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In the wake of ComEd scandal, officials should embrace independent redistricting

In light of federal prosecutors' revelations about an elaborate and long-running bribery scheme involving utility giant Commonwealth Edison, CHANGE Illinois calls upon Illinois lawmakers to embrace and adopt an advisory redistricting commission and a more transparent remap process in Illinois.

Illinois officials should demonstrate that they are prioritizing the needs of Illinoisans by committing to independent and transparent redistricting, not another behind-the-scenes deal.

The federal government's deferred prosecution agreement notes that ComEd executives and top officials engaged in extensive efforts to influence and reward Public Official A, identified as the Illinois House Speaker from 2011 to 2019. Within that time frame, [multiple media reports](#) have noted that former ComEd CEO Frank Clark and former top lobbyist John Hooker successfully filed suit and blocked from the ballot a constitutional amendment question asking voters if they wanted state and congressional political maps to be drawn by an independent commission rather than politicians. Clark and Hooker hired attorney Michael Kasper to represent them in that suit. Kasper, at the time, was a lobbyist for ComEd who also represented the Speaker and the Democratic Party of Illinois. The effort to advance that independent redistricting measure had been supported by more than 570,000 Illinois voters. Since at least 2009, poll after poll has shown overwhelming support for an independent redistricting process.

Efforts to advance a constitutional ballot question for the Nov. 3, 2020 election were killed this year when Illinois' legislative leaders chose not to convene until May 20, 2020. The constitutional deadline for ballot questions was May 3, 2020.

However, this fall, Illinois lawmakers still can convene and approve legislation to require a more independent and transparent redistricting process that will begin to restore Illinoisans' faith in their democratic institutions.

"ComEd has admitted elaborate corrupt activities in an attempt to win the favor of House Speaker Michael Madigan," said CHANGE Illinois Executive Director Madeleine Doubek. "Because former

top ComEd officials were at the center of an extensive effort to block the independent redistricting that threatens a key component of the Speaker's control, Illinois officials now should demonstrate a commitment to unprecedented independence and transparency before redistricting next occurs."

Lawmakers should create an advisory independent redistricting commission that could hold hearings, collect community input and draw maps to recommend to lawmakers. They should approve legislation that requires unprecedented transparency with a series of public hearings and an opportunity for community input before and after maps are proposed. Lawmakers should adopt a law committing to writing a compliance report that explains how the proposed maps comply with the U.S. Constitution, the Illinois Constitution and the Illinois Voting Rights Act. The threatened months-long delay in the return of census results to the state only adds to the need for lawmakers to act, committing to equity and transparency for Illinoisans.

"Previously gerrymandered political maps in Illinois have stifled competitive elections, driving down participation in a form of voter suppression," Doubek added. "We ask the Governor, the Speaker, the Senate President, and every state lawmaker to stand for and support adoption of a law that demonstrates a commitment to an open, independent and accountable redistricting process so that every Illinoisan has faith they have been counted, their maps are not rigged, and their interests are represented first and foremost."