

1-8-2024

January 8 Roundtable Update

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Recommended Citation

Wice, Jeffrey M., "January 8 Roundtable Update" (2024). *Redistricting Roundtable Updates*. 127.
https://digitalcommons.nyls.edu/redistricting_roundtable_updates/127

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WE ARE NEW YORK'S LAW SCHOOL

N.Y. CENSUS & REDISTRICTING ROUNDTABLE UPDATE

REDISTRICTING

Groups Ask Redistricting Commission to Hold Hearings

A group of good government groups asked the state's Independent Redistricting Commission to prioritize transparency and public participation in the congressional map drawing process. Their letter follows:

Dear Commissioners,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to prioritize transparency and public participation as you resume drawing New York's congressional map in the coming weeks. Our organizations represent a broad range of groups and communities that remain deeply invested in an equitable and transparent process that includes substantive input from New Yorkers around the state. We firmly believe that an open redistricting process is critical for ensuring that the voices of all New Yorkers are heard.

New Yorkers deserve the opportunity to weigh in on district lines before they are finalized despite the challenges presented by the procedurally set timeline for the creation and submission of the new map. The adherence to a strict timeline should not be achieved at the expense of the interests of everyday New Yorkers. Notwithstanding the position expressed by some commissioners in their December 15 statement, we note that several commissioners are newly appointed and do not have the benefit of having heard directly from New Yorkers at the hearings held in 2021 and early 2022. Moreover, prior hearings held were not in response to current congressional maps drawn by the Special Master.

The Commission should solicit feedback from New Yorkers by holding hybrid hearings at different locations in the state. The Commission should also allow the public to submit written testimony that the

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Commission is required to share with all commissioners. Such hearings and written testimony are required to ensure that any new map reflects the diversity of New York's population and upholds the principles of the Voting Rights Act. To ensure fair representation for all New Yorkers, we urge you to protect communities of interest and minority voices throughout the state.

Finally, the Commission should make it clear that its duty is to the public, not elected officials or political parties. Holding mapping deliberations in public will significantly help the Commission achieve this goal. It is our hope that the Commission collaborates and prioritizes reaching a consensus on the new map. New Yorkers deserve a redistricting process free of gridlock, and we ask that the Commissioners do everything in their power to reach an agreement.

- The lack of public trust in New York's redistricting process is pronounced and voters are weary of everchanging district lines and the attendant uncertainty it brings right before a consequential election cycle. We urge the Commission to make every attempt at collaboration, meaningful public input, openness and transparency before submitting any new congressional map plan to the Legislature.

Sincerely,

APA VOICE Redistricting Task Force
Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund (AALDEF)
Citizens Union
Common Cause/NY
Empire State Indivisible
League of Women Voters New York
New York Civic Engagement Table (NYCET)
New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)
New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)
Reinvent Albany

Broome County Executive to Hold Redistricting Hearing

Broome County Executive Jason Garnar will hold a public hearing on a new county legislative district map adopted by the county legislature. The hearing will take place on Thursday, January 11th at 5:00 PM in the Crawford Building

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at 60 Hawley Street in Binghamton. The county executive is required to hold a public hearing before taking action on the map. The legislature's map was created in response to a lawsuit that invalidated a prior map based on violations of the state's Municipal Home Rule Law.

ELECTION LAW LEGISLATION**Common Cause/NY Announces 2024 Albany Legislative Priorities**

Common Cause/NY announced their priorities for 2024. Those issues include: expanding voting rights and investing in our elections, protecting our democracy, and strengthening campaign finance laws.

The full list is below and [here](#).

PRIORITIES:

Note, some issues lack a bill number because they haven't been assigned yet for the 2024 cycle.

Expand voting rights and invest in our elections:

- Allow New Yorkers to provide water and snacks to voters at poll sites or while in line to vote. (S616 Myrie/A1346 Simon)
- Guarantees the use of voter verifiable paper ballots in elections. (A5934B Cunningham/S6169A Cleare)
- New York should join the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization of states that share voter roll data to maintain more accurate voter rolls. (S6173A Skoufis/A7052B Silitti)
- Remind voters they can now vote by mail.
- Move New York City's municipal elections to even years. New York's local elections suffer from low turnout during a very off year election. Moving local elections to an even year, either during congressional or presidential elections, would increase voter participation.
- New York is one of the few states that does not provide consistent nor significant state funding for election administration. An annual dedicated budget line should be created to support local Boards of Elections efforts to smoothly hold elections.
- Uniform procedures for voting while in jail. Citizens who are in jail have the right to vote, but are often prevented from voting because the local jurisdiction in control of the jail has no procedures in place.

Protect democracy:

- New York must move quickly to repeal our Article V Resolutions. Article V resolutions are aged legislative resolutions calling for a federal constitutional convention. These old resolutions do not by their terms have any expiration date. Extremist entities seeking to call a constitutional convention to hobble the federal government argue that these old resolutions should be counted and include New York in the total count of states calling for a constitutional convention bringing the total above the needed 34 states. (B477 Krueger/K137 Zebrowski)

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- Increase candidate disclosures. Voters deserve to have elected officials who tell the truth. Candidates will have to disclose their military service, recent employment history, education and confirm their in-district residence. (A5358-A Sillitti/S5884-A Liu)
- Protect against Deep Fake campaign ads. Voters are entitled to honest campaign ads and materials. Placing clear, enforceable disclosures on campaign materials with altered images, video or audio warns voters to be wary of the altered material, protecting voters and candidates
- Allow for nonpartisan poll monitors during in-person voting. (A2408-A Paulin/S5193-A Skoufis). Nonpartisan monitors will assist voters and help problem solve. This will increase confidence in the integrity and transparency of our elections.
- Board of Elections reform. Professionalizing and reducing partisanship in election administration is an essential component to improving our elections.
- Reduce legislators' outside income. The State Legislature must enact a ban on income earned through certain professions and a cap of up to 15% on certain permissible outside income from select professions.

Bolster campaign finance laws:

- Reduce the corrosiveness of money in politics and enhance public trust in our government by passing:
 - S2362 Rivera/A6542 Carroll: which would increase employer disclosure requirements for campaign contributions
 - S6247 Myrie/A7179 McDonald: which would prohibit campaign contributions from individuals or organizations while bidding on state contracts.

IN MEMORIAM**APA Voice Redistricting Task Force Mourns the Loss of Dr. John Flateau**

The Task Force issued the following statement: “The sudden and unexpected passing of Dr. John Flateau is a huge loss to the civil rights community, locally and nationally. An ardent and unwavering supporter of the Voting Rights Act, Dr. Flateau’s lifelong service has been devoted to educating and empowering the marginalized, particularly the African American community, to be civically engaged and represented. We are honored to have worked with him toward a vision of an equal and participatory democracy. Our sincere condolences to his family.”

Dr. Flateau’s funeral will take place on Wednesday, January 10th at 10:00 AM at the Bridge Street AWME Church, 277 Stuyvesant Avenue, in Brooklyn. More details (including a ZOOM link to view) are attached.