

May 5, 2016

LWVUS Board and Convention adopted, by consensus, this position covering redistricting at the LWVUS 2016 convention.

To: State and Local League Presidents

From: LWVUS Board of Directors

Re: Notice of Intent to Propose Concurrence at Convention 2016

At Convention 2016 in Washington, D.C., LWVUS will be recommending adoption by concurrence on the floor of convention with the following LWVUS Redistricting Task Force position on redistricting:

Redistricting Position in Brief:

Support redistricting processes and enforceable standards that promote fair and effective representation at all levels of government with maximum opportunity for public participation.

Redistricting Position:

1. 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.
2. Every redistricting process should include:
 - a. Specific timelines for the steps leading to a redistricting plan;
 - b. Full disclosure throughout the process and public hearings on the plan proposed for adoption:
 - i. Redistricting at all levels of government must be accomplished in an open, unbiased manner with citizen participation and access at all levels and steps of the process,
 - ii. Should be subject to open meeting laws;
 - c. A provision that any redistricting plan should be adopted by the redistricting authority with more than a simple majority vote;
 - d. Remedial provisions established in the event that the redistricting authority fails to enact a plan. Specific provisions should be made for court review of redistricting measures and for courts to require the redistricting authority to act on a specific schedule:
 - i. Time limits should be set for initiating court action for review,

- ii. The courts should promptly review and rule on any challenge to a redistricting plan and require adjustments if the standards have not been met.
- 3. The standards on which a redistricting plan is based, and on which any plan should be judged, must:
 - a. Be enforceable in court;
 - b. Require:
 - i. Substantially equal population,
 - ii. Geographic contiguity, and
 - iii. Effective representation of racial and linguistic minorities.
 - c. Provide for (to the extent possible):
 - i. Promotion of partisan fairness,
 - ii. Preservation and protection of “communities of interest,” and
 - iii. Respect for boundaries of municipalities and counties.
 - d. Compactness and competitiveness may also be considered as criteria so long as they do not conflict with the above criteria
 - e. Explicitly reject:
 - i. Protection of incumbents, through such devices as considering an incumbent’s address, and
 - ii. Preferential treatment for a political party, through such devices as considering party affiliation, voting history and candidate residence.

This position does not supersede any existing state League redistricting position.

The following information is being sent in compliance with LWVUS Bylaws, Article XII, Sec. 2. Program (c):

Arguments that support the redistricting concurrence

- 1) Provides a basis for action by state Leagues that don't have state redistricting positions, especially in regard to supporting non-partisan redistricting commissions.
- 2) Provides a basis for possible federal legislation to reform the redistricting process for federal elections in every state.
- 3) Reflects and respects the broad diversity of state League positions on redistricting.

Arguments that oppose the redistricting concurrence:

1) A national position is not appropriate for a state-based process like redistricting. State League positions reflect the different political cultures in each state and uniformity should not be imposed from national. State Leagues that wish to be active on redistricting need to develop their own positions.

2) There are too many and conflicting criteria in the proposed position, so it does not provide adequate direction. By listing virtually all the possible redistricting criteria, the proposed position is just a restatement of possibilities rather than a clear statement of policy.

3) The proposed position does not include important elements to protect and enhance democracy, such as Instant Run-Off Voting and multiple-member districts in addition to single-member districts.

Rationale for using Convention concurrence to adopt these positions:

Concurrence at Convention is a valid method of developing new League positions and over the years it has been used to adopt new positions ranging from the Violence Prevention position in 1994 to Human Trafficking in 2014. It is particularly useful for issues that are easily understood and where traditional local-League based studies could be expected to reach the same conclusion as the proposed concurrence. The League's Bylaws provide the authority for the adoption of positions by concurrence.

Background information can be found at:

The LWVUS Redistricting Task Force webpage:

<http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/redistricting-task-force>