LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN EDUCATION FUND

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LEGISLATURE SHOULD ESTABLISH INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR REDISTRICTING

MADISON: When the state Legislature meets in special session this week to vote on contracts for state employees, it should also pass legislation to establish an independent commission, composed of citizens with some representation from the legislature, to oversee legislative redistricting. The commission should be composed of citizens who do not have a direct stake in the results of the district mapping, along with some representation from the legislature.

Redistricting and reapportionment are not new issues for the League of Women Voters, which has supported the mapping of electoral districts based on the principle of "one person, one vote" since the 1930s. Over the years the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin has many times objected to the gerrymandering of districts to give advantage to any political party. For decades the League has advocated for better procedures, and a number of times has been involved in litigation on redistricting issues.

Earlier this year the League was a leader of the "We Count! Wisconsin" project, which sought to achieve an accurate count for our state in the 2010 Census. Our state proudly led the nation in response to the census despite significant cuts in municipal funding for promoting the effort. Wisconsin should now use the good data that were generated to draw districts that will provide the best possible representation for residents, rather than the best scenario for partisan interests.

Since the 1980s the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin has supported the establishment of an independent commission, similar to that in Iowa, as the best means of providing our state with a balanced, effective redistricting process. Now is the time to get this done.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Fund is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that promotes informed and active participation in government. Through member-led research, public education and direct advocacy, the League works to improve public participation in the democratic process and to champion public policy goals that are beneficial to all. There are 17 local Leagues in Wisconsin.

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