



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 3, 2007

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Governor Schwarzenegger and League of Women Voters Endorse California Voters FIRST Act

Sacramento, December 3 – Today, Governor Schwarzenegger and the League of Women Voters of California endorsed the California Voters FIRST Act, a proposal for reforming the state’s redistricting process to put the power back in the hands of Californians.

“I have been fighting for redistricting reform since I took office because the people of California want to bring competition and centrist leadership back to our state,” said Governor Schwarzenegger. “We need a system where voters choose the politicians not where politicians choose the voters. This initiative is our best shot at fulfilling those promises and returning power to the people.”

The California Voters FIRST Act will create a 14-person independent citizens commission comprised of five Democrats, five Republicans and four individuals not registered as a member of either major party to draw district boundaries for the Senate, Assembly and Board of Equalization. The measure creates a more open and transparent redistricting process, takes the power to draw district lines out of the hands of lawmakers and puts into place a non-partisan process that requires respecting existing city boundaries, county boundaries and communities.

"Redistricting reform is an important issue for our members throughout the state," said Janis R. Hirohama, President of the League of Women Voters of California. "This is why our organization has endorsed the California Voters FIRST initiative. Under current law, California legislators are drawing their own political districts, and we see that as a serious conflict of interest- one that is harmful to voters. We're excited to be in the company of Governor Schwarzenegger, the AARP, California Common Cause and the LA Chamber of Commerce in supporting this initiative and are hopeful that this reform will put voters back in charge."

Joining the Governor and the League of Women Voters for this announcement were representatives of AARP, Common Cause, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, and other supporters of the measure. Voters FIRST campaign chair, California State AARP President Jeannine English, welcomed the endorsements.



“We are thrilled to have the Governor and the League as supporters of this initiative. Our proposed reform is one that will finally take redistricting out of the partisan battles of the legislators and gives the voters a voice,” said English.

Both Governor Schwarzenegger and the League of Women Voters committed to working alongside other supporters of this measure to qualify and successfully pass it in November 2008.

“We look forward to working with the Governor, the League, AARP, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce and the many other supporters of the California Voters FIRST Act to pass this important reform. Some communities have no political voice because they have been split into as many as four different districts to protect incumbent legislators,” said Kathay Feng, Executive Director of California Common Cause and a leader in the campaign. “Politicians draw districts that serve their interests, not those of our communities- and it’s time that we have reform that will put voters back in charge.”

“The California Voters FIRST Act does put the interests of voters before the interests of politicians because it guarantees that the maps will be debated in the open – not in a backroom at the State Capitol,” said Gary Toebben, CEO of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce. “We applaud Governor Schwarzenegger and the League of Women Voters for their commitment and leadership on this important issue.”

The initiative was filed with the Attorney General’s office on October 23, 2007. Attached is a fact sheet and full text of the California Voters FIRST Act.