

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Albany County, I am submitting this testimony for your review.

The League has been a leading voter advocacy organization for over 100 years. It is our goal that on every level of government, there will be fair maps in place that represent different communities of interests in Albany. We also believe that it is extremely important that the maps proposed by the commission respect the rights of minority voters. The aim should be to increase diverse representation in city council and keep the city in line with the Federal Voting Rights Act.

It is challenging to identify how effective MMDs are so we recommend that the commission start by drawing sufficient MMDs first and start having conversations about what it would take for a district to become an effective MMD now. The commission may want to hire a voting rights expert who could use statistical techniques to prove which districts are effective.

The League also agrees with the commission that the remaining two people who are chosen to join the commission represent different communities, experiences and background than the current members. More diversity on the commission will help create better maps that reflect all the different communities in our city. We look forward to seeing the commission fulfill the promise of more diversity and encourage members of the commission to continue outreach.

Another thing for the commission to consider is making better use of the website. The League recommends that the commission post the meeting minutes, public comments, the existing districts, future draft maps and in general, more information about how redistricting works in addition to the biographies that are currently on the website. Providing more information will help commission members and the public keep track of the process and will further increase the transparency of the commission. At a recent meeting, the commission seemed to like the idea of setting up sub-committees and creating a website subcommittee would be useful.

Besides engaging the public through the website, the League also encourages the commission to attend public gatherings and different festivals within the city. Tabling at these events is a good way to engage members of the public who are unfamiliar with the process and don't know that wards are being redrawn. Tabling also will bring your website information to the public's attention.

Our last recommendation is that the commission continues to stream all of its meetings and also stream the drawing of the maps. Members of the public will be less confused as to how commission choices are made with regard to drawing the maps. Streaming the map drawing session will also give the public a better idea of the trade offs that the commission is considering. If the public knows what choices are considered, they will be able to comment about which trade offs they prefer.

To summarize, the league would like the commission to increase its diversity. We also recommend that the commission start having conversations about what makes an effective MMD now and begin to sign up to table at public events. Finally, we would like to see the

commission add more information to its website and to stream mapping sessions once they begin. The League has confidence in the commission and we look forward to seeing the progress you will make.

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