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After Redistricting Commission Vote, Civil and Voting Rights Organizations Call for Transparency

Orgs Call for the Legislature to Hold One Public Hearing Before Vote on New Congressional Maps

NEW YORK, NY (02/15/2024) (readMedia)-- The New York State Redistricting Commission voted today on new congressional maps for New York. The maps are now delivered to the New York Legislature, where lawmakers will then vote on the maps in the coming days.

In response, the following groups released these statements:

"The reconvened Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) owes New Yorkers an apology. From the start, this commission met behind closed doors, locking New Yorkers out of a process that directly impacts them. We have no idea how these maps were drawn, who influenced them, and why the districts are the way they are. Now, the Legislature must hold at least one public hearing – and allow written testimony – so New Yorkers can weigh in on the process before lawmakers vote on these maps. It's the least they can do," **said Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY.**

"New Yorkers deserve a better redistricting process. The IRC should have held deliberations in public, and sought public input. Before voting on the maps, the legislature must hold at least one public hearing, and allow New Yorkers to comment on these lines. Going forward, we need a more independent process that reduces partisanship and outside influence over the commission, brings more diverse voices to the table, minimizes the potential for deadlock, and eliminates the Legislature's authority to veto the final maps," **said Betsy Gotbaum, Executive Director of Citizens Union.**

"New York's redistricting process has been plagued with multiple changes and convoluted decision making," **said Cesar Ruiz, Associate Counsel at LatinoJustice PRLDEF.** "It's essential that the legislature hold a public hearing. We cannot allow the will of the voters to be undermined. A redistricting process only works where there is a process in place that is fair, transparent, and equitable."

"The League of Women Voters of NYS is dismayed that the Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) held no hearings during their consideration of new congressional maps. Public input is critical to ensuring that the voters are choosing their elected officials and not the reverse. Even though it was not required by the court decision, the IRC should have realized the importance to all to solicit this public input in this redrawing of the maps. The League has advocated for public input throughout this multi-year redistricting process and will continue to support all efforts now and in the future to ensure the public's voice is heard in determining district lines," **said Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director, League of Women Voters of NYS.**

"Public input is essential to give legitimacy to the redistricting process. Eyes are on New York. Don't shut the public out of the process for a second time. We ask the legislature to prioritize democracy over expediency and hold a public hearing before any map is finalized," **said Elizabeth R. OuYang, Coordinator, APA VOICE Redistricting Task Force.**

"New Yorkers deserve a transparent, fair and inclusive process when it comes to redistricting. Instead, constituents were handed a set of congressional maps developed by the Independent Redistricting Commission without community input and shrouded in secrecy until their release today. Now it's up to the Legislature to correct this wrong, by seeking and incorporating public input from New Yorkers before voting on these new maps. This is the only way to increase trust in the system and ensure that every New Yorker has a say in the process that will impact their lives for years to come. Building a more open process is vital for fostering an inclusive democracy that represents and uplifts the voices of immigrants and all New Yorkers," **said Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director of the New York Immigration Coalition.**

On Tuesday, these groups will host a virtual hearing on New York's redistricting process. Attendees will hear from members of the public and voting and civil rights groups about the current state of New York's redistricting, why

redistricting is important to them, and how new Congressional lines will impact their communities over the next decade. [RSVP to the event here.](#)

In December, the New York State Court of Appeals ruled that the state's Independent Redistricting Commission must propose new maps to the Legislature by February 28. That decision followed a lengthy legal saga in which voters had twice sued the Commission, claiming the state Legislature had no authority to create its own congressional map. After the New York Court of Appeals [tossed the congressional maps](#) made by the Legislature and implemented a neutral map in 2022, voters again sued the Commission, leading to the Court's decision to [restart the process ahead](#) of the 2024 election cycle.