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League of Women Voters: Redistricting is unprecedented opportunity for Michigan

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A transparent redistricting process in Michigan gives voters, instead of politicians, the power to choose who represents them.

The League of Women Voters of Michigan is working hard to ensure Michigan's redistricting process is as transparent as possible, with opportunities for the public to be informed and involved in creating new and fair state legislative and congressional maps.

Michigan voters overwhelmingly passed Proposal 2 in 2018, which called for a Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) and opened a process that previously took place behind closed doors and was heavily influenced by the political party in power.

Redistricting, which is done every 10 years and follows the Census, was inherently political. When politicians are given the power to draw the lines, they often manipulate them to keep their party in power. An independent process gives regular Michigan citizens the power to draw the state's new legislative districts based on Census data, federal law and prioritized criteria, as listed in the Michigan Constitution.

The League of Women Voters is undertaking a widespread educational effort to help voters understand redistricting, and to ensure the commission is doing what voters have asked: for citizens to draw district lines instead of legislators or special interests, and for the commission to respect Communities of Interest (COI). COI are populations that share cultural or historical characteristics or economic interests and are third in the prioritized list of criteria the MICRC is required by the Michigan Constitution to follow in drawing district maps.

The mission of the League of Women Voters is to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy. The League is a nonpartisan organization; we do not support or oppose parties or candidates. We do take positions on public policy issues that we've studied. Supporting the commission by ensuring participation in the redistricting process is a good example.

More than 100 trained, local League members across the state are working in Michigan counties to identify COI. Local Leagues across the state are holding town hall events around our April 29 Day of Action to educate voters on this new process.

This is a huge effort, but we are doing the work because we believe redistricting, and citizen participation in the redistricting process, will further our democracy and put more power into voters' hands to choose who represents them, rather than the other way around.

Our goal is to identify, educate and support COI so they can testify effectively on their own behalf at one of the 15 public hearings the commission plans to hold in May and June.

To learn more about how to get involved with the League, visit [our website](#).

Voters overwhelmingly favored making this a public and transparent process. Let's support the efforts of the commission, while holding it accountable, and ensure the voices of all Michigan voters are heard.

Christina Schlitt, is president of the League of Women Voters of Michigan.