

Testimony to the Legislative Courts, Corrections & Justice Committee
By Richard Mason, League of Women Voters of New Mexico – August 10, 2021

My name is Dick Mason and I am chair of the Action Committee of the League of Women Voters of NM and Project Leader of the Fair Districts for NM project.

First of all, I want to express my thanks to the NM legislature for passing the Redistricting Act in the 2021 session. This act has received national praise for taking a positive step towards redistricting reform. I also want to thank Justice Chavez and the other 6 members of the Citizens Redistricting Committee (CRC) for their service on the Committee.

I have attended 4 of the public meetings conducted by the CRC and have been gratified to see the level of public interest in redistricting. It is evident that citizens know their communities and know what they want from their legislators.

As well as a copy of my testimony, I have supplied you with 3 other documents, I am not going to cover each in depth, but I may refer to them. They are:

- **LWVNM Advocacy Statement on Redistricting;**
- **a fact sheet on Fair Districts for New Mexico – please note 27 organizations of FDNM;**
- **and a fact sheet on how to use Districtr – the official public input tool of the CRC.**

As I stated, the Redistricting Act was a great step forward for redistricting reform in New Mexico, but Fair Districts did not get everything we wanted, for instance:

- We included language that the appointments to the CRC should reflect the **“cultural and geographic diversity” of New Mexico**. That did not happen, most noticeably is the absence of Native American representation on the CRC. We realize we should have been more specific on the responsibilities of each of the appointing entities.
- We wanted more specific language on prohibiting the use of incumbents addresses in developing districts maps.
- On state Senate and House districts we wanted populations to not deviate by plus or minus 5 percent. The legislation allows 10 percent
- **Lastly, and most importantly, we wanted the legislation to require that the Legislature accept one of the 3 preferred maps presented to them by the CRC. That was left out of the legislation.**

None of this should take away from the accomplishment of passing the Redistricting Act

What are the requests of Fair Districts for NM?

- We ask that the CRC and the Legislature adopt the recommendations of the pueblos and tribes. The courts did that in 2011.
- We ask that Legislature accept the preferred maps presented to them by the CRC. If they do amend the recommended maps we would like to have them provide an explanation of why they amended the maps.
- We ask that all meetings in the redistricting special session of the Legislature follow both letter and the spirit of the Open Meetings Act.

I want to close by once again thanking the NM Legislature for taking the positive step of passing the Redistricting Act and I want to thank this Committee for allowing me to comment.