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PRESS RELEASE

ACLU of Utah Urges the Utah Legislature to Let the Independent Redistricting Commission Do Its Job

Updates released this week from the Utah Elections Office indicate that anti-gerrymandering Proposition #4 received enough votes to pass.

The ACLU of Utah, a 501(c)4, supported Proposition #4 and advocated for its passage in the recent election. We now urge the leadership and members of the Utah Legislature to respect the will of 500,000 Utah voters and let the independent redistricting commission do its job.

“We believe that voters should choose their elected leaders instead of the other way around,” says Brittney Nystrom, executive director of the ACLU of Utah. “Almost no one supports gerrymandering as good for voting and democracy. But elected officials who benefit from it are naturally resistant to a more open and nonpartisan redistricting process. This year over half a million Utah voters are telling Utah’s lawmakers they want independent redistricting, and our elected leaders should be listening.”

Utah isn’t immune to gerrymandering. After Utah’s 2001 redistricting map resulted in 684,000 voters shifting among the state’s three congressional districts, the *Wall Street Journal* called the effort a “scam” to defeat the state’s lone Democratic member of Congress. Similar machinations continued during the next redistricting effort in 2011 on both a federal and state level.

The ACLU believes gerrymandering is harmful to democracy because it artificially dilutes or strengthens voters’ actual representation. Consequences of gerrymandering include unrepresentative elected bodies and reduced turnout due to voter apathy. Recent analysis by the Utah Foundation found that Utah’s 2016 voter participation ranked 39th nationally and has declined significantly over the last four decades.

After the U.S. Supreme Court declined to rule on the constitutionality of partisan gerrymandering in two cases argued during the 2017-18 term, we believe state-led efforts like Proposition 4 represent the best way forward to improve the function of our democracy.

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