JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING
ON 2020-2021 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL
PUBLIC PROTECTION

TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT FISCAL COMMITTEES OF THE
NEW YORK STATE SENATE AND NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY

Introduction
Following the 2014 constitutional amendment to Article III, Section 5-b of the New York State Constitution, state legislative and Congressional maps will now be drawn by an independent redistricting commission (the “Commission”). Although the census counts will not be delivered to the states until March of 2021, the state legislature was mandated to form the Commission by February 1st, 2020. As of February 3rd, 2020, eight of the 10 Commission members had been appointed by the Assembly and Senate Majority and Minority.

Despite this constitutional mandate for a new Commission, the former entity tasked with drawing maps, the Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research & Reapportionment (LATFOR), continues to receive significant state funding. The Governor has proposed $2,031,705 for LATFOR’s operation in the FY 2020-2021 budget. This entity has received funding in all budget cycles following the passage of the 2014 amendment. The League and its good government partners have questioned the taskforce’s continued operation in prior legislative sessions but have never received response as to the need of LATFOR under the new redistricting process.

The League believes that in order for the new Commission to be successful in drafting fair lines, it must have the ability to act as an independent entity. LATFOR’s continued existence undermines the Commission’s independence by authorizing a unit with legislative members to function in tandem with it. The League recommends that the legislature dissolve this unnecessary taskforce and re-appropriate these funds to the new Commission.

Unnecessary Funding For LATFOR
The recommended FY 2020-2021 appropriation for LATFOR includes a 2% increase or $39,837 from the amount appropriated in FY 2019-2020. LATFOR’s 2020-2021 budget includes $18,000 for supplies and materials, $9,000 for travel, $122,602 for contractual services, $208,000 for equipment, and $1,674,103 for personal services. As a taskforce that isn’t currently conducting any type of reapportionment actions, this funding seems entirely unnecessary.

According to Assembly and Senate expense reports, as of March 2019 the task force employed a total of 16 staff, excluding the current task force members. LATFOR’s website is out of date with the most recent...
articles, press releases, and videos being eight years or older. The Times Union reported in 2017 that LATFOR employed 17 staff that year even though it was unclear what work the taskforce was doing.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LATFOR FY 2020-2021 APPROPRIATIONS</th>
<th>Assembly</th>
<th>Senate</th>
<th>Joint</th>
<th>Total Expenditure</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplies and materials</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
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<td>$17,000</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
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<td>Equipment</td>
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<td>Personal services</td>
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<td>$381,263</td>
<td>$912,375</td>
<td>$1,674,103</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>$391,665</td>
<td>$1,248,375</td>
<td>$2,031,705</td>
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**Funding Need for the Redistricting Commission**

The funding being recommended for LATFOR for the coming year can and should be re-appropriated to the new redistricting Commission. For the Commission to properly function and adhere to the constitutional mandates for the redrawing of state legislative and Congressional lines, it must be allocated funding to hire professional staff, acquire computer software for creating maps, and secure locations for 12 public hearings. The League has highlighted the following potential cost factors:

**Staffing:** The Commission will need to hire a minimum of two co-executive directors and two assistants to these directors, a legal counsel, demographer, numbers analyst, and experienced map maker.

**Travel:** Over the course of the Commission’s work they will be required to hold a minimum of 12 public hearings in Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, White Plains, Bronx County, Kings County, New York County, Richmond County, Queens County, Nassau County, and Suffolk County. Travel costs will be incurred for all 10 Commissioners as well as staff.

**Software:** Although the Commission will likely be able to use some existing state software, there will be additional costs for the creation of a public website for the Commission’s work, map making programs, and live-streaming of public hearings.

The Commission may rely on the legislature to provide staff services, hardware, software, travel, and space rentals. However, if it is to truly be independent it should have the ability to hire its own staff and make its own arrangements for public hearings.

**Conclusion**

For both FY 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, the last period of redistricting, LATFOR’s budget was $1,858,759. During this period, LATFOR held 21 public hearings throughout the state. With consideration for inflation, the League believes that an appropriation of $2 million is enough to begin to study current populations and plan actions for the Commission following the release of the census counts in 2021. Any funds that are not spent this fiscal year can be reallocated in the next budget cycle.

The Legislative Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment was written into legislative law in 1978. For this commission to be disbanded, sections of chapter law will need to be repealed. The League recommends that the legislature pass a law to dissolve LATFOR before the end of the 2020 session.