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Redistricting in Monroe County 2022

The Monroe County Legislature approved new district lines in mid-December, but County Executive Bello vetoed the proposal in January. At its March 8th meeting, the Legislature authorized a new 5-member commission to start over. Their new district map is due by June 11th. The full legislature will vote on the map afterwards.

Our Open Letter to the Legislative District Revision Commission

March 11, 2022

I'm writing on behalf of the League of Women Voters to share our thoughts on redistricting in Monroe County.

1. **Legislative districts should make it easier for citizens to become knowledgeable and engaged**, and to participate in effective self-government. Neighborhood associations work to solve problems and make life more livable for residents. County Leg districts should be drawn to build on the energy of neighborhood associations, so that knowledge of citizens' needs flows efficiently up. **There is no reason any neighborhood association should be broken up.**
2. **Villages should not be broken up.** In fact, under the state law governing redistricting which was signed last summer, NYS Chapter 516 of 2020 (Bill Number A.229-C/S.5160-B), "no villages or cities or towns except those having more than forty percent of a full ratio for each district shall be divided." The districts which were passed last year appear to violate this law because they partitioned East Rochester and Brockport.
3. **Towns should be broken into as few districts as possible and districts should contain as few towns as possible.** It's not necessary to carve up Henrietta and Brighton into four districts each, nor to have legislators serving parts of up to four towns. This makes it unnecessarily confusing for residents to be informed or engaged citizens and legislators to do a good job of knowing their constituents' needs.
4. **We think it makes sense to keep city residents districted with city residents.** We've heard complaints from city residents who were put into districts which were largely suburban and feel that their interests have been ignored since the 2011 districts were drawn.
5. **The public must be better informed and consulted.** Any new proposed maps should be made available online in a searchable form so that people can easily find their address and zoom out to see how the lines are drawn around them. We would also like to see data about the demographic breakdown of proposed districts.
6. **Hearings should be truly publicized in advance** and held all over the county (including, of course, all over the city), in accessible places and there must be adequate time for the public to review the maps prior to the hearings." Only by really hearing from the people affected can we know if the lines will foster citizen engagement or work against it. The NY Independent Redistricting Commission showed us that this is feasible and yields important

input. Monroe County can do this. The League stands ready to help publicize such hearings and encourage citizen participation in every part of the county.

7. **District lines must pass the smell test.** Are the lines jagged and the districts irregular in places that don't correspond to city, town, village or community association lines? State and local law requires districts to be as compact as possible. Do districts contain fragments of neighborhoods, villages and towns? Legislative District 26 is a poster-child for disenfranchising voters by dividing communities of interest, with its fragments of four neighborhood associations and two towns. **We hope that you will eliminate such ugly remnants from previous maps.**
8. **There should be time for revisions to respond to public hearings.** The County Charter requires hearings at which the public can respond to proposed districts. That requirement is only meaningful if there is time between the hearings and when the vote is taken. Legitimate issues will be raised by the public and it is both possible and desirable to plan for a process of revision to the proposed lines to respond to those issues.
9. **We encourage you to consider and evaluate previous citizen input.** In the fall of 2021 there was a lot of public testimony, including specific complaints about various neighborhood lines. It appeared that such testimony was never actually considered. We would like to see the Commission go through that testimony and determine which suggestions should be incorporated in the revised maps.

We look forward to working constructively with you to engage the public in a process which will yield maps that make it easier for citizens to engage in self-government.

Feel free to contact me if I can be useful in any way.

Sincerely,
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If the League can be of help, send an email to redistricting@lww-rma.org.

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