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January 27, 2022

Senator Dan Hughes, Chair
and Members of the Executive Board
State Capitol, Lincoln NE

RE: LR269CA (Hunt) Constitutional Amendment to create a Commission on Redistricting

SUPPORT

Dear Senator Hughes and Members of the Committee:

For the record, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska supports LR269CA. The League has long believed and supported that responsibility for redistricting preferably should be vested in an independent special commission with membership that reflects the diversity of the unit of government, including citizens at large, representatives of public interest groups and members of minority groups.

Independent redistricting commissions (IRCs) are increasingly common. In 2018, voters in four states (Colorado, Michigan, Missouri and Utah) approved ballot measures creating IRCs, and Ohio also passed a bipartisan redistricting reform measure. States such as Arizona, California and Iowa also have commissions that remove politicians from directly drawing the lines and that require consensus. The structure of IRCs vary from state to state, but IRCs are meant to make the redistricting process more transparent and impartial by establishing standards for who can serve on the commission and criteria that must be followed when drawing district maps. A key component is that political insiders are prohibited from participation, eliminating the clear conflict of interest that exists when elected officials or those close to them draw districts.

Partisanship and the outcomes of future elections weren't far from the minds of legislators during last year's redistricting. The question of drawing maps for partisan gain or incumbent protection was raised many times during public hearings, by testifiers and committee members alike. Protecting incumbents seemed of greater concern to state senators than equal voting power for every Nebraskan and the voices of the communities they are supposed to represent. Please recall that a January 2021 poll by the ACLU found 93% of Nebraskans agreed "redistricting should be driven simply by census data, not by making deals that benefit a political party."

Nebraskans are willing to participate in this process. A contact with the aide to the Redistricting Committee reported that approximately 900 letters were received during the special session. Additional public testimony occurred at each of the three hearings. The totals I received were:

	LB1	LB2	LB3	LB4
Proponents	21	44	16	36
Opponents	35	11	23	12
Neutral	26	28	34	34
Total	82	83	73	82

The creation of an independent commission – a citizen-run process subject to final legislative approval – will increase public confidence in the redistricting process.

We urge the committee to advance LR269CA for full floor debate.

Sincerely,

Sheri St Clair
League of Women Voters of Nebraska