

**SENATE . . . . . No. 51**

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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PRESENTED BY:

***James B. Eldridge***

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*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying proposal for constitutional amendment:

Proposal for a legislative amendment to the Constitution establishing an independent redistricting commission.

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PETITION OF:

| NAME:                    | DISTRICT/ADDRESS:              |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>James B. Eldridge</i> | <i>Middlesex and Worcester</i> |
| <i>Jason M. Lewis</i>    | <i>Fifth Middlesex</i>         |
| <i>Paul R. Heroux</i>    | <i>2nd Bristol</i>             |
| <i>Denise Provost</i>    | <i>27th Middlesex</i>          |

**SENATE . . . . . No. 51**

By Mr. Eldridge, a petition (accompanied by proposal for constitutional amendment, Senate, No. 51) of James B. Eldridge, Jason M. Lewis, Paul R. Heroux and Denise Provost for a legislative amendment to the Constitution to establish an independent redistricting commission. Election Laws.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION  
SEE SENATE, NO. 11 OF 2013-2014.]

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court  
(2015-2016)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Proposal for a legislative amendment to the Constitution establishing an independent redistricting commission.

A majority of all the members elected to the Senate and House of Representatives, in joint session, hereby declares it to be expedient to alter the Constitution by the adoption of the following Article of Amendment, to the end that it may become a part of the Constitution [if similarly agreed to in a joint session of the next General Court and approved by the people at the state election next following]:

ARTICLE OF AMENDMENT.

1 SECTION 1. Article CI of the Articles of Amendment to the Constitution of the  
2 Commonwealth is hereby annulled, and the following is adopted in place thereof:-

3 Article CI

4 The House of Representatives shall consist of one hundred and sixty members, each of  
5 whom shall be elected from one representative district. Every representative shall have been an

6 inhabitant of the district for which he or she is chosen for at least one year at least immediately  
7 preceding his or her election and shall cease to represent such district when he or she shall cease  
8 to be an inhabitant of the Commonwealth, provided, however, that for the first redistricting  
9 following the adoption of this article, the General Court may suspend the residency requirement  
10 of this section.

11 SECTION 2. The Senate shall consist of forty members, each of whom shall be elected  
12 from one senatorial district. Every senator shall have been an inhabitant of the Commonwealth  
13 for at least five years immediately preceding his or her election and shall be an inhabitant of the  
14 district for which he or she has been selected at the time of his or her election and shall cease to  
15 represent such senatorial district when he or she shall cease to be an inhabitant of the  
16 Commonwealth.

17 SECTION 3. The manner of calling and conducting the elections for the choice of  
18 representatives, senators, and councillors, and of ascertaining their election, shall be prescribed  
19 by law.

20 SECTION 4. The federal census shall be the basis for determining the representative,  
21 senatorial, and governor's council districts for the ten-year period beginning with the first  
22 Wednesday of the third January following the commencement of the taking of said census.

23 SECTION 5. In the year after each census is commenced, and only in that year, an  
24 independent redistricting commission, herein referred to as the commission, shall be convened  
25 and shall divide the commonwealth into congressional districts, 160 representative districts, 40  
26 senatorial districts, and eight councilor districts. The federal census shall be the basis for  
27 determining congressional districts for the ten year period beginning with the first Wednesday of

28 the third January following the commencement of the taking of said census. All districts shall  
29 comprise contiguous territory, shall be equal in population to the extent required by law, and  
30 shall comply with federal constitutional and statutory requirements. No district shall be drawn  
31 for the purpose or with the effect of diluting the voting strength of any group based on race,  
32 ethnicity or language minority status, or for the purpose of augmenting or diluting the voting  
33 strength of a political party, or any individual. In drawing district lines, the commission shall not  
34 consider residential address, party affiliation, or partisan voting history of any individual or  
35 groups of individuals, except to the extent necessary to avoid dilution of voting strength based on  
36 race, ethnicity or language minority status. In addition, to the maximum extent possible, district  
37 boundaries shall be drawn so as to: (1) maintain the unity of well-defined municipal  
38 neighborhoods; (2) observe municipal boundaries; (3) establish senatorial districts that follow  
39 representative district boundaries; (4) establish councilor districts that follow representative  
40 district boundaries and (5) promote geographic compactness of districts. If it is not possible to  
41 draw district boundaries that fully comply with these criteria while also complying with the  
42 mandatory requirements set forth herein, then districts shall be drawn to optimize the criteria in  
43 the order of priority set forth hereinabove. The commission shall also consider communities of  
44 interest in determining which cities, towns, or neighborhoods thereof to aggregate into a single  
45 district.

46           Within 30 days of the passage of this act, the following offices shall each appoint one  
47 member of the commission: the governor of the commonwealth, who shall appoint a dean or  
48 professor of law or political science or government at an institution of higher learning in the  
49 commonwealth; the attorney general of the commonwealth, who shall appoint a retired justice

50 who resides in the commonwealth; and the secretary of the commonwealth, who shall appoint an  
51 expert in civil rights law who is a resident of the commonwealth.

52 By the same date, the house speaker, the house minority leader, the senate president, and  
53 the senate minority leader shall each nominate three individuals. The appointees chosen by the  
54 governor, attorney general, and secretary of the commonwealth shall then select one of the three  
55 nominees named by each said official within 7 days of their nomination.

56 If nominations or appointments are not made within 30 days of the passage of this act, the  
57 office responsible for making the appointment or nominations shall forfeit its rights under this  
58 section and the remaining direct appointees shall then make an appointment to fill the vacancy  
59 within 7 days. Nominations and appointments shall reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic, gender,  
60 and age diversity of the commonwealth to the maximum extent feasible and shall be selected on  
61 the basis of civic involvement and knowledge of redistricting policy, civil rights, political  
62 science, demographics or statistics, election expertise, voting rights, community organizing, or  
63 law. No person nominated or appointed to the commission, in the five years preceding such  
64 nomination or appointment, shall have held Congressional, state legislative or statewide elective  
65 office, or shall have served as mayor or city councilor of a city in the commonwealth, governor's  
66 councilor, or shall have been elected to a state or federal party committee; or shall be a current  
67 employee, agent or family member of any of the above; or, in the two years preceding such  
68 nomination or appointment, shall have been a legislative agent. The commissioners shall agree:  
69 (1) not to stand for election to the general court, congress, or the governor's council until districts  
70 are redrawn following the next census; (2) to apply the provisions of this article in an honest,  
71 independent, and impartial fashion; and (3) to act at all times so as to uphold public confidence  
72 in the integrity of the redistricting process.

73           The commission shall be convened no later than 60 days following the passage of this  
74 act. The commission shall disband only upon final adoption and exhaustion of judicial review of  
75 challenges to representative, councilor, and senatorial districts.

76           The commission shall hire staff and may retain experts to assist it in the performance of  
77 its duties. The commission shall establish rules governing its operation and procedures.  
78 Commissioners may receive compensation for actual time spent on commission duties and shall  
79 be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses. The budget of the commonwealth shall  
80 provide adequate funding for the operation of the commission.

81           A member of the commission or an appointing authority may petition the supreme  
82 judicial court to remove a commissioner on the grounds of neglect, misconduct, or inability to  
83 perform the duties of a commissioner. A vacancy so created shall be filled by the office which  
84 appointed the removed commissioner or by the nomination and selection process set forth in  
85 section 6, as applicable.

86           All meetings of the commission shall be open to the public, consistent with the laws of  
87 the commonwealth concerning open meetings as of the date of the adoption of this Article. All  
88 documents produced by or for the commission shall be public. The commission shall hold public  
89 hearings in at least five geographically disbursed counties. The public shall be afforded the  
90 opportunity to submit proposed maps for consideration by the commission and the commission  
91 shall make map-making software available for public use. The commission shall take all steps  
92 necessary to ensure that the public can exercise its right to review and comment on proposed  
93 district maps before they are approved and shall publish all preliminary and final plans in

94 publicly accessible forums that are free of charge and that ensure wide public distribution.  
95 Proposed districts shall be presented in both graphic and narrative form.

96 No later than April 20, 2017, the commission shall prepare and publish for public  
97 comment a preliminary plan for representative, councilor, and senatorial districts. The public  
98 shall have a three-week period to comment on the preliminary district plan. The commission may  
99 revise the preliminary district plan in response to public comment and shall, no later than May  
100 11, 2017, submit the revised plan to the special joint committee on redistricting, as created by  
101 order of the general court, as adopted by the senate on January 29, 2009 and adopted by the  
102 house on March 5, 2009, which shall vote on the revised plan. If the plan is rejected by either the  
103 committee or the general court, the commission shall prepare, publish, revise, and submit a  
104 second-round preliminary district plan in the same manner as the first within 30 days of the  
105 rejection of the initial plan. Following the three-week period for public comment, the  
106 commission may revise the preliminary district plan in response to public comment and shall  
107 submit the revised plan to the joint committee for a vote no later than July 29, 2017.

108 With respect to each plan the commission submits to the joint committee for a vote, the  
109 vote must be taken within two weeks of submission. No amendments to the plan as submitted  
110 may be made. If the plan is approved by a majority of the joint committee present and voting, or  
111 if no vote is taken within the two-week period, it shall be submitted to the general court for a  
112 vote. With respect to each plan the joint committee submits to the general court for a vote, the  
113 vote must be taken within two weeks of submission. No amendments to the plan as submitted  
114 may be made. If the plan is approved by a majority of the members of the house of  
115 representatives and the senate present and voting or if no vote is taken within the two-week  
116 period, then the plan as submitted shall become law.

117           Original jurisdiction is hereby vested in the supreme judicial court upon the petition of  
118 any voter of the commonwealth for judicial relief relative to the establishment of the  
119 congressional districts. The general court may by law limit the time within which judicial  
120 proceedings may be instituted to challenge any redistricting map.