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## **Democracy Leaders Release Comprehensive Evaluation of California Statewide Redistricting**

*The report assesses the outcomes and processes of the 2020 California Citizens Redistricting Commission and offers recommendations for continued future success.*

**SACRAMENTO** – The League of Women Voters of California and California Common Cause have released a comprehensive report evaluating both the outcomes and the processes of the 2020 California Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC).

The report, authored by Dr. Christian Grose, professor of political science and public policy at USC, highlights the successes and challenges of California's 2020 statewide redistricting process, which bore the responsibility of following California's 2010 best-in-the-nation showing and was conducted entirely during the pandemic. The report also offers detailed recommendations for strengthening the upcoming 2030 redistricting cycle.

The report was based on interviews and feedback with dozens of key stakeholders and observers of the process, public meetings of the commission, and publicly available information and data on the redistricting process and maps. It is intended to serve as the report of record for the 2020 CRC, as the only externally produced, comprehensive evaluation of the commission's work. Its meticulous, data-driven recommendations should inform future redistricting policies and the work of the 2030 CRC to ensure its continued success and to advance equity and fair representation in the Golden State.

California has long been a leader in state and congressional redistricting. In 2020, for the second time in its history, the state utilized an independent redistricting commission to redraw state legislative and congressional district lines. The use of an independent commission, and the hard work of 14 dedicated commissioners, led to a fundamentally fair and open process that was driven by the public and was focused on the needs of California's communities above all else.

This underlines a major finding of this report: the importance of its institutional design. The CRC process, by design, is massively more participatory, inclusive, and transparent than redistricting conducted by state legislatures. The result is a process that empowers communities and reduces the influence of political actors and the potential for partisan gerrymandering. When the commission faced hurdles, the framework of California's independent redistricting process helped the commission successfully navigate those hurdles while keeping the needs of Californians at the heart of the endeavor.

To build on this success, the report highlights key priorities for the 2030 redistricting cycle. A few of the many **top-line recommendations** include:

- **Mapmaking:** California must prioritize its most populous and diverse regions early in mapmaking, to ensure compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act and to allow enough time to draw fair, equitable maps.
- **Voting rights:** To continue protecting the rights of voters of color, the legislature should consider codifying protections against minority vote dilution into state law.
- **Commissioner diversity:** Statewide officials must invest more resources into recruiting a more diverse applicant pool. This means intensive applicant recruitment and support in the most marginalized communities, particularly in the Latino community, which was significantly underrepresented in the 2010 and 2020 initial commissioner pools. The California State Auditor's Office and other statewide officials should incorporate redistricting education and recruitment into the state's 2030 census outreach.
- **Outreach:** Future commissions must be able to partner with trusted community messengers for community outreach and ensure that redistricting materials are widely accessible to Californians who speak languages other than English. The state should explore ways the 2030 CRC can use subgrants to community-based organizations to drive community education and outreach work.
- **Transparency:** To ensure full transparency in the selection process, the state's legislative leaders, who are permitted by law to strike names from the final applicant pool, should be required to release the names and rationales for their respective strikes. The finalist strikes provided to legislative leadership represent the only stage in the full commission process in which transparency is actively deprioritized.

"This report demonstrates why the 2020 California Citizens Redistricting Commission is the gold standard in citizen-led redistricting, but it doesn't stop there," said **Stephanie Doute, executive director of the League of Women Voters of California**. "With the many noted successes, the report offers recommendations that will continue to improve this process, furthering inclusive and equitable outreach, representation, and access in the 2030 redistricting process."

"California's independent redistricting commission sets a standard for the nation," said **Dr. Christian Grose, professor of political science and public policy at USC**. "Policymakers, advocates, redistricting stakeholders, and the public will learn what went down in California's most recent redistricting cycle, what worked, and what didn't. This report offers a guide to equitable redistricting for future line-drawers and policymakers, through policy recommendations on voting rights, commissioner recruitment, communities of interest, and more. This is the only record of California's 2020 redistricting commission process, beyond what the 2020 commission produced itself. Those interested in adopting commissions in their own states have much to learn from California."

"California's redistricting process was democracy done in public view, for all to see. It was at times messy and at times imperfect, but it was always transparent and always driven by the public," said **Jonathan Mehta Stein, executive director of California Common Cause**. "California has paved the way for inclusive, equitable mapmaking, and we can take it even further. This report details how we can build off our current successes to achieve a truly representative, multi-racial democracy through redistricting."

The report will inform the next California independent redistricting commission and assist advocates in other states interested in bringing this gold-standard anti-gerrymandering tool to their states or localities. It was made possible because of the generous support of the Haas Jr. Fund, the Blue Shield of California Foundation, and the Weingart Foundation.

[Read Fair Maps in the State of California: The 2020 California Citizens Redistricting Commission's Successes and Challenges.](#)

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*The League of Women Voters of California, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Our mission is to empower voters and defend democracy. For more information, visit [www.lwvc.org](http://www.lwvc.org).*

*Common Cause is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. We work to create open, honest, and accountable government that serves the public interest; promote equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all; and empower all people to make their voices heard in the political process.*

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