



August 24, 2017

Dear Senator Scarnati, Senator Corman and Senator Folmer:

I am writing as the chair of Fair Districts PA, a redistricting reform coalition formed by Common Cause PA, League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, Committee of Seventy, Pennsylvanians for Fair Elections, the Public Interest Law Center and the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. The coalition is now supported by dozens of other Pennsylvania organizations and thousands of volunteers across the state.

We are working together to urge passage of Senate Bill 22 and House Bill 722. Since January we have held over 200 public meetings attended by over 13,000 citizens. Those citizens have urged passage of resolutions of support from 82 municipalities and 11 counties, with many more under consideration.

We have heard from some of our volunteers and supporters that Republican senators have been unwilling to meet with them to discuss Senate Bill 22 due to the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania redistricting lawsuit

We have also seen correspondence from Senator Folmer stating that hearings "relating to redistricting have been put on hold due to pending litigation on the drawing of maps."

We believe there are clear differences between challenging a law that violated the equal protection rights of voters guaranteed by our state Constitution, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, advocating for reform of the process that allowed that violation to occur.

Constitutional and trial lawyers we've consulted have all made clear that there is no legal rationale for delay of a hearing or refusal to speak with constituents on this issue. Responses have ranged from "nonsense," to "politically convenient but legally indefensible."

Please explain how this situation differs from many others where a law is challenged in the courts while those affected by that law are simultaneously advocating for changes to it by the General Assembly. In this case, the people directly affected are the voters of Pennsylvania. The law being challenged in the courts is one that relates to their fundamental rights as citizens. How can any elected official justify refusing to discuss these matters with their constituents?

We have also heard that legislators have been advised to wait until the Wisconsin Gill v Whitford case is concluded since that might in some way impact the redistricting process in Pennsylvania. That case and others may provide insight into judicable measurements for partisan gerrymandering but would have no bearing on the intent of Senate Bill 22 and House Bill 722, which directly address the conflict of interest inherent in the current Pennsylvania redistricting process.

Our constitution makes clear that our elected Senators and Representatives have an absolute obligation to listen to the people and hear their concerns on an issue that is fundamental to their self-governance.

Please be aware: there is great interest in this among Pennsylvania citizens, bar associations and press.

We welcome your written clarification and look forward to a hearing on Senate Bill 22 in the very near future.

Sincerely,

Carol Kuniholm
Fair Districts PA Chair
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