



April 12, 2021

Washington State Redistricting Commission
C/O Sarah Augustine, Chair
CC: Lisa McLean, Executive Director
Re: Recommendations for Redistricting Input

Dear Commissioners,

Since 1930, The League of Women Voters of Washington has been a leader in redistricting advocacy. We believe in increasing access to democracy, transparency in government processes and maximizing all people's ability to give input. For this cycle of redistricting, we have educated over 4500 people to date and are holding workshops called Speak Up Schools across the state. (See lwvwa.org/speakup). Sponsored by local League chapters and partners, these trainings encourage a wide range of people to testify. These workshops share tools to help participants find their own voice and build effective, personal testimony. Our goal is to encourage at least 2000 people to testify in front of this year's commission. We see ourselves as partners with the commission, working to ensure that everyone who wants to provide input can do so in a manner that works best for them.

In past cycles Washington State's redistricting process has been good, but today's communities demand more. Based on four years of input from people across Washington, as well as consultation with LWV redistricting experts in other states, we respectfully submit the following recommendations to strengthen your communication, outreach, testimony and map-drawing processes. It is our hope and assumption that we share these bottom-line goals: to increase public confidence in the process, and ultimately, to strengthen district representation.

I will continue to communicate with you throughout your process this year with additional recommendations. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact me for any questions or clarifications.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alison McCaffree".

Alison McCaffree
Redistricting Issue Chair
League of Women Voters of Washington
253-720-6813, amccaffree@lwvwa.org

Attachment

Recommendations for Public Input, Transparency, Access and Websites

Public Input Process.

The public outreach and input process is critical to gathering the information you need to make mapping decisions that represent the desires of the people of Washington. Thank you for all that you already are doing to provide access to your meetings during the pandemic. We recommend that you continue or implement the following to ensure immediate and widespread public access.

- Publish a regular meeting schedule and provide notice of any changes at least twenty (20) days in advance, per open meeting law RCW 42.30.075. This gives advocacy organizations enough time to get the word out to their networks.
- Provide 20-days' notice for any additional meeting being held.
- Provide detailed agendas at least 24 hours but preferably seven days before each meeting.
- Post notices on the commission website. Email meeting announcements and publish in appropriate local news sources and social media accounts. Notice should be provided in all languages required in voting materials across the State.
- Set up connection points to community-based organizations so information can be distributed in a timely manner.
- Provide unique and specific opportunities for testimony from election officials from each county and municipality. (County auditor & Election department staff.) Ask officials to comment on local population changes, communities of interests and local redistricting processes and requirements.
- Provide unique and specific opportunities for tribal governments to give input on the district changes that impact their communities.
- Conduct hearings in a manner that invites the widest possible public participation, including but not limited to the following:
 - Have online live streaming access and meaningful remote participation access to all meetings.
 - Archive the recording of the meetings on the commission website.
 - Hold meeting outside normal working hours
 - Vary the time and location (if relevant) of the meetings to allow for people with different schedules to participate at different times.
- Set up partnerships with libraries or other locations in communities for people without internet access to watch meetings, provide written and verbal testimony, and observe the work of the commission.
- Set up a specific public testimony schedule for mapping input that includes the following:
 - Hold at least 25 meetings whose main purpose is to take testimony on district mapping.
 - Allow for at least 4 hours of testimony at each meeting with appropriate breaks.
 - Organize these meeting by region, even if virtual. This will allow communities to organize and commissioners to focus on one part of the state at a time. Repeat the regions after a few months so additional people can testify.
 - Hold a minimum of 1 meeting in each current congressional district.
 - Hold meetings both before and after preliminary maps are released.
 - Analyze the diversity and breadth of public input. Set up additional meetings to hear from underrepresented groups.
 - Summarize the testimony heard at each meeting.
- Designate a specific staff member(s) whose responsibility is to maximize public outreach. (Use the 2020 Census Complete Count effort as a model.)

Maximize Public Trust

Trust in our voting process starts with trust in the redistricting map-drawing process. We recommend the following process for maximizing public trust.

- Hold discussions and publish a document communicating the intention of the commission regarding the redistricting criteria stated in the law. Since redistricting criteria are not ranked in statute, this document should rank priorities, define communities of interest and determine how tradeoffs among criteria will be made.
- Publish reports on all public input in each public comment period. Links to reports should be shared using the same broad outreach outlined for public meeting notices.
- Allow a minimum of 30 days each for the preliminary and final plans to be reviewed and commented on by the public through in-person, online or mail testimony. Please include meaningful ways to respond.
- Publish a report by the commission to accompany each plan. Provide the basis on which the commission made its decisions in achieving compliance with plan requirements, including responses to the public comments received on any preliminary redistricting plan developed.
- Publish any dissenting views by commissioners.

Access for those with limited English

We recommend that the commission take extra and specific effort to provide access and accommodation for Washington residents with limited English language skills. Many in these communities are often underrepresented and the barriers are higher for giving their input. The following actions are recommended:

- Provide translation services on the website. Publish all meeting notices and other outreach in major languages.
- Provide interpretive services in at least 5 languages (see below) plus American Sign Language. Provide interpretive services for other languages as requested at all designated public input meetings and additional meetings.
- Recommended Languages: The following languages are required by the federal law in certain WA counties: Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese Mandarin, Vietnamese (see Register 2016-28969). We recommend communication in additional languages in specific areas. County Auditors and community organizations are good resources for this information. For example, The LWV of Spokane area translated election materials into Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese and Swahili to meet the demands of their area.
- Designate a specific staff member(s) whose responsibility is outreach to residents whose preferred language is other than English. Provide clear and easy to find contact information for that person.

Website

The website redistricting.wa.gov is key to your public input and communication plan. A modern, up-to-date, easily searchable website will increase positive public opinion and a sense of transparency. We recommend prioritizing the hiring of website development staff to implement the following features and keep them updated on at least a weekly basis.

- General information about the commission, its history including past commissions, redistricting RCWs, resumes of current commissioners, contact information.
- Up-to-date meeting information including meeting schedules, minutes, and links to video archive.
- Clear information on how to sign up to testify, on the technology being used, and how to request language interpretive services.

- Translation or ability to translate website information into at least the 5 languages required by voting rights law. (See Pierce County site <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/> as a good example.)
- Means for submitting public comment by written document and video testimony upload, email, and online forms.
- Means for submitting partial or complete maps.
- A key word and tag searchable archives of all documents, videos and written communications received by the commission, including public input and maps.
- Free downloadable access to all plans discussed by the Commission and the data used to create those plans. Maps and data should be comprehensively labeled and in common formats that are easily downloadable (ESRI Shapefile recommended). Data should include, but not be limited to, data Washington receives from the U.S. Census Bureau, up-to date election districts, county district and municipal boundaries, election results compiled at the election district level.
- Information about free map-drawing applications such as Dave's Redistricting App (DRA 2020), or Districtr.