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## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

February 27, 2012

Memo to all LWVNYS Members

### **Update on Redistricting** **Sally Robinson, LWVNYS VP Issues and Advocacy**

As many of you may be aware, we are nearing the end of our most recent campaign for a better redistricting process for New York and I wanted to provide an update on what is happening in Albany and clarify the League's position. Many of you held public forums highlighting the need for reform using the materials we provided in the fall of 2010. This followed years of the League advocating for a constitutional amendment setting forth permanent and fair guidelines and establishing an independent commission to draw lines free of partisan gerrymandering. We have long felt that the pen that draws legislative lines needs to be removed from the hands of the legislators, but understandably it has been an uphill fight given the inherently political nature of the redistricting process.

The first set of state legislative lines for the 2012 election was released by the Legislature in January and a revised set is expected soon. At the time of their release, we criticized those lines as partisan and gerrymandered, as did our good government colleagues and many others, and we called for both improving the lines and implementing lasting structural reform to a fundamentally flawed process. Congressional lines have yet to be released, even though a federal judge has moved the Congressional primary forward to June 26. It has never been more obvious that the redistricting process in New York is broken and the courts are already preparing to step in as they have in past decades of Congressional redistricting.

We believe that the Governor should use his veto threat, and the power it gives him to negotiate with the Legislature, to not only improve the 2012 lines but also to achieve certain and permanent structural reform to the redistricting process. Permanent structural reform can only be achieved through a constitutional amendment but momentum for this has typically diminished greatly in the years following each redistricting battle. Now may be a unique opportunity for reform in light of the unprecedented campaign that has been waged by many different groups, including those allied with us in ReShapeNY, to hold legislators to their pledge to enact redistricting reform and Governor Cuomo's insistence that the status quo could not stand. Certainty can be added to the process by coupling first passage of a constitutional amendment with an accompanying statute, ensuring reform even if the amendment does not achieve the second legislative passage necessary to go on the ballot. The League will continue to urge the Governor and the Legislature to reach an agreement that provides for both a constitutional amendment and a statute, creating structural reform that permanently takes the redistricting pen away from the legislature and provides the voter with the power to choose their elective representatives.

If you have any questions about redistricting contact Sally at [robintwins@gmail.com](mailto:robintwins@gmail.com) or call the state League office at 518-465-4162.

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