



**Proposing a Modified Iowa Redistricting Model for New Mexico
Presentation to the Interim Courts, Corrections and Justice Committee, October 18, 2018
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In 1970, the League of Women Voters of Iowa, along with other groups, filed a lawsuit challenging the fairness of the Iowa redistricting system. As a result of the court decision, the Iowa legislature crafted legislation that introduced greater fairness into the process. The model has turned out to be widely admired for its efficiency, cost- and time-effectiveness, and lack of partisan contentiousness.

The Iowa redistricting reformed process was created in statute, and we believe New Mexico's could also be done this way. Although the League and a majority of the public who when polled indicate that they want an Independent Redistricting Commission to be created through a Constitutional amendment, we understand there is little legislative support for that route.

What is the Iowa process? In a nutshell, Iowa has their version of the Legislative Council Service draw up maps based on criteria set by the legislature and the federal standards. Then the process proceeds as follows:

Step One: The legislature votes up or down on the maps created by and presented by LCS, no amendments. If the legislature does not approve the maps, they are sent back to LCS for rework.

Step Two: A second set of maps is presented to the legislature for an up or down vote with no amendments. If not approved, they are sent back to LCS for rework.

Step Three: The third set of maps is presented to the legislature. These maps can be amended. If not approved, the maps go directly to the Supreme Court, which will draw the maps.

Iowa nests their House & Senate seats with the Congressional district. We are not proposing this for New Mexico.

In Iowa, all redistricting is done under the above procedure. In New Mexico, it would include Congressional districts, the New Mexico Public Education Commission and the Public Regulation Commission. The League is mainly concerned about using the Iowa model for New Mexico House and Senate seats. We do not believe legislators selecting their own districts is conducive to the democratic process. But for efficiency's sake, it might be best to have all redistricting done using the above procedure.

Iowa law states that political subdivisions, contiguousness, and compactness must be considered in redistricting. We would like these provisions to be included in the New Mexico law.

Iowa law also provides that certain factors shall not be taken into account when preparing redistricting plans. Specifically, the code provides that districts shall not be drawn to favor any political party, incumbent legislator, member of Congress, any other person or group, or for the purpose of augmenting

or diluting the voting strength of a language or racial minority group. We would like these provisions to be included in the New Mexico law.

Iowa creates a five-member Temporary Redistricting Advisory Commission (TRAC). Four of the commission members are selected by the respective Majority and Minority Floor Leaders for the Senate and House. Within 30 days after the four appointments are made, the four members choose the fifth member who serves as chair. The TRAC has two functions: to provide guidance to the LCS if questions arise about the process; and, once the first plan is released to the legislature, to hold at least three public meetings to obtain public input. The TRAC summarizes the public input in a report to the legislature.

Does the Iowa model work? In April 2011, the Iowa legislature approved the first proposed plan. In June, 2001 the legislature approved the second proposed plan. In May 1991 the legislature approved the first proposed plan. Contrast this to the 2011 New Mexico process where the maps were contested and had to go to the Supreme Court. This resulted in \$5 million additional cost. Also, New Mexico's final legislative redistricting map was not approved until the February 29, 2012, just days before the final candidate filing deadline.

The League is currently working with the Legislative Council Service to draft legislation to create an Iowa-style redistricting process for New Mexico. We are asking the Courts, Corrections, and Justice Committee to consider supporting this concept and legislation.

Links to more information on Iowa Redistricting:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LG/9461.pdf>

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/redistricting/the-iowa-model-for-redistricting.aspx>

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?451614-1/congressional-redistricting>