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League of Women Voters of Ohio and Common Cause Ohio Praise Progress on Redistricting Reform, Giving Ohio Voters a Say

COLUMBUS - Today, the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO) and Common Cause Ohio (CCO) praised the efforts by Ohio legislators to work together in a bipartisan fashion to address the problem of gerrymandering. Early Friday morning, House and Senate leaders announced that a compromise had been reached on a redistricting reform measure, HJR12, which would change how Ohio's state legislative districts are drawn.

"In our current winner-take-all system, the voters lose, because the results are predetermined by the district map-makers," said Catherine Turcer of CCO. "The proposal passed today would require district maps to more closely reflect the will of voters rather than artificially favoring one party or the other."

"When our current gerrymandered district map took effect, we heard from many voters who were upset or confused by their communities being split into different districts," added Ann Henkener of LWVO. "This proposal requires map-makers to keep cities and counties together rather than splitting them up. This should help voters understand who their representative is because the boundaries will make more sense."

If the Ohio House signs off next week on the Senate amendments to HJR12, the proposal will go before voters to be approved on the 2015 ballot. The boards of both LWVO and CCO will consider formal approval of the proposal shortly. However, LWVO and CCO noted that the bill matches some of the criteria the organizations have advocated for years, such as representational fairness and keeping communities whole.

LWVO and CCO noted that HJR 12 only covers state legislative maps and does not solve the problems of Congressional gerrymandering. "While today's deal makes significant strides to address gerrymandering of state legislative districts, we are disappointed that it leaves out Congress," Henkener said.

"We remain committed to giving voters a fair say in Congressional races as well, and we hope the spirit of bipartisan compromise demonstrated by Ohio leaders this month will lead to additional reforms in the future," concluded Turcer.

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