

Statement on Redistricting Reform
At the Citizens Union Symposium on the Reapportionment Process
April 28, 2006

Eliot Spitzer wants to thank Citizens Union for conducting this symposium on reforming New York State's current reapportionment process. Eliot has long supported fundamental reform of our redistricting process.

In a speech on government reform at the Rockefeller Institute last fall, Eliot said:

“With regard to redistricting, it is clear that district lines are too often drawn for the specific purpose of ensuring that incumbents get re-elected. That is unconscionable. To me, it's a classic conflict of interest that lawmakers draw their own district lines to suit their needs rather than the public interest. It's a big part of the reason why control of the two houses has been so rigidly held for decades. The right approach is to have an independent, non-partisan commission – and not politicians – draw the lines.”

Eliot supports the four major principles expressed by Citizens Union:

- The creation of an independent redistricting commission;
- The development of a set of strict and fair guidelines;
- A fair and transparent reapportionment process; and
- A mechanism for passage that encourages the approval of the independent redistricting commission's plan

There are a number of different models being discussed for implementing these principles. The panels today that address these issues are an important part of the public input process that should occur in preparing specific proposals that will make redistricting reform a reality in New York State.

To be truly effective, redistricting reform must be accompanied by campaign finance reform. In addition to strict limits on campaign contributions, we need a system of public financing that makes it possible for candidates to present their views to voters without becoming beholden to special interest contributors.

Taken together, redistricting reform and campaign finance reform can make our political system more representative and responsive. It can, to borrow a title from one of today's panels, “reinvigorate democracy.”