



Dear League Member:

I would like to encourage you to participate in the 2010 Redistricting Initiative Process organized by the Fair Boundaries Coalition.

The Utah League at their State Convention in May heard a presentation by Fair Boundaries. Their slogan is: *Elected officials are choosing their voters, instead of voters choosing their leaders.* The League delegates voted to have the league participate in this initiative process.

The Fair Boundaries Coalition was formed to address the issue of gerrymandering that occurred in Utah in 2001 that led to the disenfranchisement of many voters. Their goal is to address the 2010 Utah redistricting process by circulating a petition to put a citizens initiative on the November ballot.

The initiative calls for a *Utah Redistricting Standards Commission, to enact legislation that provides for uniform procedures and standards in redrawing the boundaries of legislative districts.* This would be an independent commission whose goal would be to keep communities intact and ensure that the redistricting process remains open and transparent. It excludes individuals with obvious conflicts of interest from the process. To see the actual initiative go to: <http://fairboundaries.org/documents/initiative.pdf>

By law, public hearings need to be held throughout the state and the schedule for these meetings is listed below. Any league member interested in participating in this process; carrying a petition, attending these meetings can contact me (Nanette Benowitz (801) 718-0437 or the executive director of Fair Boundaries - Nikki Norton (435) 513-2606.

For more information you can go to their web-site at: [www.fairboundaries.org](http://www.fairboundaries.org) Click on "Get the Facts" to see several examples of gerrymandering in Utah.

This is a huge job with little time to complete the process. With the town meetings in July, the petition drive will begin as soon as the town meetings are complete. For direct initiatives, proponents must gather 10% of the vote cast in the last gubernatorial election in at least 26 of the 29 Utah Senate Districts (91,996 signatures statewide).

The league encourages everyone who can to participate. This is what the league is all about voter participation.

**I would like to track the leagues activity in this process. Any league member who goes to a town meeting, I would appreciate a brief overview of what you heard and what if anything you said. Please email me at [njb@benowitz.net](mailto:njb@benowitz.net).** Please see the FairBoundaries initiative summary with special bullet points for those attending the town meetings. The Fair Boundaries website has a great deal of information including specific examples of the gerrymandering that occurred in 2001. Please consider participating in this process.

Nanette Benowitz (H)278-3324, (C) 718-0437 [njb@benowitz.net](mailto:njb@benowitz.net)

## Public Hearing Schedule

### Utah Redistricting Standards Commission – Initiative petition

July 1, 2009

**Bear River Region – Box Elder, Cache and Rich Counties**

County Administration Building  
*Cache County Multipurpose Room*  
179 N Main Street  
Logan, UT  
6:30 to 8:00 pm

July 6, 2009

**Central Region – Juab, Millard, Piute, Sanpete, Sevier and Wayne Counties**

*Snow College*  
Room 114 – Humanities Building  
150 E College Avenue  
Ephraim, UT 84627  
5:30 to 7:00 pm

**Mountain Region – Summit, Utah and Wasatch Counties**

*Sheldon Richins Building*  
6505 Landmark Drive  
Park City, UT 84098  
6:00 to 7:30 pm

July 7, 2009

**Southeast Region – Carbon, Emery, Grand and San Juan Counties**

*Carbon County School District Office*  
251 W 400 N  
Price, UT  
6:00 to 7:30 pm

**Uintah Basin Region – Daggett, Duchesne and Uintah Counties**

Uintah Community Center  
*Classroom 3*  
610 South Vernal Avenue  
Vernal, UT  
5:30 to 7:00 pm

July 8, 2009

**Southwest Region – Beaver, Garfield, Iron, Kane and Washington Counties**

*Kanab City Library*  
374 N. Main Street  
Kanab, UT 84741  
7:00 to 9:00 pm

**Mountain Region – Summit, Utah and Wasatch Counties**

*Provo Library*  
550 North University Avenue  
Provo, UT 84601

7:00 to 8:30 pm

July 9, 2009

**Wasatch Front Region – Davis, Morgan, Salt Lake, Tooele and Weber Counties**

*Salt Lake County Complex  
Council Chambers  
2001 S State Street, North Building  
Salt Lake City, UT*

7:00 to 9:00 pm

## Initiative Summary

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It is the intent of the People to enact legislation that provides for uniform procedures and standards in redrawing the boundaries of legislative districts. In previous decades of redistricting, boundary lines were manipulated for political advantage by incumbents, effectively undermining the ideals of a republic and thwarting the true purpose of redistricting--to provide equal representation to each voter.

In lieu of divisions made by the state legislature with its inherent conflict of interest, this politically independent commission will be required to draw political maps with accountability and transparency, thereby creating election district boundaries that comply with the Voting Rights Act, the United States Constitution, and the Utah State Constitution.

Statutory provisions are enacted to produce better maps of election districts which are reasonably equal in population, reasonably compact, contiguous, and respectful of existing city and county boundaries. The commission must consider communities of common interest and make use of natural and geographic boundaries. Additionally, the projected outcome of the commission's work will be improved voter participation and increased competitiveness in elections.

### **Highlighted Provisions:**

1. Defines anti-gerrymandering standards to keep communities with similar economic, geographic, and social factors intact, with respect to existing city and county lines.
2. Establishes an eleven member independent redistricting commission composed of Utah citizens, with respect to geographic and partisan diversity.
3. Limits conflicts of interest. Elected officials, lobbyists and candidates for office are not allowed to serve on the commission.
4. Suggests a uniform scoring matrix for preparing a redistricting plan.
5. Technical staff for the commission will be provided by the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel, and permits the commission to hire its own legal counsel.
6. Accepts alternative plans submitted by citizens for consideration by the commission.
7. Requires public hearings on the draft plan adopted by the commission.
8. Requires the final map to be submitted to the legislature for and up or down vote.
9. If the commission's map is rejected, requires the legislature to prepare a redistricting plan in compliance with mandatory anti-gerrymandering standards.

### \*LWV Position on Reapportionment and Redistricting (1980)

The basic criteria for reapportionment and redistricting are the standards of each citizen's right to vote, the equal value of each vote, and effective representation regardless of where that citizen resides.

#### Recommendations

The League supports meeting strict anti-gerrymandering standards including:

- prompt judicial review
- basic equality among districts
- district lines that honor local political boundaries
- district lines that are compact
- district lines that are not drawn for the purpose of advantage or disadvantage of any political party, incumbent, or any person or group
- lines that do not dilute voting strength of any minority
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Addresses of incumbents, political affiliation of registered voters, previous election returns, or demographic information other than population should not be used in redistricting.

The League supports establishing a bipartisan commission that would serve in an advisory capacity to the Legislature. The Legislature would approve a final plan that would be subject to approval by the courts.