

League of Women Voters of Colorado Redistricting Work through Fair Districts Colorado

Teleconference with Local Leagues: Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2017, 7 P.M.

Participants: Marjie Gray, LWV Chaffee County; Barbara Whinery, LWV Greeley Weld; Kayla Dodson, LWV Mesa County; Kathleen Schmidt, LWV Larimer County; Mary Lonergan, LWV Jefferson County; Alice Reuman, LWV Estes Park; Lena Brown, LWV Arapahoe Douglas; Elizabeth Crowe, LWV Boulder County; Jean Fredlund, Chair, LWVCO Redistricting Committee; Barbara Mattison, Member, LWVCO Redistricting Committee.
LWVCO Board Listener: Ruth Stemler.

Meeting Notes

Introduction

- Jean Fredlund, Chair, LWVCO Redistricting Committee, welcomed everyone and noted that all League members should receive the three documents sent to local League leaders in preparation for the teleconferences.

Q's and A's

- Marjie Gray: In the initiatives, does "communities of interest" include rural Colorado. Jean: yes. Marjie noted that the commissioners will be selected from the Western Slope and on the Eastern Slope from parts of the state south of El Paso County and east of Arapahoe County. She registered her concern that rural areas like Chaffee County and the city of Alamosa are not west of the Colorado Divide and may be overlooked the way these selection criteria are structured.

Jean Fredlund noted that the criteria that Marjie is referring to apply only to commissioner selection and that the map drawing hearings that the commission will have will provide opportunity for communities to give direct input on map boundaries.

- Elizabeth Crowe: Where are we now in the process?
Jean: Proposed Initiatives 48, 49 and 50 were previously filed; #49 was dropped by Fair Districts Colorado (FDC) and 48 and 50 have been approved by the Colorado Supreme Court. Subsequently, the FDC Coalition came back together and, having heard from a variety of groups (Common Cause was one), developed three additional initiatives, incorporating content from a number of them, including Common Cause. These proposed initiatives are now #67, #68 and #69. The only difference between # 67 and #68 is that one uses the word "senior" judges and one uses "retired" judges for the judges' panel. Most likely, #67 and #69 will be the final initiatives to be moved ahead for signature gathering. This new set of proposed initiatives has been approved by the Title Board and must now be approved by the Colorado Supreme Court. There is no firm timeline for the court's approval - this could be several months. The Campaign Legal Center, a national organization, will file amicus briefs supporting the initiatives.
Barb Mattison and Jean: FDC may begin gathering signatures before the court's decision because signatures need to be turned in in August.
Elizabeth: Best case scenario is that the court will decide soon.
Jean: Yes and LWVCO will provide updates to local Leagues on all of this every 2 weeks – these will be sent to all local League/LWVCO Board liaisons by Sue Vaughan for sharing with all members.

- Mary Lonergan: League year typically ends in April/May and we may need to gather signatures then and educate our members and the community soon. Local Leagues will need a very clear Power Point and other materials with which to “train trainers”, etc. Will LWVCO provide that?
Jean: Yes. FDC has a Power Point now and will provide clear materials with clear messages. I will keep you all updated on that.
- Elizabeth: I’m concerned that communities of color/minority groups are not supporting these initiatives. What have they said are their concerns?
Barb: FDC has not heard specific concerns – it is mostly a lack of endorsement. Many state representatives of color are Democrats and Colorado has its largest number of people of color in the current legislature. Democrats are in power now – they drew the maps last time. This is threatening to the current districts and the current representatives and senators.
Jean: Current redistricting law says that districts shouldn’t change much; this proposed law could potentially change districts.
Barb and Jean: A group representing African immigrants who are new citizens is actively supporting these initiatives.
Jean: In California’s redistricting initiative after the last census, communities of color was noted first (as it is in the FDC initiatives); more competitive districts actually resulted.
- Elizabeth: What about Common Cause and ACLU – why are they not supporting?
Barb: LWVCO President Toni Larson has heard from Colorado Common Cause’s Legislative Director and Toni has written back; dialogue is continuing.
- Lena Brown: Why is LWVCO joining this particular initiative effort?
Jean: Presented the history of starting to meet with an initial group in Dec/Jan 2016-17 and, over the following months, developing many iterations with many discussions about overall concepts and the language. These initiatives agree with the national LWVUS Redistricting position and LWVCO had to be sure of that before joining. In the beginning, LWVCO brought a summary of the contents of redistricting laws and proposed laws from a number of states where state Leagues have sponsored/joined the redistricting work.
- Elizabeth: I would appreciate your sharing where LWV has sponsored in these efforts in other states.
- Elizabeth: What/whom do you anticipate the opposition will be?
Jean: This has polled well in an initial poll several months ago – if we can get enough signatures to get it on the ballot, it probably will win. In every state, the parties form the strongest opposition because they want to remain in control.
- Elizabeth: What will local Leagues have over the summer to face this probably opposition?
Jean: FDC is working on materials now with clear messages. I will continue to share everything with you.

Jean: FDC continues to work on expanding the current coalition. Also, Kent Thiry, CEO of DaVita, has given money to this effort. He did this in California and worked with the League of Women Voters of California. He has stated that he's very glad to work with the League again and is happy that the League is involved.

- Marjie: Mario Carrera wrote an op ed in the Durango paper in November critical of the Republicans involved in this effort, especially Frank McNulty and Alan Philp. What do you think of that?

Jean and Barb: The League of Women Voters acts based on its positions, both state and national. These initiatives agree with League positions. The League does not base its positions and actions on people or parties.

- Kathleen Schmidt: Aren't we just swapping major party folks for Libertarians by saying that the unaffiliated commissioners may be members of a minor party?

Jean: There is a list of criteria in the initiatives that the judges must follow in making the selection of the individuals for the unaffiliated commissioner positions. It is doubtful that these will all be Libertarians or all people from any particular minor party.

Kathleen: You said this is as good as it can be – it would be better if it were just like California's initiative and the state board of auditors ran the commission and the final four wouldn't be affiliated with any party at all.

Barb: In each state where the League has been involved in a redistricting process, the products are all different. Each plan is unique and reflects the way that state is structured. League has worked on many different plans - each must agree with League positions.

- Ruth Stemler: A list of organizations and individuals endorsing these initiatives dated Oct. 24, 2017 was sent to the LWVCO Board.

Jean: I will share that list which continues to grow.

- Ruth: At the LWVCO Legislative Conference on Monday, Jan. 29, 2018, there will be a presentation and discussion on these FDC Redistricting initiatives. Please encourage your members to come to learn more.

- Marjie: As part of materials being developed, I would like to suggest sample letters to the editor – our members and community members are newspaper readers.

Closing

- Jean thanked everyone for participating in the teleconference. Meeting notes will follow.

Redistricting Teleconference, p. 4

*Footnote re: state board of auditors:

In Colorado, the Secretary of State's Office appoints audit boards in the following cases (rules below) for risk-limiting audits:

25.1.4 "Ballot polling audit" means a type of risk-limiting audit in which the audit board examines and reports to the Secretary of State voter markings on randomly selected ballot cards seeking strong evidence that the reported tabulation outcome is correct.

25.1.5 "Comparison audit" means a type of risk-limiting audit in which the audit board examines and reports to the Secretary of State voter markings on randomly selected ballot cards, then compares them to the voting system's tabulation as reflected in the corresponding cast vote records.

Barbara Mattison (recorder for this Dec. 27 meeting) could find no other mention of audit boards in Colorado government.