



Contact: Amy Ruffo
communications@fairdistrictspa.com
(800) 313-1597

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF PA VOTERS SAY CURRENT REDISTRICTING PROCESS PUTS POLITICAL SELF-INTERESTS OVER CITIZENS

Statewide poll shows support for an independent commission cuts across party lines and geographic regions

Harrisburg, PA (October 9, 2019) – A new statewide poll of registered voters’ attitudes released today shows why 67% of Pennsylvania voters support an independent commission to draw legislative district lines. This includes majorities of Democrats (66%), independents (78%) and Republicans (63%).

“This poll confirms the growing alarm we hear in every county and corner of Pennsylvania. Citizens believe that the current system is rigged in favor of political self-interests – not the interests of the people,” said Carol Kuniholm, chair of Fair Districts PA, a nonpartisan, statewide coalition advocating for a redistricting process that is transparent, impartial and fair. “The research clearly shows that voters no longer trust a process that lets party leaders manipulate maps for their own personal and party advantage.”

When asked their feelings about what outcomes the current redistricting process yields, Pennsylvania voters were clear that the current process is designed to maximize party influence, minimize accountability and reduce competition.

According to the poll:

- 72% of voters believe the current system of drawing legislative districts allows party leaders to put party interests above voter interests
- 70% of voters believe the current system creates polarization and gridlock
- 65% of voters believe the current system lets elected officials choose their voters instead of voters choosing them
- 62% believe the current system gives voters fewer choices on Election Day
- 61% believes that the current system of drawing legislative districts prevents voters from holding their representatives accountable

“The Pennsylvania legislature has an opportunity to help end the conflict of interest that threatens the integrity of our elections. This will be a ballot-box issue in the 2020 election,” continued Kuniholm. “There is overwhelming support for a fair and impartial process. No other major democracy allows an elected official a role in drawing their own district lines.”

226 Forster St., Harrisburg, PA 17102 | (800) 313-1597 | info@FairDistrictsPA.com

The poll shows that support for an independent commission is high across all demographic groups and throughout the state's diverse geographic regions. Majorities in every region of the state responded in favor of an independent commission with 71% in support in central Pennsylvania, 70% in Allegheny County, 69% in Philadelphia and 65% in the northeast.

The poll was designed and administered by the Center for Opinion Research at Franklin & Marshall College. There were 901 interviews conducted with registered voters between Aug. 20, 2019 and Sept. 10, 2019.

"The results of this poll are clear," said Berwood A. Yost, Director of the Center for Opinion Research and Floyd Institute for Public Policy at Franklin & Marshall College. "Voters from all political, geographic and demographic groups support changing the way legislative districts are drawn. The support for reform is likely motivated by the fact that voters believe the current process for drawing legislative districts puts party interests ahead of voter interests."

Today, congressional and state legislative voting districts are redrawn every 10 years following the census and based on changes to the state's population. In the current process, state legislative districts are drawn by four state legislators and a fifth commissioner chosen by those four; or, if they can't agree, by a majority of the PA Supreme Court. Congressional districts are passed as a bill by the General Assembly and approved or vetoed by the Governor. The result is gerrymandering, which manipulates voting districts to benefit parties in power, not citizens. Gerrymandered districts give voters less of a voice and less of a choice.

"Competitive elections keep politicians accountable," said Kuniholm. "It's no surprise that three in five registered voters are more likely to vote for a legislator who supports an independent commission for redistricting."

The research was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizens Education Fund and Fair Districts PA. Fair Districts PA includes in its membership volunteers representing all of Pennsylvania's counties and political affiliations. It supports legislation pending in both the PA House and Senate that would establish a commission of impartial, independent citizens charged with drawing fair district lines. States with citizen commissions in place have seen improvements in representation, competitiveness and voter trust.

To date, more than 70,000 Pennsylvanians have signed a petition in support of an independent commission and more than 300 municipal governments, 21 counties and three statewide associations have passed bipartisan resolutions or letters asking their legislators to support redistricting reform. They represent over 68% of the PA population.

To read the poll, visit www.fairdistrictspa.com.

###

Fair Districts PA is a nonpartisan, statewide coalition of individuals and organizations who believe free and fair elections are the foundation of our democracy. Its mission is to ensure the redistricting process in Pennsylvania is impartial, transparent and accountable. Learn more at www.fairdistrictspa.com.