January 22 2018

Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Subject: Written Testimony to SJR-5

To all concerned:

The current draft of SJR-5 does little to nothing to end or even limit gerrymandering and, in fact, it appears to actually constitutionalize gerrymandering and promote its practice.

Recent analysis done by the League of Women Voters indicates that the rules included in the proposal would allow the apportionment of districts could be as one-sided as a 12 / 3 split of congressional districts in favor of a majority party assuming that such majority party was intent on gerrymandering the districts. That such an outcome could be possible is completely incompatible with the functioning and principles of a legitimate democracy in a state where the actual split of the population between the parties indicates something close to even.

There is currently no requirement included in the proposal that new congressional district maps not favor one party or the other. That district maps must be drawn to favor no political party is an absolute requirement for redistricting as is already provided for by the constitution in drawing Statehouse maps.

Further, the proposal must be changed to provide for unqualified bi-partisan approval of any new congressional district maps. The ability of the majority party to override the minority party in the process cannot be permitted.

Veto by the Governor should also be provided as a check and balance of the process.

Finally, the legislature should have no hand in the district map making process since such a thing represents a supreme conflict of interest – that is, to have political parties themselves draw the lines for districts they already represent. Ideally, to avoid such conflict of interests, the current constitutional process setting for the drawings of the Statehouse districts would provide the necessary protections and I urge the adoption of that process for the congressional districts.

Best regards,

Denis M. Osowski

