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Pennsylvania Supreme Court Expedites Redistricting Lawsuit

Harrisburg, Pa. – Today the Pennsylvania Supreme Court took control of the lawsuit alleging Pennsylvania’s Congressional districts were gerrymandered for partisan purposes by granting the Application for Extraordinary Relief filed by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and individual voters. The state’s highest court lifted the stay, ordered the Commonwealth Court to conduct all necessary pre-trial and trial proceedings, and issue its findings of fact and conclusions of law no later than December 31, 2017.

Attorneys for the petitioners hailed the ruling reversing the Commonwealth Court’s decision, which would have delayed trial until late next year. This decision enables the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to review the matter and make a determination in time for the 2018 election.

“Pennsylvania voters deserve to have their day in court,” said Mimi McKenzie, Legal Director of the Public Interest Law Center. “We will leverage this expedited process to ensure the map is struck down and a new map that complies with the constitution is created in time for the 2018 election.”

“The state’s current congressional district map is an unconstitutional gerrymander,” said David Gersch with Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP. “The shape of the districts cannot be explained by anything other than pure partisanship. This fact is confirmed by the complete failure of the General Assembly to offer any defense of how the map was made. The voters of Pennsylvania deserve a fair chance to elect their representatives and not have the election outcomes predetermined by partisan map drawing.”

“The entire purpose of this lawsuit is to ensure that Pennsylvania’s maps are drawn in such a way that every voter can have a meaningful impact in their elections,” said Susan Carty, President of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania. “We are thrilled that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court recognized that this is an issue that cannot wait and we are confident that this will result in fairer congressional districts in Pennsylvania.”

The attorneys from the Public Interest Law Center and Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP represent the 18 individual petitioners (one from each U.S. Congressional District) and the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania in this challenge. Filed in June in the state’s Commonwealth Court, the lawsuit alleges the current U.S. Congressional map violates the Pennsylvania Constitution because it was designed to override voter preferences and create a lopsided majority in favor of Republican representatives.

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