



January 26, 2022

Submitted Via Email

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senate Temporary President and Majority
Leader

Honorable Robert Ort
Senate Minority Leader

Honorable Carl Heastie
Assembly Speaker

Honorable William Barclay
Assembly Minority Leader

Dear Messrs. Heastie, Ort, Barclay and Ms. Stewart-Cousins:

Over the last months, thousands of New Yorkers participated in the redistricting process with the belief that their testimonies, comments, and proposed maps would contribute to the final maps. Now, after the Independent Redistricting Commission has failed to submit a second redistricting plan to the Legislature, the responsibility for drawing fair and truly representative legislative lines falls on state lawmakers. **We are writing to you as leaders of the Legislature to remind you of your responsibilities to the public in the redistricting process.**

The Legislature can introduce amendments to the plans first submitted by the Independent Redistricting Commission, which must comply with all Federal and state constitutional standards including the ban on partisan gerrymandering approved by the voters in 2014. Under state law, the Legislature's plan must also not impact more than 2% of the population of any district contained in the Commission submitted plan that is being amended.

We urge the Legislature to publicly release the amended plan as well as the underlying data as soon as possible after it is proposed. That release should be followed by a period during which the public can review the proposed districts before any vote.

Communities impacted by the amendments, including those protected by the Voting Rights Act, should have the opportunity to offer input during a public hearing. We realize that the time for this will be limited, but it is important to demonstrate that the Legislature has the public interest in mind rather than partisan self-interest. The participation of so many New Yorkers in the process in the last year should not go to waste.

The redistricting process to date has failed to live up to voter expectations when they approved the 2014 Constitutional amendment. However, there is still time for the Legislature to demonstrate its commitment to transparency and adherence to the Constitutional standards approved by voters.

Sincerely,

Laura Ladd Bierman
Executive Director
League of Women Voters of New York
State

John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany

Betsy Gotbaum
Executive Director
Citizens Union of the City of New York