



New Jersey Senate

TRENTON

November 29, 2018

The Honorable Nicholas P. Scutari
1514 E. Saint Georges Ave.
2nd Floor
Linden, NJ 07036

The Honorable Stephen M. Sweeney
935 Kings Highway
Suite 400
West Deptford, NJ 08086

Dear Senator Scutari and Senate President Sweeney,

We write to you as a caucus united in our opposition to SCR-43/SCR-152, a proposed constitutional amendment that is designed to impart a permanent electoral advantage to incumbents and legislative candidates from the Democratic Party.

As we are sure you are aware, this amendment would constitutionally mandate that future legislative districts be drawn in a way that is mathematically guaranteed to cement and even grow the Democratic Party's legislative majorities.

Our democratic society was built on the principle of equal representation, through which every citizen should have the opportunity in fair and truly competitive elections to choose the leaders who serve in their town halls, state capitals, and in Washington.

Your proposal upends that principle. Quite simply, it's a blatant attempt to rig the electoral process in New Jersey forever. It's partisan gerrymandering to the extreme. It's the antithesis of democracy.

Those sentiments are not partisan hyperbole. Rather, they are the dire warnings expressed by a host of independent election experts, civil rights groups, and academics from across the political spectrum who have been unified in their opposition to this extremely dangerous measure.

In fact, not a single witness testified in support of the proposed constitutional change when a legislative hearing was held several days ago. To the contrary, every single witness vehemently opposed the amendment.

Helen Kioukis of the League of Women Voters said "voters should be choosing their politicians -- not the other way around," calling the proposal "undemocratic."

Richard Smith of the New Jersey Chapter of the NAACP expressed concern that “the proposed constitutional amendment is an unacceptable step backwards for New Jersey” that “will virtually ensure the voting power of communities of color will be diluted for decades to come.”

Patrick Murray of the Monmouth University Polling Institute said the proposal “is Democrats being overly greedy for no good reason,” warning that it “just further erodes public trust in government for little actual gain.”

Brian Williams of the Princeton University Gerrymandering Project determined the amendment “would create an artificial, evenly distributed advantage for the majority party” that “would drastically reduce the number of seats for the minority party in a way most New Jerseyans would consider unfair.”

Ronald Chen of the Center for Law and Justice cautioned that “requiring that districts be drawn on order to favor one political party, or even both major political parties, is contrary to sound redistricting practice, and enables partisan gerrymandering.”

Ryan Haygood of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice said the amendment would “constitutionalize a redistricting process for New Jersey that elevates partisanship over people,” while impacting “the ability of communities of color to elect their candidates of choice.”

David Pringle, a former Democratic candidate for Congress, said, “It is very difficult to see this as anything but a naked power grab by Democrats,” adding, “this doesn’t help create faith in government; it creates more distrust.”

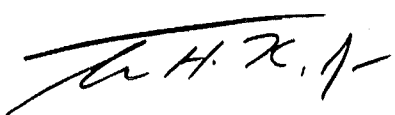
Those statements reflect a shared concern that the proposed amendment would disenfranchise millions of voters from across the political spectrum by limiting competition and prioritizing a partisan advantage for Democrats in the New Jersey Constitution over every other electoral concern or consideration.

In a democracy that holds true to its principles, citizens must have the power to hold individual legislators and political parties accountable at the polls.

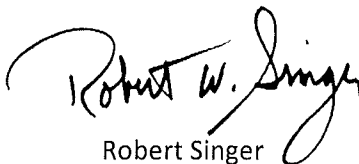
Should your proposed constitutional amendment be enacted, however, New Jerseyans will be left with little more than an illusion of choice when they enter the voting booth in future legislative elections. The outcome will be assured before the first vote is cast.

We urge you to do the right thing. We urge you to listen to the unanimous wisdom of the widely respected experts and institutions that oppose SCR-43/SCR-152. We urge you to permanently table this undemocratic constitutional amendment.

Sincerely,



Thomas Kean
Leader



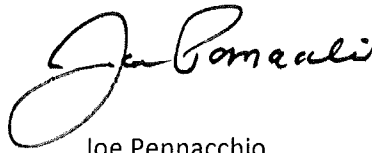
Robert Singer
Deputy Leader



Steven Oroho
Conference Leader



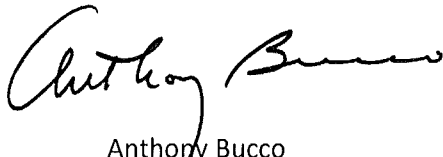
Chris Brown
Deputy Conference Leader



Joe Pennacchio
Whip



Dawn Marie Addiego
Deputy Whip



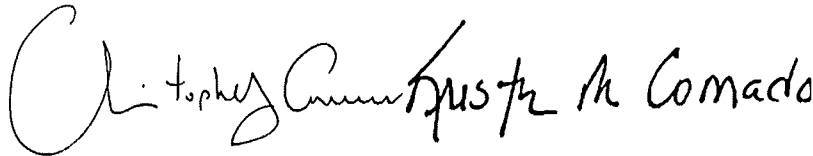
Anthony Bucco
Budget Officer



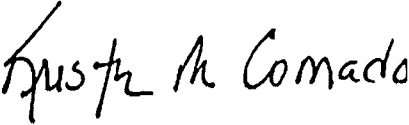
Kip Bateman
Senator – District 16



Gerald Cardinale
Senator – District 39



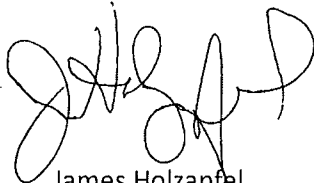
Christopher Connors
Senator – District 9



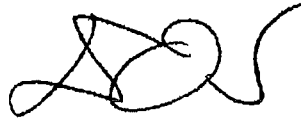
Kristin Corrado
Senator – District 40



Michael Doherty
Senator – District 23



James Holzapfel
Senator – District 10



Declan O'Scanlon
Senator – District 13



Samuel Thompson
Senator – District 12

CC: The Honorable Philip D. Murphy
Governor

The Honorable Craig J. Coughlin
Assembly Speaker

The Honorable Jon M. Bramnick
Assembly Republican Leader