



WILL BARCLAY
Minority Leader

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

January 21, 2021

Ms. Rosemary Rivera & Ms. Jessica Wisneski
Co-Executive Directors
Citizen Action of New York
94 Central Avenue
Albany, NY 12206

Mr. Blair Horner
Executive Director
NYPIRG
107 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12210

Ms. Laura Ladd Bierman
Executive Director
League of Women Voters of NYS
62 Grand Street
Albany, NY 12207

Ms. Susan Lerner
Executive Director
Common Cause New York
80 Broad Street, Suite 2703
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Mr. John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany
148 Lafayette Street, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10013

Ms. Betsy Gotbaum
Executive Director
Citizens Union
299 Broadway, Suite 700
New York, NY 10007

Dear Ms. Bierman, Ms. Gotbaum, Ms. Lerner, Ms. Wisneski, Ms. Rivera, Mr. Horner & Mr. Kaehny:

The Constitutional Amendment relating to reapportionment and the processes of the Independent Redistricting Commission was passed in the Assembly this week. Having been approved by the Senate earlier this year, this marks the second passage of the measure and it now will move to voters in November as a public referendum.

As New York State's leading advocates for transparent, equitable, and honest government, I'm sure you appreciate the significance of this effort. Determining new legislative district lines and maps will have far-reaching impacts on state and federal elections for at least a decade. While some of your organizations have expressed well-founded opposition to the legislation, I hope all good-government groups will do their part in educating the public about the flawed process and priorities that resulted in the upcoming referendum.

Members of the Assembly Minority Conference have serious concerns with the blatant maneuvering to compromise any balance to the process and total disregard for the public referendum passed in 2014.

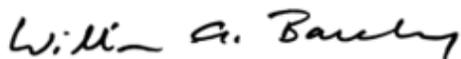
Eight years ago, Majority Conferences overwhelmingly approved a Constitutional Amendment to guide the Independent Redistricting Commission. The intent of the amendment was to limit political interests, and ensure fair and equitable representation was established during the process by which election maps were drawn. Unfortunately, the legislation that passed this week effectively reverses the measures majority members previously supported and completely nullifies the 2014 public referendum before the redistricting process even begins. This is a flawed approach and we have serious concerns.

- Under current law, in order for a plan to be approved by the Independent Redistricting Commission it must have seven “Yes” votes. Because the Assembly Speaker and Temporary President of the Senate are of the same political party, the approval must include affirmative votes from at least one member appointed by each of the legislative leaders. However, the new legislation allows for a redistricting plan to move forward with only a seven-person vote in favor. This new approach diminishes the input of minority parties and removes the requirement that at least one appointment of the minority leaders approve the plan.
- In addition, the majority has lowered the threshold for a final redistricting plan to pass the Legislature. Under current rules, if a plan is approved by the Independent Redistricting Commission it is submitted to the Legislature for approval. Because the Assembly Speaker and Temporary President of the Senate are of the same party, a two-thirds majority vote is required. However, the recently passed legislation changes that requirement to a simple majority vote of each house for passage of a plan.

The new approach represents a blatant power-grab, as one political party attempts to tighten its hold on reapportionment authorities and move to gerrymander legislative districts permanently into Democrat control. Fortunately, New York’s voters will make the final determination in November when they consider the referendum.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Will Barclay
Assembly Minority Leader