RESOLUTION 16-09

TO SUPPORT FAIR AND NONPARTISAN REDISTRICTING REFORM

WHEREAS, a fundamental tenet of democratic rule is that voters choose their representatives and that representatives reflect the will of the people; and

WHEREAS, in Indiana, the system of representative democracy is broken; and

WHEREAS, instead of voters picking their representatives, representatives pick their voters; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence, Indiana's State legislature and Congressional delegation do not look like, nor reflect the values of, Hoosiers; and

WHEREAS, this rigged system is the result of a wrong-headed approach to redistricting – the process used by governmental bodies to redraw electoral districts; and

WHEREAS, while federal law provides vital voter protection in its requirements that districts be equally populous and that redistricting comply with the Voting Rights Act, Indiana's redistricting process is still fundamentally unfair; and

WHEREAS, in Indiana, the boundaries of state and U.S. Congressional districts are drawn by legislative incumbents, a process that creates an inherent conflict of interest and one that favors incumbents; and

WHEREAS, political boundaries drawn by incumbents favoring incumbency create an unjust electoral advantage for the majority party; and

WHEREAS, both Republicans and Democrats benefit from this system of self-selection; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. is the only country that allows politicians to draw their own district boundaries; and

WHEREAS, political boundaries drawn by incumbents favoring incumbency reduce competition; and

WHEREAS, reduced or impaired competition stifles the robust exchange of ideas and does not provide the voting public with a meaningful choice. The absence of a meaningful choice does not afford the public the opportunity to select the best candidate for the job of public office; and

WHEREAS, elected officials are more responsive to constituents when voters have a choice of candidates, thereby increasing accountability and serving the best interests of the voters of Indiana; and

WHEREAS, reduced competition and the absence of a meaningful choice discourage voting and foster voter disillusionment and disaffection; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, 54 of the Indiana General Assembly races were unopposed;

WHEREAS, in 2014, Indiana had a voter turnout rate of 28% -- the *lowest* in the nation and the *lowest* turnout rate the state has seen in 72 years; and

WHEREAS, gerrymandered districts, drawn by incumbents, create polarized districts and discourage cooperation; and

WHEREAS, boundaries matter. Instead of irregularly-shaped districts with tentacles that oddly squiggle and snake to carve out the optimal result for a political party, districts should be compact, contiguous, and reflect the natural integrity of "communities of interest" -- communities with shared characteristics, interests, or needs, such as counties, cities, towns, and neighborhoods. These communities should not be fractured; and

WHEREAS, the redistricting process should be conducted in an open manner with meaningful opportunities for public feedback and engagement; and

WHEREAS, increasing numbers of Indiana residents are discontent with political boundaries that do not reflect their communities nor their voices; and

WHEREAS, in response, the Indiana General Assembly passed House Enrolled Act 1003 in 2015, a measure that calls for an independent study committee on redistricting reform, this committee is known as the "Special Interim Committee on Redistricting;" and

WHEREAS, the Interim Committee's final report is due by December 1, 2016;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLOOMINGTON, MONROE COUNTY, INDIANA, THAT:

SECTION 1. The Special Interim Committee on Redistricting is urged to produce a final report that supports the creation of a citizen-led commission composed of Indiana voters who are representative of the state's diversity, partisan balance, and geography for all future redistricting.

SECTION 2. The criteria for drawing boundaries by such a commission should include contiguity, compactness, communities of interest, political competition, protection of voting rights, and protection of the "one-person, one-vote" principle.

SECTION 3. The criteria for boundaries should *not* include voter registration data, incumbents' addresses, previous election results, nor demographic data outside of census counts.

SECTION 4. The procedure followed by such a commission should be transparent with full opportunities for public participation, including meetings in different geographic regions of the state.

SECTION 5. The Bloomington City Council directs the Clerk to send a copy of this resolution to the Special Interim Committee on Redistricting, the Governor of Indiana, the Speaker of the House, the President Pro-Tempore of the Senate, and Assembly members representing districts touching the City, and leaders of other municipalities around the state as deemed appropriate.

PASSED by the Common Council of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this 22 day of September, 2016.

ANDY RUFF, President
Bloomington Common Council

ATTEST:

NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk
City of Bloomington

PRESENTED by me to the Mayor of the City of Bloomington, Monroe County, Indiana, upon this 23rd day of September, 2016.

NICOLE BOLDEN, Clerk
City of Bloomington

SIGNED and APPROVED by me upon this 23rd day of September, 2016.

JOHN HAMILTON, Mayor
City of Bloomington

SYNOPSIS

This resolution is sponsored by Councilmembers Granger, Rollo, and Sandberg and comes at the request of the League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County. The resolution documents Indiana's current process for drawing U.S. Congressional and Indiana General Assembly maps and points out that the process is one that favors incumbency and political parties. This is an outdated practice that stifles political competition, discourages compromise, and ensures the continued control by the party in power. The resolution calls for the Indiana General Assembly-created Special Interim Committee on Redistricting to produce a final report that supports the establishment of a citizen-led commission whose criteria for boundary drawing include: contiguity, compactness, communities of interest, political competition, protection of voting rights, and fidelity to the principle of "one person, one vote." The resolution states that criteria for consideration should not include voter registration data, incumbents' addresses, nor previous election results. The resolution calls for the redistricting process to be transparent. The legislation directs the City Clerk to send the resolution the Interim Committee, and other stakeholders.