

Carlucci Talking Points on Independent Redistricting

I would like to start by thanking Senator Martin Malave Dilan, Co-Chair of the Legislative Advisory Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment, for convening this public meeting to hear comments and recommendations on proposed goals and criteria for legislative redistricting.

I applaud the Task Force's efforts to ensure a fairer redistricting process, and share its goal of ensuring that New York's state and federal legislative districts are redrawn in a manner that better respects geographic and municipal boundaries and more fully protects minority voting rights.

But I cannot support a process that does not include **Non-Partisan, Independent Redistricting**.

The most sacred principal of American democracy is that fair elections are supposed to allow the voters to choose their representatives, but New Yorkers have long been denied true choice because elected officials have historically been able to draw district lines to choose their voters.

New York State's legislature has one of the highest incumbency rates in the nation – not because voters are happy with the quality of their governance - but because legislative districts are drawn to suppress the kind of competition that might otherwise allow talented newcomers to challenge the status quo.

The public face of partisan redistricting is the absurdly comical district maps that look like inkblot tests run amok and make it difficult for many New Yorkers to even figure out who represents them. The more sinister side of partisan

redistricting is its use as a weapon to enforce party discipline among rank-and-file members. The very threat of redistricting can make a legislator more receptive to party leadership than to the will of his or her own constituents.

We can all agree on the merits of requiring districts to be contiguous, compact and more equal in population, but as long as those districts can be gerrymandered to favor or punish a particular political party or incumbent, they will never be fair. And, as long as legislators are drawing the district lines, the impulse to gerrymander will be irresistible.

That is why creating an independent redistricting commission is such an important and necessary first step towards restoring the public's faith in the State Senate, the state legislature and the political process.

When I am sworn in as a State Senator in January, I will be joining a body in which 53 sitting members (31 Republicans and 22 Democrats) have publically pledged to support the creation of an independent, non-partisan redistricting commission. Included in that pledge is the promise to vote "no" on any proposal to establish a commission that is not independent.

I did not make that pledge lightly. My support for independent redistricting is not an empty campaign promise made to curry favor with advocacy groups or political action committees; it is a commitment to my constituents in the 38th Senate District and to all of the people of New York who deserve more from their legislature and their elected officials.

I am proud to be joining the conference that brought Senator Valesky's independent redistricting bill, S1614, to its first ever committee vote in 2010, and I look forward to working with our next governor to help secure its passage into law in 2011.

By working with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and in the Assembly, I believe we can ensure that redistricting pursuant to the 2010 Census is constitutional and fair, but only if we remove the potential for political abuses. That is why I will be supporting a redistricting plan that does not sacrifice compactness, contiguity and the principle of one man-one vote on the altar of political expediency.