



## House State Government Finance Committee

February 21, 2017

HF 314

### League of Women Voters Minnesota

Good morning, Members. My name is Nick Harper and I am a member and volunteer with the League of Women Voters Minnesota. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. As you likely know, the League grew out of the effort to secure for women the right to vote. Along with protecting the right to vote for all citizens, we believe in an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive. Most importantly, the League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party.

I want to start by saying that the League of Women Voters Minnesota believes it is good policy to define redistricting principles and procedures into statutes. The League supports the inclusion of the redistricting principles listed in HF 314.

However, we oppose creating a new statutory provision prohibiting the legislature from creating an independent commission composed of non-legislators.

As you know, the legislature is not subject to open meeting laws and information laws thus this provision could result in the redistricting process being done with limited public knowledge or input.

If both the Legislature and the Governorship are controlled by one party, it is certainly possible, perhaps even likely, the resulting map will be drawn to ensure the majority stays in power. The resulting map would probably be challenged in the Courts. Legislators will have spent an enormous amount of time and money on this issue only to have the boundaries determined by the Supreme Court, an inefficient way to run government.

The new statutory provision in HF 314 is an extreme impediment to any type of redistricting reform. In Minnesota, four of the last five (1971, 1981, 2001,

and 2011) redistricting plans were determined by the courts because the legislature and/or the governor could not agree. This history tells us that our redistricting process needs to be reformed otherwise we face a costly and time consuming repeat of what happened before. Indeed, the increasingly deep partisan divisions in our state and country should compel us to seek an approach to redistricting that will restore the public's trust and confidence in government.

Finally, a principle of good government tells us that we should look to other states for best practices in their approaches to public policy issues. HF 314 would not allow the legislature to even consider the redistricting methods used successfully by other states such as Iowa. It would not even allow the legislature to consider the five-judge model proposed in 2008 by former Governor Arne Carlson (Republican) and former Vice President Walter Mondale (Democrat). Both methods are non-partisan and eliminate the inherent conflict of interest when legislators are allowed to select their own voters.

The League of Women Voters Minnesota asks the Members to oppose HF 314.