet the League's definition of "an independent commission." Maryland needs redistricting reforms codified in law or its Constitution, establishing standards for who can serve on the commission and criteria that must be followed when drawing district maps.

In addition, the LWVMD's position taken in 2004 states: "Standards on which the redistricting plan is based should include: substantially equal population; geographic contiguity; and geographic compactness." This Congressional map does not align with our position because it does not meet the third standard of geographic compactness. Several of the proposed districts are drawn in ways that bypass nearby populated areas in favor of more distant populated areas.

LWVMD, representing over 1,400 concerned citizens throughout Maryland, urges an unfavorable report on HB 1 Congressional Districting Plan.