



It's Time to Draw the Lines: Redistricting

Since the League of Women Voters first study on apportionment after the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the organization recognized that one person, one vote depended on accurate census information and fair drawing of political district maps. After fifty years of seeing districts favoring incumbencies, disregard for ideas and candidates outside the dominant two parties, and increased gerrymandering, the national League has taken a new position:

The League of Women Voters believes responsibility for redistricting preferably should be vested in an independent special commission, with membership that reflects the diversity of the unit of government, including citizens at large, representatives of public interest groups and members of minority groups.

After the 2020 U.S. Census, a flurry of activity will begin to reshape the nations Congressional and Legislative Districts to reflect the changes in population. Western States have led the country in recognizing the importance of reducing partisan influences by creating Independent Redistricting Commissions. The following six states provide valuable design examples and how to succeed against partisan opposition in the courts. Their success has sent a wave of voters tired of gerrymandered districts to work for independence and transparency in their state's district line-drawing activities. It is time for Arkansans to follow the lead before the window of opportunity closes and district lines are locked down for another decade.

Washington – Since 1982

Arizona – Since 2000

California – Since 2008

Montana – Since 2009

Idaho – Since 2011

Alaska – Since 2013

Evolution of League Positions on Apportionment and Redistricting

1965 – LWVUS Study on Apportionment after Voting Rights Act of 1965

1966 – One person, one vote doctrine for both houses of state legislatures

1972 – Extended position to all jurisdictions

1990 – Advocated for the U.S. Census to be the basis for equitable apportionment

1998-1999 – Worked to ensure scientific sampling and funding for the census

2005 – The LWVUS Board affirmed that Leagues at all levels may take action under LWVUS positions relating to redistricting.

2009 – LWV Education Fund became an official partner of the U.S. Census. LWVEF staff worked closely with national partners (such as civil rights and Latino groups), and provided information and support to state and local Leagues in their efforts to minimize an undercount.

2016 – Stated position regarding preference for redistricting with use of a diverse and independent special commission.

Introduction to the Petition's Author

DAVID COUCH is a native of Newport and a lifelong Arkansan. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Arkansas in 1981 and graduated in 1985 from the UALR William H. Bowen School of Law.

As a practicing attorney in Little Rock, he is known for his advocacy representing elderly people abused and neglected in nursing homes. Since 2001, he has successfully represented individuals neglected in nursing homes here in Arkansas and in more than 20 other states.

Other interests have led Couch to work for increasing Arkansas's minimum wage, a ban on corporate contributions to Arkansas candidates and lobbyist gifts to legislators, and the successful measure allowing the use of medicinal marijuana in the state.

