

RESOLUTION NO. 2018- 12

**A Resolution Requesting That The Indiana General Assembly
Establish an Independent Redistricting Commission**

WHEREAS, the current redistricting process creates a conflict of interest—as state legislators are effectively choosing their own constituents; and

WHEREAS, the redistricting process should be conducted in an open manner with real opportunities for public dialogue and feedback, not behind closed doors; and

WHEREAS, public input and involvement in the redistricting process will empower our communities by allowing them to elect representatives who represent their interests on issues that are important to their lives; and

WHEREAS, the boundaries of state districts are currently drawn by legislative incumbents, often sacrificing the integrity of neighborhoods and cities; and

WHEREAS, important principles such as the protections of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 and respect for neighborhoods and cities should be clearly listed for a Commission to abide by; and

WHEREAS, voters are more likely to participate when they feel that their vote will count and that they have a reasonable chance of electing candidates who represent their interests; and

WHEREAS, elected officials are more responsive to constituents when voters have a choice of candidates, thus increasing accountability and serving the best interests of the voters of Indiana; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Common Council of the City of Hobart, Indiana as follows:

We hereby urge the Indiana General Assembly to support comprehensive redistricting reform which incorporates the following:

1. The state of Indiana should establish a citizens led commission composed of Indiana voters who are representative of the state's diversity, partisan balance, and geography, for all future redistricting. This Commission will oversee the process to draw the lines of the state Senate, state House of Representatives and Congressional districts.

2. District boundaries should be drawn according to clearly described criteria, including respect for:

- a) The U.S. Constitution's requirement of one person, one vote;
- b) The Voting Rights Act (VRA);
- c) Contiguity requirements (to draw districts as one connected area);
- d) Communities of interest, city and county boundaries;
- e) Political competition, where this does not conflict with the above criteria
- f) Compactness, where this does not conflict with the above criteria;

3. The addresses of any individual, including an incumbent officeholder or candidate, shall not be considered when any district is drawn.

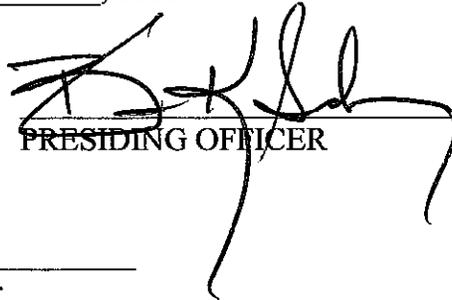
4. The Commission should conduct a transparent redistricting process with full opportunities for public participation. All redistricting plan information should be available in a timely fashion, free of charge, via a public website and other means. The public should be provided the ability to draw and submit maps for Commission consideration.

5. The public should be given ample notice to participate in any Commission meetings and meetings should be held in at least 3 different geographic regions of the state.

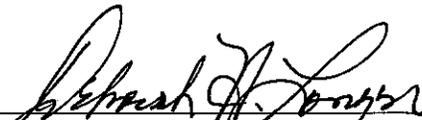
6. Members of the Commission must be prohibited from all off-the-record communications with anyone (including lobbyists, political party officials, elected officeholders and candidates), except staff and legal counsel.

7. Redistricting should occur once every 10 years following the decennial U.S. Census and Congressional Reapportionment.

ALL OF WHICH is ADOPTED as the resolution of the Common Council of the City of Hobart, Indiana on this 16th day of MAY, 2018.

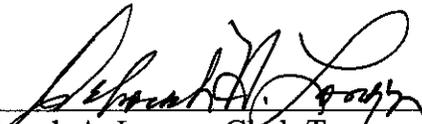


PRESIDING OFFICER

ATTEST: 

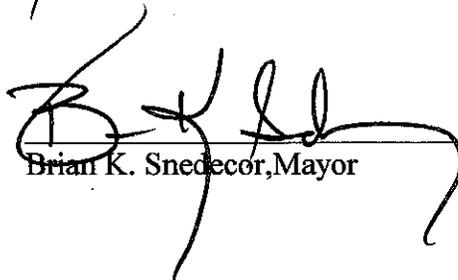
DEBORAH A. LONGER, Clerk-Treasurer

PRESENTED by me to the Mayor of the City of Hobart on the 16th day of MAY, 2018 at the hour of 6:45 pm.



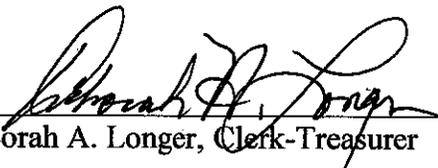
Deborah A. Longer, Clerk-Treasurer

APPROVED, EXECUTED and RETURNED by me to the Common Council of the City of Hobart on this 16th day of MAY, 2018.



Brian K. Snedecor, Mayor

ATTEST:


Deborah A. Longer, Clerk-Treasurer

COMMENTS TO THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
LA PORTE ON THE NEED FOR REDISTRICTING REFORM

December 18, 2017

Leigh Morris

In this day and age when we are dealing with crime and drug problems, you often hear about “packing” and “cracking,” but I’m asking you to think about those terms in a different way—as gerrymandering techniques. “Packing” is when the party in charge of redistricting tries to “pack” voters from the rival party into as few districts as possible, to minimize the number of seats the opposition is likely to win. “Cracking” is when blocs of opposition voters are parceled out among several districts, to achieve the same goal. In either event the general public loses. Proliferation of these techniques makes the need for redistricting reform even more important.

Michael Li, a New York University expert who analyzes redistricting across the country, was one of the resource persons the Redistricting Legislative Study Committee utilized, Li said getting redistricting right is more important than ever, since new mapping technology and greater access to consumer databases make it easy for politicians to effectively select individual voters and place them in specific districts.

I’ve heard it said that only Democrats favor redistricting, but I submit to you that redistricting is a non-partisan imperative. Others have said it better than I:

- Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, defines gerrymandering this way: [Democrats] get to rip off the public in the states where they control and protect their incumbents, and we [Republicans] get to rip off the public in the states we control and protect our incumbents.
- Former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger: “Thirty years ago, my hero, Ronald Reagan, called partisan gerrymandering ‘antidemocratic and un-American, “and it’s only gotten worse since then.”
- Former U.S. Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming: “Quite literally, gerrymandering is killing our system. Most Americans think politicians are corrupt, and when they’re rigging maps to pick their own constituents, they’re giving them reason to believe it. We can, and we must, do better.”
- John Mutz, former Lieutenant Governor of Indiana strongly endorsed the need for redistricting reform, saying that he felt that “gerrymandering is one of the biggest threats to democracy.”
- Former Senator Richard Lugar: “Unfortunately, today’s unrelenting partisanship on Capitol Hill means that the best interests of the public too often fall by the wayside. One of the causes of this dynamic is gerrymandering, whereby too many seats are safely controlled by one party or the other. For the good of our country, it must end.”
- John Kasich, the Governor Ohio (where 71% of the voters in a referendum supported non-partisan legislative redistricting): “Ideas and merits should be what wins

elections, not gerrymandering. When pure politics is what drives these kinds of decisions, the result is polarization and division. I think we've had enough of it. Gerrymandering should be in 'the dustbin of history.'"

The time is ripe for change. Gerrymandering benefits the party over the electorate. It has resulted in only 44 of 100 Indiana's House districts having any competition in 2014, and Indiana has recently had the lowest voter turnout of all states in the nation.

La Porte will join with Michigan City, Valparaiso, South Bend, Lafayette, West Lafayette, Vincennes, Crawfordsville, Greencastle, Anderson, Kokomo, Muncie, Bloomington, Evansville, Carmel and many other cities, towns and counties in urging the Indiana General Assembly to act on the recommendations of its Legislative Study Committee to reform redistricting after the 2020 census. Gerrymandering cheats the voter and undermines the effectiveness of government. We need to act now to change that. Your support of the resolution before you would be an important step in that process.

COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF A RESOLUTION BEFORE THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF
LA PORTE URGING THE INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO ADOPT COMPREHENSIVE
REDISTRICTING REDFORM

By Leigh Morris

December 3, 2017

Periodic redistricting is a key element of helping to assure equity and vitality of our electoral process. Every ten years after the completion of our decennial U.S. Census, boundaries for electoral and political districts are realigned. That process is called redistricting. The purpose is to equalize the number of people in each district to uphold our constitutional principle of “one person, one vote.” The concept of redistricting is very simple and clear, but the execution of it is not. There is a long-standing practice that many feel has undermined the logic and equity of redistricting. It’s called Gerrymandering, a process by which the political party in power gains special advantage over the opposition party by manipulating the boundaries of electoral districts to create partisan, incumbent-protected districts.

In 2015, the Indiana General Assembly created a study committee of legislators and citizens to spend 15 months studying how other states handle redistricting and to propose reforms for Indiana. Their recommendations were incorporated into proposed legislation in the 2017 session of the General Assembly with strong bipartisan support, but the chairman of the House Elections committee refused to allow a vote. It will be reintroduced in the 2018 session of the General Assembly and communities across the state are adopting resolutions similar to the one before you this evening, urging them to give full consideration to the proposal.

I’d like to cite just two of the reasons why that should happen.

1. The Indiana Bicentennial Visioning Project led by the distinguished bi-partisan team of former Congressman Lee Hamilton and former Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann listed redistricting reform as one of our state’s top policy priorities because of its negative impact on competitive elections in the state.

2. In the 2014 election, 44 of the 100 seats in the Indiana House of Representatives were uncontested in the general election. That same year, Indiana had the lowest voter turnout in the country.

Here's what the committee recommended:

1. A redistricting commission that would convene following completion of the 2020 U.S. Census to draw new districts for Indiana's nine U.S. House seats, 100 Indiana House seats and 50 Senate seats.
2. They must also be contiguous, compact, nearly equal in population and avoid breaching precinct or community boundaries.
3. Four of the redistricting commissioners would be selected by the Republican and Democratic leaders of the Indiana House and Senate.
4. Then, to minimize the influence of party politics, the other five commissioners would be picked from a pool of 12 "independent" candidates endorsed by the chief justice of Indiana and the presidents of Indiana, Purdue and Ball State universities.
5. An affirmative vote of at least seven of the nine commissioners would be needed to take official action on any question.
6. The commission would draw new maps, make them available online for public review and suggested changes, present the maps at public hearings throughout the state and finally submit them to the Legislature for final approval, as required by the Indiana Constitution, with only limited changes permitted.

Fourteen other states have already adopted some form of bi-partisan or non-partisan redistricting. It's time for Indiana to "move on up" so that La Porteans and other Hoosiers have the benefits of equitable representation based on the "one person, one vote" principle rather than simply providing advantage to an incumbent or political party. If you adopt the resolution before you, you will be joining with Valparaiso, Michigan City, South Bend, Carmel and a dozen or so other communities to say that equitable representation is

more important than partisanship and political bickering. I hope you will do so, and I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you.