

# Purdue Exponent – All things Purdue

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## City Council supports resolution to change redistricting

A city council member illustrated the problems of redistricting Monday evening, saying he has run for office in a district that was peculiarly drawn to include as many Republicans as possible.

“I refer to it as ‘no Republican left behind,’” said David Sanders, a democratic at-large city council member.

The West Lafayette City Council passed a resolution Monday evening supporting the League of Women Voters of Greater Lafayette’s idea of redistricting reform. The league opposes gerrymandering – the act of drawing districts in a way that would benefit one political party – and aims to form an independent committee, composed of citizens, to handle the duties of redistricting. Those citizens would be at a minimum, heavily involved in and, possibly, drawing the district lines themselves.

“I never did like the way districts were drawn. I just figured it was just a fact of life,” said Thomas Kesler, a West Lafayette resident. “My ideal district is shaped more like a square and less like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle.”

Citizens and city council members are all too familiar with redistricting, a process the city has experienced three times in the last four years.

The resolution strictly acts as a recommendation to the state, but does not bind the city. By passing the resolution, West Lafayette joins the cries of others, but the resolution does not necessarily ensure tangible changes. Mayor John Dennis urged the importance of taking additional steps past the resolution, saying it is important to follow through with the spirit of the resolution, rather than simply celebrate the resolution’s success.

The Greater Lafayette branch of the League of Women Voters constitutes only part of an effort that stretches across the country, seeking the end of gerrymandering.

“Last election, 44 of the 100 state reps and 10 of the 25 state senators ran unopposed,” said Sue Scholer, who spoke on behalf of the League of Women Voters. “The league has always tried to promote voter participation, and this does not leave much participation when we have no choices.”

The League aims to finalize a report that is due to the Indiana legislature in December, while mass redistricting will not take place until after the completion of the next United States Census.

“What’s critical is that people are being denied a fair chance to vote for a representative that potentially represents their own interests,” said Sanders. “With the system that we have now, we don’t have voters choosing their representatives; we have representatives choosing their voters. And that’s simply wrong and undemocratic.”

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