



May 21, 2021

VIA Email

California Citizens Redistricting Commission
721 Capitol Mall, Suite 260
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Partisan Attempts to Influence the 2021 Redistricting Cycle

Dear Commissioners:

As one of the principal proponents of Prop 11 and comprehensive redistricting reform in California, the League of Women Voters of California, is committed to the success of the California Citizens Redistricting Commission (CCRC). California created the first citizens redistricting body in the country designed to be free of the control of legislative bodies, and the polarization and divisiveness of political parties maneuvering for dominance over the legislative process. The current commission is only the second in California. The eyes of the country are on it as other states work to achieve what was accomplished by the CCRC 10 years ago, and what you seek to achieve now. The CCRC's success is essential not only for California, but for the future of citizen focused redistricting in the country.

The League of Women Voters of California is a nonpartisan organization that promotes the informed and active participation of people in their government. We do not support, oppose, or endorse any political candidate or political party. We have over 60 local Leagues throughout the state; from Humboldt County to San Diego, in the mountains, deserts, small farming towns, and urban areas. Our exclusive interest in the Commission is to support the overall success in executing the redistricting process without political or partisan influence, both in the letter and spirit of the law, and ensuring that the public - ordinary Californians - have ample time and opportunity to engage with the process and have their voices heard. It is in that spirit, and drawing on our history, that we make the following comments.

Because your work is to remove power from politicians and political parties, the Commission will be subjected to intense scrutiny and criticism. This is part and parcel with the critical role that it plays in giving power to ordinary people. History tells us that no matter what is done, the Commission will likely face legal challenges and pressure from all corners of the political world, as political parties seek to gain or retain power in the state. As you act with transparency, we hope that public input will support the Commission's decisiveness, and allow the important task of embracing the fact that the political world will often be at odds with your decisions and the process. That is the nature of a truly independent redistricting commission's work.

With that, we have observed through public comment, both verbal and written, the political machinery in California attempting to influence, and potentially even derail the redistricting process and specifically, the work each of you is charged to accomplish. Legislators and political operatives do not have a place in making recommendations for your schedule, offering legal advice, or otherwise seeking to influence the CCRC. Advice received from attorneys of any entity other than the CCRC should be viewed with the understanding that their primary duty is to represent their client's interests, and not the interests of the CCRC or those impacted by redistricting. It is critical that the Commission have independent counsel to guide all decision making and that you are transparent about your decisions and the reasons for them. Independent counsel and transparencies about your decision making is critical because the Commission must ensure that power is given to the communities of California. All other political influences have self interest in the process, their advice and input is not necessarily neutral, and not necessarily offered in the spirit of giving power to ordinary Californians.

In addition to being offered advice from the legislature, you are also receiving criticism about the way in which the Commission is conducting its business. This appears to be designed to shake your confidence, to place doubts in the public consciousness about the wisdom of using a commission of citizens to draw district lines, and to possibly to set up the grounds for future challenges to your work.

The response to this is to be clear and decisive in your actions. Using California law, CCRC's own legal counsel, and the best interest of the California public as your guide, the only protection the Commission will have is to make clear decisions about the process used, show ways that transparency and public input were gained, and by identifying the policies supporting this work. Historically, the goal has always been to act decisively and document the reasoning.

Ten years ago, the California Redistricting Commission was new and innovative. The fact that it was successful in its work challenges traditional political power brokers. The response of those with political power is to work to undermine the second Commission – you and your work. We want the CCRC to succeed and to surpass the achievements of the 2010 Commission. Success of this Commission is critical to the overall future of independent redistricting, not just in California, but in the United States. We look forward to seeing how you move forward in the important authority you have been given at this time.

Sincerely,



Carol Moon Goldberg
President