



April 30, 2009

Dear Members of the House State, Veterans, and Military Affairs Committee,

Colorado Common Cause supports House Concurrent Resolution 1005 and thanks Rep. May for bringing this bill forward. Colorado Common Cause works to promote open honest and accountable government and to increase public participation in the political process.

The way we draw congressional districts is important and should be done in a manner that allows the voters to elect candidates that represent the district's interests and needs. HCR 1005 is a step in the right direction by creating an independent commission that is tasked with drawing the districts for both the state legislature and congressional districts.

It is impossible to remove partisan considerations from the redistricting process—there is too much at stake. But establishing an independent body to conduct the redistricting establishes a more fair process. Under the current system, congressional districts are drawn with the express goals of protecting incumbents and promoting partisan advantage for the party that controls the process. As a result, the process is overly politicized and the maps rarely gain final adoption without the assistance of the Supreme Court. This holds true whether the party in power is Republican or Democrat.

To ensure that districts are drawn for the benefit of the voters rather than the political parties, we should have an independent commission handle the redistricting process. That's how Colorado currently draws legislative districts; it makes sense to expand this to include the drawing of congressional districts as well.

What's missing from this proposal is clear guidance on the criteria that the commission will use to draw the districts, and most importantly, a requirement that we create districts without regard for the residences of current or potential elected officials. We recommend that the Legislature add language to ensure that the districts are drawn without regard for an incumbent or potential candidate's residency.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today on this important bill to strength democracy in Colorado.

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