



Senator Bruce Starr

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, S-215
Salem, Oregon 97301

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CONTACT: Michael Gay
503.986.1950
503.781.8559

Senator Starr proposes overhaul of redistricting process

Broad support for a bi-partisan commission

Salem, OR – State Senator Bruce Starr (R-Hillsboro) has proposed a new plan to make the way Oregon draws new legislative districts bi-partisan, objective and fair. Starr will introduce the plan before the 2009 Legislative Assembly.

“This plan takes the politics out of the redistricting process so neither party can play kingmaker with Oregon’s representatives,” said Starr. “Past redistricting plans have been used by political parties to create grossly gerrymandered districts that look more like Rorschach inkblots than legislative districts. Our state has a great legacy of fairness, and our redistricting process should eliminate any possibility for partisan games so that our elective districts are drawn with the best interests of voters at heart.”

Starr’s plan calls for a commission of five to draw new district boundaries every ten years. The commission will consist of two appointees each from the minority and majority parties of the legislature. The fifth member, a non-voting chairman, will be elected by a majority vote of the commission members. No past or presently elected official will serve on the commission.

The plan also stipulates fair and object criteria for drawing the new districts. Each district will be nearly equal in population, compact, and separated from other districts by logical boundaries such as geographical features, artificial barriers or existing political lines. The map will be drawn so as not to favor or discriminate against any political party or group.

The legislature is given power to amend the redistricting plan, but only with a two-thirds vote.

“This plan puts voters first and politicians second when it comes to redistricting,” said Starr. “That’s the type of politics that represents the Oregon I know.”

The Public Commission on the Oregon Legislature, a bi-partisan group tasked with making suggestions for a more effective legislature, recommended the creation of a Redistricting Commission as a fundamental change needed in Oregon government. The Commission’s *Blueprint for a 21st Century Legislature* recommended “a process that is staffed by skilled professionals, overseen by a stae official with no political stake in the outcome, and may result in plans that are more fair and can be prepared more efficiently.”

Starr is submitting his redistrict plan for drafting and introduction in the 2009 legislative session. Oregon is due to re-draw district lines in 2011.

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