

LWVBN Testimony for NYS Redistricting Commission

My name is Margaret Meyer, and I am testifying on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Buffalo-Niagara. The League is a non-partisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government.

The issue we bring to your attention is regarding gerrymandered districts at the state and national levels. Legislative gerrymandering disenfranchises New York's voters and puts incumbency and party above people. Voters become discouraged and silenced when electoral districts are controlled by one party.

When there is little competition in elections and voters know that their vote will not matter, a hopelessness sets in. They do not feel heard and turn away from the privilege of voting. Too often, politicians cater to the people who will fund their campaigns and re-elect them.

When the gerrymandered district candidates are not challenged, those elected have little incentive to be accountable to ALL those they represent. They see no need for town halls... or meeting with their constituents... except for "PR" events. They 'hide' from or avoid some of their people when there are concerns. Subsequently, our Democracy becomes compromised.

There are many issues people in the Buffalo-Niagara region experience: lack of affordable housing, transportation, low wages, poverty, pollution where the impoverished live and more. Poverty exists in every area of Buffalo-Niagara. Politicians like to ignore this inconvenient fact. The poor have no voice since they have no money to influence and support political candidates. They know they will not be heard and do not vote! Like one man said, "It's like we don't matter".

Redistricting impacts **every single issue** our communities face. We are asking the Commission to create fair, nonpartisan Congressional and State electoral districts so that there will be a level playing field. Fair redistricting will provide an opportunity for candidates to really compete. The electorate needs to be able to vote for candidates who will listen and truly represent them.

Thank you. Remember that **fair** REDISTRICTING REALLY MATTERS!

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