

Illinois Fair Map Initiative - Press Conference December 3, 2009

Statement by Nancy Marcus
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The League of Women Voters has historically promoted the idea that citizen participation is key to maintaining and strengthening democracy. We are pleased to join with the Better Government Association, the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform and members of the Illinois Reform Commission to launch a citizens' initiative and the "Take Back Illinois" campaign, the goal of which is to garner petition signatures to place the Illinois Fair Map Amendment on the November 2010 general election ballot.

The principles embodied in the Fair Map Amendment correspond well with the elements LWVIL believes are essential: a redistricting process that is timely and transparent, includes a formal announced timetable, makes information and related data available to all who wish to participate in the process, offers ample opportunity for public reaction to any proposed maps, maximizes diversity, and results in maps which offer voters a choice of candidates for election.

Illinois has serious challenges ahead. As you may know, a report released by the Pew Center on the States last month reported that Illinois is among ten states where the consequences of the current economic downturn is wreaking havoc, in part because Illinois' leaders have been putting off making tough decisions and where the political resolve to enact long-term fixes to its fiscal problems is lacking.

The League of Women Voters of Illinois believes that underlying this analysis as well as a myriad of other issues is a lack of accountability on the part of those who've been elected to the Illinois General Assembly. Sadly, this includes a seeming indifference to the culture of corruption that has for too long been a hallmark of politics as usual in this state.

The League believes that redistricting is the next item on the reform agenda in Illinois. A citizen initiative involves the public in a significant way both by collecting signatures and also because of the amendment itself which allows for public participation. This proposed amendment makes the process more transparent and creates an independent commission all of which will result in legislative districts that will elect legislators who understand the enormous challenges and respond with laws that reflect the public interest.