



July 6, 2011

The Honorable Rick Snyder
Governor
State of Michigan
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Snyder:

On behalf of the Michigan Redistricting Collaborative, we urge you to veto SB 498 and HB 4780 and to join us in seeking reform of the redistricting process. Unlike other states, the redistricting plans provided by the Legislature were adopted without meaningful citizen dialogue.

Yes, maps were provided prior to hearings. However, data was not provided in a way that could easily be analyzed by citizens. Now is the time to enact reform that puts the power of selecting elected officials in the hands of voters.

Michigan already has some great examples to emulate. Iowa has used a non-partisan redistricting service since 1980. Voters in California, Florida and Minnesota recently approved measures aimed at removing partisan politics and special interests from redistricting. And there is public support for reforming the system.

As part of the Michigan Redistricting Collaborative, The Center for Michigan helped us hold community conversations to inform Michigan citizens about redistricting, hear their views on it, discuss how they can get involved in the process and let them decide how they wanted to reform it. Community conversations took place in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Lansing, Livonia and Traverse City. More than 250 people voiced their opinions on the redistricting process by voting on questions posed to the group.

When asked about their priorities for how legislative districts are drawn, 88% said that transparency is very important to them. Another question asked participants what process would be best, only 3% said the current process is best, compared to 34% that indicated support for a new legislative system with more transparency,

public hearings, clear map rationale and 63% that said they would prefer a non-partisan redistricting commission independent of the Legislature.

This year we have seen a series of activities that only add to citizen cynicism about the political process. Newspaper reports of one special interest group and the Attorney General's office meeting behind closed doors with Republican members of Congress, apparently to draw lines that met the needs of those groups without concern about the public. Democratic members of Congress virtually begging the Legislature to create districts that benefit them and their personal needs. Legislative log rolling and behind the scenes horse trading on districts at a critical time in our state's history.

None of that is healthy for democracy. Allowing politicians to pick their voters instead of letting voters pick their politicians is simply wrong.

With such a politically charged issue, it is necessary for reform to happen now and not in ten years. We need to reinvent the redistricting process to create a better Michigan.

We hope that you will veto the current redistricting plans because of the lack of citizen input and that you will join us in calling for reform.

Sincerely,

Kyle Caldwell
President & CEO
Michigan Nonprofit Association

Christina Kuo
Executive Director
Common Cause

Rich Robinson
Executive Director
Michigan Campaign Finance Network

Susan Smith
President
League of Women Voters of Michigan