



SENATOR
VI SIMPSON
SENATE DEMOCRAT LEADER ★ SENATE DISTRICT 40

NEWS RELEASE

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Simpson pushes for implementation of independent legislative redistricting commission in 2011

INDIANAPOLIS –Senate Democrat Leader Vi Simpson (D-Ellettsville) proposed a measure today that would establish an independent commission to advise the General Assembly for legislative redistricting. Simpson says the change would not require amending the state constitution and could take effect immediately, impacting the 2011 redistricting process. The amendment was introduced for Senate Bill 80 and was defeated along party lines by a vote of 16 to 33.

“I strongly support the concept of an independent commission to advise the General Assembly in the redistricting process, but I do not support the delay in implementing this for another decade,” Simpson told the Senate. “If this is a good idea for 2021, then why not institute it now?”

Simpson said she has supported for many years the concept of using an independent commission in the legislative redistricting process. Under Simpson’s proposal, the 9-member commission would draw district boundaries for the Indiana House of Representatives, the Indiana State Senate and Indiana’s Congressional districts to be ratified by the General Assembly. The process would satisfy constitutional requirements for the General Assembly to set the new district boundaries. Legislative redistricting takes place every ten years after the national census is completed. Twenty other states have commissions that have the primary responsibility for drawing new districts or function as an advisory body for redistricting.

Individuals appointed to the commission would be residents of Indiana and must not have served within six years prior to appointment as a candidate or member of the General Assembly or Congress, as an elected or appointed state official, as a chairman or treasurer of a committee for a General Assembly or Congressional candidate, or as a registered lobbyist. Additionally, commission members would be prohibited from being a candidate for election or to fill a vacancy in the General Assembly for the following election cycle.

Last week the Senate Elections Committee heard testimony on a similar proposal that would create a legislative committee to study redistricting reform proposals, including amendments to the state constitution. The study committee and constitutional amendment process, however, would delay reform to the 2021 redistricting at the earliest. Much of the public testimony before the committee on that bill supported more immediate reform with the implementation of an independent commission.

The debate over redistricting reform will continue in the General Assembly, with several other proposals still moving through the process and future opportunities for negotiations likely.

For more information on Sen. Simpson or updates on Senate activities visit www.senatedemocrats.in.gov.

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