



Published on *Citizens' Committee for an Effective Constitution* (<http://nyconstitution.org>)

Opinion Editorial on 2012 Redistricting Cuomo Amendment

Call this reform? ?More like a sham

[Editorial](#) ^[1] ^[2] ^[2] ^[2]

01/24/2013

<http://blog.timesunion.com/opinion/call-this-reform-%E2%80%A8more-like-a-sham/23...> ^[3]

Our opinion: A proposed constitutional amendment on redistricting would leave the Legislature as in control of the process as it is now. Voters should reject it.

It's not surprising that a constitutional amendment to create an allegedly independent redistricting process in New York sailed through the state Legislature once again. This supposedly "independent" process is a sham of reform. Voters should reject it.

The measure's supporters claim it will turn redistricting over to an independent commission. But as surely as a puppet doesn't act independently from its unseen puppeteer, this commission would be a tool of the legislature that created it. And which wrote loopholes into it big enough to drag a gerrymandered district through.

This is not about Democrats or Republicans, progressives or conservatives. It's about who really decides who gets elected in this state — the voters, or the political class. If Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the Legislature have their way, politicians will be even more empowered than they are now to manipulate the political maps, and essentially pick who votes for them.

How could that be, you ask? It's a fair question, since this is, after all, a bipartisan plan with support from Assembly Democrats, Senate Republicans, and a Democratic governor.

Here's how: This plan was hatched by those in power to preserve a system that has allowed them to create political districts that would give the parties in power the best odds of hanging onto that power. And a governor who knows he needs the Legislature to work with him if he's going to push his own agenda through, and who may be eyeing a presidential race in 2016, isn't likely to worry about how this plan will play out when the next maps are drawn after the 2020 census.

Read the fine print, New York.

The supposed goal of this plan was to take redistricting out of the hands of the state Legislature and put it into the hands of an independent commission. Yet eight of the 10 members of this commission will be picked by the Legislature's leaders. The appointees of the two top leaders of the Senate and Assembly must agree to whatever redistricting maps the commission produces.

The amendment purports to bar the drawing districts to protect incumbents or favor a particular party, but it effectively negates that by directing the commission to consider the "maintenance of cores" or existing political districts. In short, the commission shall — not may, but shall — respect the utterly partisan lines that past redistricting has produced.

Moreover, the commission would have an even number of members, a setup that would foster deadlock, just as it does on the state's partisan, ineffective Board of Elections. And if, somehow, the commission overcomes that built-in dysfunction, the maps still have to go to the Legislature for final approval. If the maps fail to get approval twice, the entire process of redistricting is handed back to the Legislature, as if this "reform" had never happened.

Oh, advocates of the bill will say those are just worst case scenarios. That you couldn't possibly get a group of Democrats and Republicans to agree to such a nefarious plot. Really? Consider what happened in the last election and redistricting, when lawmakers on both sides of the aisle publicly promised to support independent redistricting in 2012, only to break their bipartisan words.

Strip away all the convoluted language and this plan isn't any better than their promises.

The people of New York should not settle for this, and they certainly should not agree to have this corrupt system enshrined in their Constitution. No system of redistricting is perfect, but there are other models around the country that do more to put it in the hands of citizens.

We have eight years, more or less, before the next redistricting. New Yorkers should reject this amendment when it comes to the ballot in 2014. But they could start right now telling their representatives to go back and do this right.

Source URL: <http://nyconstitution.org/press-clip/opinion-editorial/2012-redistricting-cuomo-amendment/times-union-call-reform-%E2%80%A8more-sham>

Links:

[1] <http://nyconstitution.org/press-clip-author/Editorial>

[2] <http://nyconstitution.org/press-clip-author>

[3] <http://blog.timesunion.com/opinion/call-this-reform-%E2%80%A8more-like-a-sham/23820/>