

# Cape Gazette



Delaware's Cape Region

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## Citizens want input on redistricting

### Task force joins forces with league

By Kara Nuzback

knuzback@capegazette.com

Change is in the air, and local organizations are scrambling to make an impact on a change that will affect voters for the next 10 years. On a sunny day on The Circle in

Georgetown, Delaware's League of Women Voters teamed with the newly formed Hispanic Community Redistricting Task Force to announce their joint efforts to ensure a fair and open redistricting process.

Both groups want communities of inter-

est, such as Georgetown's Hispanic population, to be kept intact. Both groups also want to see enforcement of a bill that would affect the population of certain representative districts.

During redistricting in 2001, Lewes was split, and Georgetown was divided into three separate districts by a Republican-controlled House of Representatives. In 2011, Democrats are in control of redraw-

ing electoral lines, and legislation has been passed in both houses of Delaware's General Assembly aimed at creating an open process.

"It was much more political the last time around," said Mark Brunswick, a task force member and Delaware lobbyist. Brunswick said he applauds the efforts of the 146th General Assembly to encourage

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# Redistricting

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a public process, but said he sees room to strengthen those efforts. "We see a venue for greater participation," Brunswick said.

Delaware's Hispanic population has nearly doubled - from 37,000 to 73,000 - since the 2000 Census.

"We know Georgetown has seen much of that growth," said Sandra Bucay, task force member and member of First State League of United Latin American Citizens Council.

Craig de Mariana Aleman, of Delaware Council of La Raza and the task force's head of Sussex County, has drafted a proposal for the 37th House district in which Georgetown is contained in a single district. "The people of Georgetown are one community and should not be divided up," Aleman said.

"We are looking for communities of interest," said Sandra Spence, president of Delaware League of Women Voters. Spence used the Cape Region and Delaware's manufactured

homeowners in Long Neck as further examples.

She said the league is planning to draw a map of new districts for Sussex County Council. Joan Stern of LWV told the Cape Gazette the council map would have a central district containing Georgetown and four additional districts encompassing each corner of the county.

Spence said the league hopes to present a draft of its proposal by Tuesday, May 24. "We are here. We are part of the process," Spence said.

Bucay said the task force also hopes to ensure enforcement of House Bill 384. Signed into law in August 2010, HB 384 calls for prisoners to be counted as residents of their homes, not as residents of the prison.

HB 384 will have a large impact on how districts are divided, said Spence. She said most prisoners come from the city, but prisons are often located in rural areas.

"That gives an undue advantage to the district where the prison is located," she said.

Maptitude is the software program being used by the General Assembly to plug in census num-

bers and reapportion the state. House Majority Leader Pete Schwartzkopf, D-Rehoboth Beach, has said Maptitude does not allow users to shift the population manually after Census data has been entered, making it impossible for prisoners to be represented in their home districts.

Schwartzkopf said he spoke with representatives of the program's manufacturer, Caliper Corporation, who told him the change would cost \$70,000 and take two months to complete. Schwartzkopf is a leader in the House remapping process.

He said HB 384 will not likely be enforced until redistricting in 2020.

Spence said she thinks Caliper could fix the glitch. "We believe they're going to do a major fix to the software package," Spence said. The change will benefit many states with similar legislation, but Spence said she thinks the software company is trying to hand the bill to Delaware alone.

One of the task force's main goals, Bucay said, is to educate the community about the effects of redistricting and encourage a



KARA NUZBACK PHOTO

**SANDY SPENCE**, right, of Delaware League of Women Voters, joins Hispanic Community Redistricting Task Force members (l-r) Craig de Mariana Aleman, Mark Brunswick and Sandra Bucay to support one voting district encompassing all of Georgetown.

public remapping process. Bucay said the task force will continue with voter education and registration after redistricting is complete.

"We are about empowering individuals with information so they are not afraid," Bucay said. "We want to be part of the process."

After lines are redrawn, the districts cannot be changed until the next U.S. Census in 2020. "This is also the foundation for a much bigger period of activity," Brunswick said.

According to Delaware law, the General Assembly has until Thursday, June 30, to finish remapping the state.