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**CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS ISSUE
JOINT STATEMENT ON REAPPORTIONMENT DATA**

Focus Should Not Be on Partisanship, But People

LOS ANGELES, CA – Today, MALDEF, along with other civil rights and civic engagement organizations, issued the following statement regarding the recently released reapportionment data:

The organizations listed below are civil rights and civic engagement organizations that intend to have significant involvement in the state and local redistricting processes to be undertaken in 2011 and 2012. These organizations have a long history of collaboration and partnership, and in preparation for this redistricting cycle, they are meeting and consulting with one another and expect to continue to meet and consult about our community education, advocacy, and litigation efforts in this area. These organizations believe that media and public reactions to the recently-released reapportionment data from the 2010 Census have focused inordinately and inappropriately on the expected partisan impacts of the geographic shift in seats in the United States House of Representatives and have overlooked the impact of the new numbers on communities.

The following principles serve to refocus the discussion on the core considerations for analyzing reapportionment data:

1. Redistricting is a process that centers on people and groups of people, not political parties. While parties seek to influence redistricting to their advantage, and map drawing involves politics and affects political outcomes, it must focus first and foremost on communities of people.
2. It is therefore critical that communities of people understand redistricting as a process that demands their attention and involvement; the process must not be ceded solely to partisan political interests. All communities must feel able and welcome to participate meaningfully in their state and local redistricting processes.

3. Communities of color, in particular, have faced numerous obstacles to their meaningful participation in the political process, including the redistricting process. The federal Voting Rights Act (VRA) includes the protection of these communities' effective involvement in the political process. Therefore, redistricting in every state and locality must comply with the VRA. This imperative has nothing to do with partisan interests, and such interests must yield to VRA compliance.
4. Partisan affiliation is not an immutable characteristic. Individual people and communities of people have changed and can change their party preferences. In addition, over time, the behavior of parties and the growth and movement of particular communities of people can change the historical party preference of a state or other geographical area.
5. Finally, because redistricting addresses population movement and community growth, even states that have lost congressional seats or maintained their current number of seats unchanged could see significant changes in the composition of districts and the partisan affiliation of elected officials based on communities' relative growth within a state.

These basic principles demonstrate the folly of focusing inordinately upon historical party preference, the current control of state legislatures, and the movement of House seats between states and regions in analyzing and evaluating Census reapportionment data.

Organizations:

Advancement Project

African American Redistricting Collaborative of California (AARC)

Asian American Justice Center (AAJC)

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)

Democracia USA

Demos

Indian Legal Clinic, Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law, Arizona State University

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law (LCCRUL)

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (NAACP LDF)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund (NALEO Educational Fund)

National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

National Voting Rights Advocacy Initiative at Seattle University, School of Law*

One Voice

Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP)

United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI)

William C. Velasquez Institute (WCVI)

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*Founded in 1968, **MALDEF** is the nation's leading Latino legal civil rights organization. Often described as the "law firm of the Latino community," MALDEF promotes social change through advocacy, communications, community education and litigation in the areas of education, employment, immigrant rights and political access. For more information on MALDEF, please visit: www.maldef.org.*

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