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Leading Academics to Examine New Jersey Redistricting

Anticipate issuing guiding principles for 2021

A group of academics who have been active in promoting improvements to legislative redistricting will be evaluating and making recommendations about the New Jersey process. This follows a recent effort to amend the state constitution which was withdrawn after being met by widespread opposition from good government and civil rights advocates as well as activists from both sides of the political aisle. The proposal would have changed the composition of New Jersey's reapportionment commission and required a formula be used to redraw the state's legislative map, which some worried could hurt communities of color.

The working group will review how New Jersey's current practices compare with best practices in redistricting. The review will include which metrics are prioritized in the drawing of new maps, as well as the opportunity for public participation in the process. The group anticipates issuing a set of guiding principles for the state's next redistricting round in 2021 and will align its work with a series of public forums being held by the League of Women Voters of New Jersey. The working group expects to issue its report after the conclusion of these public feedback forums.

The working group is comprised of:

Will Adler, Computational Research Specialist, Princeton Gerrymandering Project, Princeton University

Ronald Chen, University Professor and Distinguished Professor of Law, Rutgers University Law School

Patrick Murray, Director, Monmouth University Polling Institute

Yurij Rudensky, Redistricting Counsel, Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law

Samuel Wang, Professor of Neuroscience and Director of Princeton Gerrymandering Project, Princeton University

Ben Williams, Legal Analyst and Project Coordinator, Princeton Gerrymandering Project, Princeton University

"Fair redistricting will not be achieved through magic formulas or algorithms, but will require a wide-ranging approach that includes broad and effective public input and the ability to reconcile

often competing redistricting principles,” said Chen of Rutgers University and the former New Jersey Public Advocate.

“We recognize that there will be conflicts between an ideal set of reforms and the political realities of New Jersey. The key is striking an appropriate balance for fair redistricting,” said Murray of Monmouth University.

“New Jersey has a strong foundation for reform but the system can be made stronger. New guidelines that protect the political gains of racial minorities, make the process community driven, and promote transparency and accountability would make the state a national model once again,” said Rudensky of New York University.

“All New Jerseyans deserve fair electoral maps. One way to ensure fairness is to ensure that the public is empowered with the data and the tools they need to have a meaningful say in the redistricting process,” said Wang of Princeton University.

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