



January 12, 2011

Dear County Legislator:

Following the census that is taken every ten years, the boundaries of county legislative districts must be redrawn to reflect changes in population and to maintain the "one person one vote" requirement. This year the process will be especially complex because of the downsizing of the legislature. The County Charter requires the establishment of a commission to advise the legislature on how to accomplish the redistricting. At the state level, the League of Women Voters supports bills that propose the guidelines listed below. The League of Women Voters of Buffalo Niagara strongly recommends that the county follow these proposed guidelines at the county level as well.

The supported bills (S.1614-B and A. 5279-B) would

- Create an independent redistricting commission to draw district boundaries for the future elections.
- Require that commissioners be appointed from a pool of diverse and qualified candidates, and set guidelines to ensure that minorities have fair and effective representation. The commissioners should be representative of both genders and the state's racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity, do not hold, or have not held within the previous two years, an elective office, a party position, or other positions or employment that would confer partisan influence, with additional procedures to ensure that the commission itself is also reflective of the state's voters.
- Require that districts be compact and contiguous, and drawn so as not to favor or disfavor any candidate or political party.
- Require that districts have roughly equal populations (within one percent of the mean).
- Require ample public hearings and opportunities for public comment, including full access to data, maps, criteria, software used, and proposed plans.

We recognize that the redistricting process is a very complex one that involves balancing efforts to keep communities together, efforts to ensure minority voting rights and representation, and compliance with the "one person one vote" mandate. Independent, fair, and thoughtful decision making is the key.

The County Charter specifies that the redistricting commission include "ten residents of Erie County representing interested community groups, five of whom shall be appointed by the majority leader and five of whom shall be appointed by the minority leader." We urge you to take this requirement very seriously. Including ten independent community representatives on the commission can lead to the kind of process we all deserve.

The results of the upcoming redistricting undertaking will affect the representation of county citizens for the next ten years. The League of Women Voters of Buffalo Niagara

urges you to ensure an equitable and open process of redistricting, free from partisan influences and gerrymandering.

If you have questions or comments on this, we would like to hear from you. Our contact information is in the letterhead.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Loretta Peszynski".

Loretta Peszynski
Co-President, League of Women Voters of Buffalo Niagara

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.