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Census Data Advisory Committee reviews redistricting proposals

Lanane emphasizes merits of implementing independent legislative redistricting commission

INDIANAPOLIS—The Census Data Advisory Committee met Friday, September 17 at the Statehouse to begin its review of plans to redraw legislative and congressional districts. According to committee member State Senator Tim Lanane (D-Anderson), following the release of newly-accumulated U.S. census data every 10 years, each state must redraw state and federal election districts based on population trends. Members of the Indiana General Assembly are charged by statute to create new districts during the 2011 legislative session.

Several plans to change the way redistricting is conducted in Indiana were reviewed including Senate Bills 289 and 136. Lanane explained that both bills were considered during the last legislative session. SB 289 would immediately create an independent redistricting commission to advise the Indiana General Assembly on legislative redistricting matters. The General Assembly would vote on the recommended maps drawn by the commission. Similar legislation has been introduced numerous times in the past, but failed to pass. SB 136 includes the creation of a legislative committee to study redistricting proposals, including an amendment to the state constitution calling for the creation of an independent redistricting commission.

“The one major difference between these two proposals is the timing. Senate Bill 289 would allow us to begin work now with a bi-partisan commission that could begin work and make recommendations to the next General Assembly. Senate Bill 136 would require making a change to our state constitution. That process alone takes three, sometimes four years. This bill would not affect redistricting until the process is undertaken again in 2020,” Lanane said.

At least 21 states have already established various independent redistricting commissions. The public seems to favor removing politics from the redistricting process, and permitting a non-partisan or bi-partisan commission to re-draw legislative district maps that are fair and equitable,” Lanane added.

The committee also received a census bureau update from the Office of Census Data within the Legislative Services Agency on the estimated population projections for Indiana. The state will officially be notified of entire population data by December 31, 2010. This data will be used to determine the number of Congressional seats held by Indiana. Initial projections indicate that Indiana will maintain nine Congressional seats. All census data including geographic and demographic information will be provided to the General Assembly no later than April 1, 2011.

For more information on Sen. Lanane, updates on Senate activities or other State Senate business, call 1-800-382-9467 or visit www.senatedemocrats.in.gov

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