



April 24, 2021

California Citizens Redistricting Commission  
721 Capitol Mall, Suite 260  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
*Sent via electronic transmission*

***Re: Commission Responsibilities Under the Voters First Act***

Dear Chair Kennedy and Commissioners:

Thank you for your commitment to serve the residents of California and ensure a fair and inclusive redistricting process. Your dedication in the face of the unprecedented challenges the pandemic continues to present for your work is appreciated by those who have been following your meetings, have attended your redistricting outreach presentations, and want to engage in your line drawing process. We write today regarding your upcoming deliberations on the time you will need to ensure meaningful public input on the final maps you adopt. As the lead proponents of the Voters First Act, our request is straightforward: that as you make this decision, you uphold and champion the principles that California voters enshrined in our Constitution when they enacted an independent redistricting process.

The proponents of the Voters First Act and the voters who passed it clearly never contemplated that a future commission would be faced with a dramatic delay in Census data, let alone be tasked with determining what its own deadline should be in the face of that delay. Last summer, the California Legislature wrestled with this dilemma and commendably went to the California Supreme Court to seek an extension of the deadline on your behalf only because you were not yet seated.

Now, faced with additional delay, it is up to you to determine the time you will need and the means of solidifying a new redistricting deadline, particularly when the timeline has shifted into a window that includes major holidays and a potential statewide recall election. Fortunately, the Voters First Act can serve as your guide as you make this important decision that will affect California's democracy for the next 10 years. The purpose and the text of the Constitutional provision provide remarkably clear guideposts that we urge you to follow.

The stated intent of the Voters First Act, when proposed to voters, was unequivocal: to "make the redistricting process open so it cannot be controlled by the party in power. . . . [t]he reform takes redistricting out of the partisan battles of the Legislature and guarantees redistricting will be debated in the open with public meetings."<sup>1</sup> The purpose was, quite simply, to "put the voters back in charge."<sup>2</sup> The text of the constitutional provision therefore very clearly centers the public in the line drawing process

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<sup>1</sup> The text of the proposed law can be found at [https://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2011/03/voters\\_first\\_act.pdf](https://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2011/03/voters_first_act.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Id.

by requiring that the Commission “conduct an open and transparent process enabling full public consideration of and comment on the drawing of district lines.”<sup>3</sup> The Commission itself is carefully selected to be “independent from legislative influence” and is required to apply the Voters First Act “in a manner that is impartial and that reinforces public confidence in the integrity of the redistricting process.”<sup>4</sup>

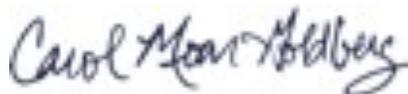
We recognize you are faced with a difficult task ahead. We urge you to chart a path forward that protects the purpose and integrity of the Commission’s process, and that centers the public and the time it needs to meaningfully engage in that critically important process. Finally, consider the spirit of the Voters First Act, which contemplates that important decisions that determine political representation for the next 10 years will be made in open meetings where the public can truly be available and participate.

Thank you again for the vital and thoughtful work you have done thus far to ensure a transparent, fair, and independent redistricting process.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Mehta Stein  
Executive Director  
California Common Cause



Carol Moon Goldberg  
President  
League of Women Voters of California

Cc: Alvaro Hernandez  
Executive Director

Marian Johnston  
Interim General Counsel

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<sup>3</sup> Cal. Const. art. XXI, section 2(b)(1).

<sup>4</sup> Cal. Const. art. XXI, sections 2(c)(1) & (6).