



STATEMENT OF LWVKY PRESIDENT FRAN WAGNER
REGARDING PROPOSED REDISTRICTING MAP FOR
THE KENTUCKY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

January 2, 2022

We appreciate the opportunity to review the redistricting map released by Kentucky House Speaker David Osborne on December 30, 2021. We were especially pleased to hear House leadership's stated concern for preserving or expanding opportunities for voters from minority groups to elect candidates of their choice. In our early review, many districts also seem more compact than the ones they would replace. It was also good to learn that key legislators are ready to support a delay in candidate filing deadlines so that the 2022 elections can be conducted in districts based on 2020 Census data.

With regret, we cannot support the proposed set of districts, for the following reasons:

1. We seek districts drawn without attention to the impact on incumbent officeholders, in alignment with the position of the League of Women Voters of the United States. This proposed House map was explicitly designed to protect incumbents.
2. We advocate for maps that divide counties where needed, but without slicing the larger counties to ribbons. In the newly released House map, however, a number of major counties have been divided in quite destructive ways. Parts of Laurel County, for example, are included in six different proposed seats, without any district centered on London. In our analysis so far, we have identified similar sharp divisions in Christian, Daviess, Franklin, Hardin, Jessamine, Madison, Pike, and Pulaski Counties. Those divisions appear to have been designed to ensure that those currently holding office could continue to do so. In our judgment, districts could have been drawn more constructively if voters, rather than office-holders, had been the priority.
3. We are struggling to understand the proposals for the state's very largest counties: Jefferson, Fayette, and Kenton. The released maps do not come with data on the population of the districts or with precinct or street boundaries that would let us analyze those elements. A holiday weekend is not enough time to analyze districts of this complexity.
4. A wider public needs the opportunity to analyze and comment on all the proposed districts. For example, a real understanding of district changes that affect Covington and Hopkinsville will require thought from people who live in those areas, but the current calendar does not allow those residents to share full thoughts with legislators or with the League.

Accordingly, we respectfully urge:

- Rapid release of the proposed maps for the U.S. Congressional seats and Kentucky Senate seats.
- Quick action to reset the filing deadline for those who want to run for office in the 2022 elections: the current January 7 deadline will clearly come and go before the maps are finalized.
- A responsible timetable for action to establish new districts, giving Kentucky citizens time to study them, identify concerns, and propose improvements. This process should take weeks, not hours, and include many participants, not just a few drafters behind closed doors.

One final point: At Thursday's press event, Rep. Jerry Miller offered the view that the League's Recommended Maps, if enacted into law, would violate the Voting Rights Act. We reject his claim. We worked zealously to propose maps that fulfill the full legal requirements for American legislative districts. The districts in our maps have total populations (as enumerated in the 2020 Census) that comply with the one-person, one-vote requirements of the U.S Constitution and the rulings of the United States Supreme Court and the Kentucky Supreme Court. The districts in our maps also provide opportunities for non-white voters to elect candidates of their choosing, and we analyzed those districts of opportunity by looking at voting-age population, in line with multiple Voting Rights Act rulings based on the same kind of data. We are in continuing dialogue with Rep. Miller about these issues and hope to arrive at a shared understanding in the very near future.

The League of Women Voters of Kentucky, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Since 2017, LWVKY has studied redistricting, provided multiple public presentations, advocated for an advisory commission approach to redistricting, published three versions of ways legislative seats could be districted, and conducted a statewide series of forums and online input opportunities to gather thoughts on the LWVKY Draft Maps. As a nonpartisan body, the League takes action on issues but does not support or oppose candidates or parties. The League supports diversity, equity and inclusion in membership and programming. Learn more at lwvky.org.

For more information on this statement, please contact President Wagner at (502) 875-6481 or at info@lwvky.org.