



**For Immediate Release:**  
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### **Fair Districts New Jersey Statement Regarding New Jersey's Apportionment Commission**

As we begin the once-in-a-decade process of legislative redistricting, it is evident that New Jersey's redistricting process is broken. While other states move forward with community-driven redistricting reforms, New Jersey's political power brokers have refused to relinquish any map-making control and continue their tradition of blocking meaningful reform and excluding New Jersey voters from the process.

For years, Fair Districts New Jersey has called for an independent, representative commission that includes the voices of community members in order to minimize partisanship and reduce political influence over the redistricting process. These recommendations have urged constitutional changes, or failing that, party chair agreement that would ensure that members of the New Jersey Apportionment Commission would be representative of the racial, ethnic and gender diversity of the state's population. These changes would also ensure Commission members would be the individuals best able to redraw the boundary lines of our new voting districts in an independent, honest and impartial manner; who will uphold the principles of the Voting Rights Act and will not engage in any effort to gerrymander our districts.

Instead, the composition of New Jersey's Apportionment Commission fails every good government and best practices redistricting standard. The group charged with redrawing New Jersey's 40 legislative districts consists of political insiders who are not representative of our state's population. There are only two women, no women of color, and no Latinx members on the committee. People of color comprise over 45 percent of New Jersey's population, yet the Apportionment Commission is dominated by white men. The complete exclusion of a Latinx participant is particularly egregious when this demographic makes up 20 percent of New Jersey's population.

Further diminishing the voting strength of New Jersey's diverse communities, a ballot question recently passed that will likely delay implementation of a new legislative map. This delay means New Jersey will continue to use a map based on the 2010 Census numbers that does not reflect and does not represent New Jersey's growing diversity. As our partner New Jersey Policy Perspective smartly points out in a [statement regarding the Commission's makeup](#), "to compile a commission that is unrepresentative of the state, after the passage of such a harmful ballot measure, is simply adding insult to injury."

These appointments are calculated compromises made to protect political interests rather than to serve New Jersey voters. In fact, it has been [reported that some commissioners have signed](#)

a pledge of loyalty to their party and have refused to work in the bipartisan fashion in which the Apportionment Commission was designed to function.

New Jersey's politically powerful backroom players are behaving as if the legislative map belongs to them. They are wrong. Redistricting is the foundation of our representative democracy and voters deserve the most powerful voice in the process. Voters are the only people to whom redistricting commissioners should pledge allegiance.

Fair Districts New Jersey wants better for voters. New Jersey's redistricting process can still be improved in time for this cycle through a combination of legislation, Apportionment Commission bylaws, selection of an eleventh member and agreements among Commissioners to work together to improve transparency and accountability. These improvements include but are not limited to measures that open up redistricting to the public and lead to more representative maps, such as:

- Make all map-making resources and data public and allow multiple methods for public submission of maps.
- Make all map drafts public, allow for public input on any proposed map prior to approval, and require redistricting reports justifying all map-making decisions.
- Protect communities of interests through ample public hearings and robust and meaningful public input.
- Adhere to ranked order clear-line drawing rules established by nonpartisan redistricting reform best practices designed to protect "one person, one vote" and prevent boundary line manipulation for political gain.
- Adopt a racial equity provision that reinforces the Voting Rights Act to protect the voting rights and voting strength of communities of color.

The Legislature must recognize the fatal flaws of New Jersey's redistricting process, which frankly even fails to serve many of them, as evidenced by the political infighting and the fact that the Commission is not representative of many legislators themselves -- particularly women of color. In addition to passing immediate legislation to begin to rectify some of the harm we face during this redistricting cycle, the Legislature must also pass redistricting reform that improves the independence and makeup of the Commission and gives voters their rightful power in future cycles. New Jersey deserves a more independent, transparent, equitable and community-driven redistricting process.

Signed:

League of Women Voters of New Jersey

New Jersey Institute for Social Justice

LatinoJustice PRLDEF

NJ Citizen Action

Blue Wave New Jersey

NJ Appleseed Public Interest Law Center

Latino Action Network

New Jersey Policy Perspective

National Association of Social Workers – New Jersey (NASW-NJ)

Women for Progress

Good Government Coalition of New Jersey

NJ 11<sup>th</sup> for Change

Represent.Us/New Jersey

SOMA Action

Lawrence Citizen Activists

Faith in New Jersey

Clean Water Action

Indivisible Cranbury