

**ACLU OF PENNSYLVANIA SUPPORTS
REDISTRICTING REFORM**

**Statement of Larry Frankel, Legislative Director
ACLU of Pennsylvania
Tuesday, April 5, 2005**

The American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania is pleased to stand here today with Representative Daylin Leach and other members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly as they unveil their comprehensive proposal for redistricting reform.

Partisan gerrymandering has become a national disgrace. All over our country elections no longer reflect the popular will. Rather they are the results of the abuse of the power to draw legislative district boundaries that is facilitated by sophisticated computer software

Over the last twenty years, both major parties have learned to effectively manipulate district lines so as to minimize the number of competitive legislative races. Despite the constitutional promise of equal treatment for all voters, such partisan redistricting schemes violate the fundamental principles of democracy.

And the voters are continuing to just lose interest in politics because so many legislative elections are not competitive.

There is abundant evidence of damaging partisan redistricting. The political machinations associated with the latest redistricting fight in Texas are well known. Persistent gerrymandering in California has led Governor Schwarzenegger to crusade for reform. Partisan redistricting has become one of the few areas where both parties agree. We have seen Republicans engage in this practice in Michigan and Florida. Democrats have also demonstrated considerable skill at skewing the line-drawing in Maryland and Georgia.

And lest we forget, Pennsylvania's most recent Congressional redistricting plan was the subject of a United States Supreme Court case. Although that plan was upheld by our nation's highest court, no one really believed that it was developed with a view towards providing truly representative democracy for all Pennsylvanians.

The ACLU urges the Pennsylvania General Assembly to take up the cause of redistricting reform and show real leadership in addressing a problem that is national in its scope. We look forward to working with Representative Leach and his colleagues in fighting to bring real democracy back to the very state where the Declaration of Independence and United States Constitutions were written.