



### **It's time to work together to end gerrymandering**

Bob Heleringer in a March 18<sup>th</sup> *Courier Journal* article seems to be arguing, in a rather mean-spirited way, that since Democrats messed up redistricting in the past, Republicans should be allowed to do the same this time since they have majorities in both Houses. The League of Women Voters doesn't dispute that Democrats, and, following the 2010 census, Senate Republicans as well, have gerrymandered congressional and state legislative districts to favor their political parties. That is precisely the reason the League is advocating for a different process, one that invites transparency and public input.

The League, both in Kentucky and nationally, has become increasingly aware of our broken redistricting process as sophisticated computer models have enabled legislators to slice and dice voters even more precisely into districts that allow legislators to choose their voters rather than voters choosing their elected officials. While it would have been better had the League spoken more forcibly earlier, it is incorrect to say, as Mr. Heleringer did, that the League has not criticized the process in the past. The League of Women Voters adopted its current position advocating for fair and equal redistricting in 2007, and we have supported that position ever since.

To further set the record straight, the League of Women Voters has never advocated by-passing the General Assembly's constitutional role to draw redistricting lines. We do support creating an Advisory Commission of citizens, most appointed by legislators, who would hold hearings and solicit citizen input and recommend district maps to legislators. But legislators would make the final decisions. The League has also supported House Concurrent Resolution 61 that encourages the General Assembly to allow public input and hold public hearings during the redistricting process.

Once census figures are released (probably in late September), the General Assembly will be charged with redrawing Kentucky's congressional and legislative districts for the next 10 years. Do we want to do it the same old way – behind closed doors with districts drawn and voted on without any public input, and, consequently, expensive lawsuits filed? No! It's time to put an end to the pernicious effects of gerrymandering and work together for districts that truly represent Kentuckians. That's not a "liberal idea." It's basic democracy. And it's one that we hope Democrats and Republicans (including Mr. Heleringer) can work on together.

Fran Wagner, President  
League of Women Voters of Kentucky