

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NASSAU COUNTY STATEMENT TO
NASSAU COUNTY TEMPORARY DISTRICTING ADVISORY COMMISSION**

THIS STATEMENT WAS PRESENTED IN PERSON TO THE COMMISSION AT THE AUGUST 31, 2022 PUBLIC MEETING

My name is Karen Moskowitz and I serve as Co-Chair of the Redistricting Committee of the League of Women Voters of Nassau County. It's a pleasure to speak with you tonight and to work together for the best interests of Nassau County residents.

The League is a non-partisan, grassroots nonprofit dedicated to empowering everyone to fully participate in our democracy. While the League takes positions on a variety of public policy issues, it never supports or opposes any political party or candidate. As the redistricting process for Nassau County legislative districts begins, the League is here to advocate on behalf of a fair and transparent process.

As we've all seen the problems encountered by the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission, it would be best practice and the best use of taxpayer money if there were one set of staff that worked with all commissioners, as opposed to separate Republican and Democratic sets of staff, counsel and mappers.

At the onset of the redistricting process, we note the special protections afforded to racial and language minority groups under the U.S. and New York State Constitutions, the Voting Rights Act and New York Statutes. We expect the new legislative districts to fairly and equitably represent Nassau's communities of color, which now comprise 44% of County residents. The new legislative districts should fairly reflect the voting strength of these communities and ensure their ability to elect candidates of their choice.

We also note the new redistricting requirements imposed under New York's recently amended Municipal Home Rule Law and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act of New York. The amended Home Rule Law requires that "[d]istricts shall not be drawn to discourage competition or for the purpose of favoring or disfavoring incumbents or other particular candidates or political parties."¹ We need a fair, equitable and non-partisan redistricting process in Nassau County.

With respect to process, it's essential that County residents be able to freely observe the work of the Commission and actively participate in that process. Redistricting is foundational to the right to vote and, as such, the public must have confidence in the fairness of the process.

The Commission's website must be updated and reflect dates and venues for the public hearings just announced. It should include Commission meeting agendas and minutes, press releases, a contact list of staff and consultants, a timetable and maps, as well as serve as a portal for public comment. All the above should be posted to the site as soon as possible.

The public should also be informed of the dates for the Commission's working meetings, which should be open to the public and posted on the website at least one week in advance.

¹ Consolidated Laws of New York, Municipal Home Rule (MHR) Chapter 36-A, Article 4, Part 1, Sec. 34(4)(e) at <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/MHR/34>.

All public, working and mapping meetings must be publicized immediately via all forms of media, particularly given the short lead time for the bulk of public meetings. And all meetings should be livestreamed on the Legislature's link.

Additional public meetings must occur **AFTER** the Districting Commission has proposed new legislative districts but **BEFORE** the Legislature has voted on the adoption of such maps.

Finally, note that the Nassau League of Women Voters is part of a coalition of community organizations. You may hear from one or more of them tonight, as well as at future public meetings.

Thank you.