



January 30, 2012

Dear City Clerk,

In less than a month, cities across Minnesota will begin the decennial redistricting process to redraw city council lines to adjust for population shifts. It appears cities will have to go through the difficult process of redrawing lines in less than 60 days as a result of the broken redistricting process at the state level.

While this timeline creates challenges for local government across the state, we encourage you to ensure that the redistricting process is fair, transparent, and has meaningfully opportunity for citizen input. This decade, redistricting in Minnesota and across the country has faced increased scrutiny from a public who has grown distrustful of redistricting lines being drawn behind closed doors. This should come as no surprise because of the extreme examples of partisan gerrymandering that occurred in Texas and California during the last decade. While in Minnesota the redistricting process has not seen the problems that occurred in those states, there was a lawsuit and significant public scrutiny in Minneapolis because of how the process was handled.

That is why Common Cause Minnesota and League of Women Voters Minnesota have spent the last year working to reform and improve the redistricting process in Minnesota. As you move forward in the next several weeks, we urge you to adopt rules and procedures outlined below to ensure that the 2012 redistricting process is as fair and transparent as possible. These recommendations are an important step that local governments can take to help build public trust in the redistricting process. We strongly believe that community input and transparency will help line drawers develop districts that better reflect the real communities that exist. In the end, our organizations believe that these recommendations will help instill greater public confidence in the redistricting process:

- **Adopt redistricting principles at the beginning of the process.**  
State law and past court decisions have outlined the redistricting principles that local government must follow. However, each local government should identify how it intends to prioritize those principles and if it intends to include any other principles during the redistricting process.
- **Provide 14 days notice before any public forums are held.**  
Adequate public notice is necessary to ensure that the public can provide meaningful public input into the process.
- **Develop and maintain a public website**  
The website will allow members of the public to monitor and comment on the redistricting committee's work. This website shall be fully functional and accessible by members of the general public.

- The website shall make available all demographic, political data, and other data considered by the redistricting commission.
- The website shall make available all comments received by the committee.

- **Allow for public comments to be submitted**

Facilitate public comments and public submission of redistricting proposals through regular testimony, public meetings, and the internet. At first, public testimony should be focused on helping to identify communities of interest. This is what the Minnesota special redistricting panel did to engage the community in their process. This input is valuable because community members can provide this valuable information on where different communities are located throughout the city. The goal of any redistricting plan should be to minimize dividing these communities of interest and keeping similar communities of interest grouped together.

- **Public Meetings**

Hold at least one public meetings prior to the release of the preliminary plan and at least one public meetings after the release of the preliminary plan.

- **Release a preliminary plan**

The preliminary plan should include all data and a map for public review and comment on during a two week period. Requesting this feedback is necessary to draw a map that reflects the communities that exist in your city.

We hope that you will consider these recommendations as you proceed in the next several weeks. By adopting these ideas, you can help build public trust in the process and ensure that the public has a strong voice in these important redistricting decisions.

Sincerely,



Mike Dean  
Common Cause Minnesota



Laura Fredrick-Wang  
League of Women Voters, Minnesota