



January 18, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tennesseans deserve fair and consistent districts

Nashville, Tenn.—The League of Women Voters of Tennessee believes that all citizens deserve elected officials who can truly represent their needs. In fall 2021 our organization joined with NAACP and CivicTN to hold hearings across the state to learn what citizens needed to be well represented. Their responses were clear--Tennesseans want their counties and their communities kept together. Sadly, the gerrymandered legislative districts that are proposed for the next decade fail to represent Tennesseans fairly. In fact, the proposed districts seem to unnecessarily split counties and communities of interest, especially ones of color.

The failure to keep communities whole has an impact throughout our state and not just in our urban areas. The arbitrary slicing of rural and suburban communities through a partisan redistricting process does a disservice to our citizens.

The Tennessee House Redistricting Committee voted on their maps last week, and we are beginning to understand its implications. For example, LaVergne is a town in Rutherford County with a population of 38,719. It will be split into two House Districts. While the motivations are unclear, its impact is quite certain. It will limit the voting power of a suburban community that has grown increasingly diverse during the past decade to include a population that is now 22.8% Black, 18.5% Hispanic, and 2.9% Asian.

In west Tennessee, there is another example of how the redistricting map will adversely impact citizens. Humboldt is a town with a population of 7,874 in rural Gibson County. The 2020 census lists its population as 45.5% Black and 4.7% Hispanic voters. Their collective voting power will be diluted for the next decade when it is divided into House Districts 79 and 82.

The Tennessee legislature does a disservice to these and similar communities when it creates gerrymandered political districts with partisan or racial motivations. The League of Women Voters believes that our citizens deserve better.

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The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose any political candidate or party.