

# Women Voters To Promote Initiative For Reapportionment

By ROSS CUNNINGHAM  
Associate Editor, The Times

The League of Women Voters of Washington has decided to undertake an initiative campaign to carry out a constitutional mandate, which the State Legislature has failed to do anything about for a half a century.

The League will lead a drive, beginning immediately, to draft an initiative reapportioning the State Legislature and seek the 50,000 valid signatures necessary to place the initiative in the November, 1956 election ballot.

They don't feel it is too early to start in view of the road blocks which may be tossed in their path by the politicians—mostly men, but sometimes women—who would stand to lose by reapportioning the Legislature to fit the geographical shifts in population since the lawmaking body was reapportioned in 1931.

The Legislature didn't do it in 1931, either. It was done by the initiative process—which gives the people the right to act when lawmakers decline to carry out their wishes.

THE LEAGUE of Women Voters hopes to get help from politicians and any civic-minded groups that are concerned.

They intend to ask George C. Kinnear, chairman of the Republican State Central Committee, and Henry P. Carstensen, who holds the same position in the Democratic Party to designate representatives of the parties to participate in writing the initiative.

If this could be done, the women might be able to avoid the partisan clashes over redistricting that have prevented Legislatures since 1901 from carrying out the constitutional mandate that it be done every ten years.

"Everyone wants to be fair but nobody wants to be first," commented Mrs. Gayton Bailey, a member of the league's board. "We find there is a demand for redistricting by a non-partisan group, and think that an initiative is the way to go.

"We hope everyone concerned will help

us get a plan that is fair to all," Mrs. Bailey said.

The League has 2,000 members throughout the state, and they perhaps could get the signatures necessary to place the initiative on the ballot. But they probably would find partisan obstacles in the election campaign unless they had some sort of an agreement from the two political parties.

There is no disagreement publicly by any official on the desirability of reapportioning the Legislature.

While lip service has been given to the problem for years, nothing has been done and the inequities have grown steadily worse.

Attention in the past has been centered on the unequal treatment afforded citizens by in the more populous counties, when their legislative representation is compared with that of people in the less-populous counties.

But the 1954 election returns show gross inequalities between districts within counties such as King.

There were many more than four times as many votes cast for state senator in the 31st District, southern Seattle and a part of rural King County, as in the 36th District, which is mainly Queen Anne Hill.

There were also more than four times as many votes cast in the 46th District, which covers a part of northern Seattle and runs east of Lake Washington, as were in the 35th District, which embraces Seattle's central business district.

These are only a couple of the examples of unequal representation given residents here in the Seattle-King County area.

When figures for inter-county areas throughout the state are compared, the situation becomes even worse.

This is what stirred the League of Women Voters into action. They think it is high time to give the voters a chance to square things up.