



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Senate to Vote on Groundbreaking Legislation to Create Independent Redistricting Commission

SUZI OPPENHEIMER May 11, 2010

| ISSUE: **ELECTIONS, ETHICS, VOTER REGISTRATION, VOTER PROTECTION**

Senate Committee Approves Oppenheimer Co-sponsored Bill

Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) is pleased to announce that groundbreaking reform legislation to create an independent redistricting commission has been approved by the Senate Investigations and Government Operations Committee and will be brought to the floor for a vote by the full Senate. Senator Oppenheimer co-sponsors this bill, S. 1614A, as well as other pieces of reform legislation. She has long been a proponent of independent redistricting.

“At long last, we are poised to end the offensive practice of partisan gerrymandering and create Congressional and state legislative districts that are cohesive and honestly drawn,” said Senator Oppenheimer. “New Yorkers have a right to a fair and nonpartisan reapportionment process.”

The bill would establish a nonpartisan citizen apportionment commission that would draw congressional and state legislative district boundaries and submit those boundaries to the legislature for approval, in accordance with the State Constitution. Redistricting occurs

every ten years following the U.S. Census and allows boundaries to be redrawn to account for changes in a state's population and to bring districts back to equal numbers of residents.

The district lines would be drawn to be compact, roughly equal in population and contiguous. Districts would not be established that abridge or deny minority voting rights, nor favor or oppose any political party, incumbent or candidate for office. The districts would align with local boundaries and unite communities of interest.

A separate nominations committee would be tasked with identifying a pool of commission members and vetting them for potential conflicts of interest. Lobbyists, political party leaders, relatives of public officials, as well as individuals who currently hold or recently held elective office could not serve on the nominations committee. The citizen apportionment commission would be selected from the pool of nominees.

"It is time now to call an end to the practice of elected officials selecting their voters, not the other way around," declared Senator Oppenheimer. "I am gratified that our Senate leadership has stated that the bill will be brought to the floor for a full vote. This is an important step, as I continue to fight for comprehensive ethics and campaign finance reforms that will enhance the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of state government."