



**CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK**  
**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEW YORK STATE**

**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF: S.2107/SKELOS, Klein**

**TO: New York State Senate**

**DATE: January 23, 2013**

***Subject: Concurrent resolution of the Senate and Assembly proposing an amendment to Article 3 of the Constitution, in relation to the establishment of the independent redistricting commission***

*Citizens Union and the League of Women Voters of New York State support the above referenced concurrent resolution (S.2107) to create an impartial process to draw state legislative and congressional district lines and put an end to New York's partisan redistricting process.*

The constitutional amendment, if passed by the people, will remove the power to draw district lines from the direct hands of legislators and put it in the hands of a non-legislative commission. For the first time, the redistricting commission will have a membership that is equally balanced between the majority and minority parties in each house, while including unaffiliated or third-party members. We believe that this new arrangement, and the requirement that a redistricting plan obtain a vote of 7 of 10 members, will foster collaboration and cooperation and result in a consensus product that is fair, unlike the current process. The accompanying statute passed last year by the legislature also importantly limits the ability of the legislature to amend the final plan put forth by the commission by requiring that if the legislature formally rejects two commission-submitted plans, any subsequent restricting amendments affect no more than two percent of the population of any district.

In addition, the independent commission will draw lines according to recognized principles of fair redistricting, including consideration of communities of interest and an express prohibition on partisan gerrymandering. The constitutional amendment will also incorporate into the state constitution important provisions of the federal Voting Rights Act and includes provisions that increase transparency of the redistricting process to the public through required public hearings across the state and public access to redistricting data and software.

The League and Citizens Union have long supported a change to the current ineffective and unfair redistricting process. After decades of trying to create an independent process that were filled with broken promises by both major political parties to reform the partisan and legislatively controlled process of redistricting, we believe that the amendment is the best chance for permanent structural reform for decades to come.

***For the above reasons, Citizens Union and the League of Women Voters of New York State strongly support S.2107.***