

Re **HB 203** – **establishing an independent redistricting commission**

Representative Griffin and members of the Election Law Committee:

How our New Hampshire legislature handles redistricting matters! Local voters have learned that election results are influenced by district boundaries, having experienced changing boundaries each time they are redistricted into yet another reconfiguration. Especially in elections of state representatives and senators, voters complain that they are being asked to vote for candidates from locales disconnected from their own. They ask why they don't have representatives from their own municipality.

Consider Sunapee, which in 2010 had a population of 3,365 (over the number 3,291, the required number for a representative of their own); they were assigned two representatives, both shared with other towns. Pelham, a town of 13,000, is represented by only two representatives from Pelham and nine from Hudson.

HB 203 wisely proposes the remedy: "As many districts as possible shall be wholly contained within a single town or city and each such district shall to the extent possible be single member districts."

Every ten years towns are bounced from one grouping to another, often with no alignment of electoral district and the existing working relationships among municipalities, school districts, and regional planning commissions.

Voters in Newbury asked me as their Town Moderator why they were suddenly no longer linked with the neighboring town of Sutton but suddenly with the town of Henniker, whose candidate talked with them at the transfer station on her acknowledged first visit ever to Newbury; how is that representative of Newbury, they complained. Ten years later they found themselves districted with New London. They expressed distress that their voices play no role in these changes.

Elected officials from both parties acknowledge that they currently construct districts to keep their party in the majority. Yet officials are elected not by parties but by individual voters. Even in primary elections the majority of those voters declare for a party then "undeclare"; the number of undeclared voters is significantly larger than the numbers of Republican or Democrat voters. By their actions, voters are telling you that your "along party line" loyalties do not reflect their priorities. Redistricting that favors your party is not benefiting New Hampshire voters.

HB 203 responds to voter preference that: "henceforth elections shall reflect to the greatest extent possible the wishes of voters of New Hampshire by eliminating partisan distortions of electoral districts."

It is clear why the position of our own League of Women Voters New Hampshire supports "legislation

establishing an independent, non-partisan commission with broad-based community representation as the preferred redistricting body.” The League of Women Voters United States has made that same goal a top priority.

We look forward to a unanimous vote of Ought To Pass – in support of every New Hampshire voter.

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