

Press Release

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New Redistricting Reform Effort Launched in Florida

The League of Women Voters of Florida and Common Cause Florida announced a new effort to reform the redistricting process today. The political committee, **FairDistrictsFlorida.org**, has filed two petitions with the Division of Elections in the Secretary of State's Office. The petitions, which are now awaiting approval, would create new requirements for drawing congressional and legislative districts. If the proposed constitutional amendments are adopted by Florida voters, congressional and legislative districts could not be drawn to favor incumbents or political parties. Districts would have to ensure that racial or language minorities have the opportunity to fully participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. They would also have to be compact, contiguous and utilize existing city, county and geographical boundaries. The petitions will give Florida voters the opportunity to end the political manipulation of districts by the legislature to protect incumbents and enhance political party power.

"The League of Women Voters of Florida strongly supports nonpartisan redistricting reform in Florida," said Dianne Wheatley-Giliotti, President of the League of Women Voters of Florida. "Politicians should not be able to design their districts to benefit themselves and guarantee their own reelection."

Under the current system, the Florida Legislature can draw bizarrely shaped districts that divide Florida's cities, counties and communities solely for political reasons. These gerrymandered districts discourage challengers and mean incumbent members of Congress and the legislature face little or no competitive opposition.

"With the reforms we are proposing, politicians will not be allowed to draw districts in ways that ensure that they cannot be defeated," said Ben Wilcox, executive director of Common Cause Florida. "We are committed to giving Florida voters the chance to enact meaningful, nonpartisan redistricting reform."

A number of political figures have endorsed the reform effort and agreed to serve as honorary co-chairs for FairDistrictsFlorida.org. They include Republicans, former Comptroller Bob Milligan and former Judge Thom Rumberger; and Democrats, former U.S. Senator and Governor Bob Graham and former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno. Miami attorney and former member of the 1998 Constitution Revision Commission Ellen Freidin is serving as the Campaign Chair. For further information, she can be reached at (305) 606-4300.