



## News Release

September 6, 2017

For Immediate Release

Contact: Aaron Cohen (202) 489-7191

### **New redistricting initiatives seek fairer, more competitive legislative and congressional districts**

*Fair Districts Colorado looks to improve state's 10-year map drawing*

(DENVER, CO) – The League of Women Voters of Colorado and former state Representative Kathleen Curry (Gunnison) today filed three new ballot initiatives aimed at improving Colorado's often contentious redistricting process. The broad coalition supporting the initiatives under the umbrella of *Fair Districts Colorado* ([www.fairdistrictscolorado.com](http://www.fairdistrictscolorado.com)) includes significant bipartisan support as well as non-partisan representation and independent representation from the Colorado League of Women Voters, former state Representative Kathleen Curry, and the Centrist Project.

"We've reached a point in our political discourse that's just unhealthy, resulting in cynicism and citizens withdrawing their participation," said Colorado League of Women Voters 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President Toni Larson. "We must do better. To stop the practice of gerrymandering, we must start by removing our map drawing from the partisan battlefield and giving it back to the voters."

Every ten years, congressional and state legislative district boundaries are redrawn to adjust for population and demographic shifts. Colorado has a checkered history of redistricting abuses, with claims of gerrymandering launched by both parties. Gerrymandering has resulted in only three State House seats out of sixty five changing partisan hands this decade, for instance.

"The ugly truth is that partisan gerrymandering rigs elections and undermines democracy," said former State Senator Ron Tupa (D-Boulder). "Establishing a truly nonpartisan redistricting commission to draw fair and competitive maps will result in voters electing legislators and members of Congress that are more responsive to their communities."

The current process pits both parties against each other to win the most seats and protect party insiders and incumbents. The maps are primarily drawn behind closed doors by sophisticated party staffers and passed by a simple majority. While the law requires emphasis on areas such as maintaining communities of interest and preserving city and county integrity, parties put heavy weight on voter registration and voter performance to give their party the best shot at winning.

Fair Districts Colorado has filed three initiatives aimed at reforming the redistricting process for both the legislative and congressional commissions. "To protect the process from those with the

most vested interests, we have filed a constitutional initiative to address the legislative commission. The more robust standards for a constitutional amendment is what led us to bring forth a statutory initiative as well,” explained initiative proponent Rep. Curry.

The *Fair Districts Colorado* initiatives:

- Establish independent commissions, balanced between Republicans and Democrats, that must include representation from Unaffiliated and non-major party members for the very first time.
- Require an eight-vote supermajority to pass maps, including one non-major party member vote so neither party can hijack the map-drawing process.
- Require full transparency, stipulating that commissions operate in public and follow open meetings and open records laws.
- Remove the map-drawing from political operatives, by tasking non-partisan, professional staff with that responsibility.
- Require maps to adhere to good government criteria, such as equal population, compliance with the Voting Rights Act, preservation of county and city integrity, compactness, communities of interest, and competitiveness.

“Under our current system, politicians pick their voters, instead of voters picking their politicians,” said former state Representative Kathleen Curry. “With our initiatives, more races will be decided by competitive November elections instead of in safe-seat primaries, making candidates actually compete for more voters.” Representative Curry is the only Unaffiliated representative to serve in the legislature in Colorado’s history.

While this is the first step to qualify for the November 2018 ballot, *Fair Districts Colorado* will eventually need to collect 98,492 qualified signatures from registered voters for each statutory initiative and 2,300 qualified signatures from each of the 35 state senate districts for the constitutional initiative within six months of petition approval.

###