



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

HB 488 Election Districts - General Assembly and Representatives in Congress

POSITION: Informational

By: Linda Kohn, President

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Since 1920 the League of Women Voters of Maryland has had one singular mission: Empower Voters, Defend Democracy. LWVMD has overcome obstacles, discrimination, and sins of the past, and we continue our fight to always put voters at the center of democracy—not political parties. The League is the state's premier voting rights organization, supporting the right for all eligible citizens to fully participate in democracy, including through their vote. We oppose mid-cycle redistricting and do not believe it should be pursued. But if done, it should be conducted with maximum transparency, adequate time for community input, and a priority on the needs of Marylanders.

Since its inception the Governor's Redistricting Advisory Commission, on which this legislation is based, has set a tone that it will not be held accountable to Marylanders. The ending was written before a single voter commented - passing a map to rid Maryland of its last minority-party district and give total power to the majority party, with the result of disenfranchising 25% of Maryland voters.

There will be claims that the commission did its due diligence in hearing from the public. **Let us be clear, Maryland has 4.2 million voters, and hearing from approximately 200 people over the course of 10 hours does not a democracy make.** We have seen a commitment to holding meetings and votes behind closed doors, rushing the process to leave voters out, and a general lack of transparency that seems almost intentionally designed to confuse voters. If mid-cycle redistricting is truly the destiny of Maryland, LWVMD must insist that it be done using the following criteria:

1. An independent commission is established
2. New maps use the basis of compact, contiguous, and equal populations
3. A complete and total transparent process

The League of Women Voters of Maryland makes a simple ask: remember that you, the Delegates, serve the people of Maryland; that politicians must never choose their voters; and that, most importantly, you cannot defend democracy by destroying it.