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EDITORIAL

Independence is key in redistricting

Cuomo must stick to his vow to veto lawmakers' plan

For what it's worth, the New York Legislature's traveling committee on redistricting was in Rochester this week to gather public input on redrawing boundary lines for state legislative and congressional districts.

Though the four-member panel is bipartisan, includes two citizens, and is said to be committed to transparency, it was hard to take seriously. Its members, after all, were doing work that should be done by a panel independent of the legislative process.

No such panel exists because despite Senate Republicans' pledge to support independent redistricting during last year's

election campaign, they've since reneged. Majority Assembly Democrats claim they're still on board.

Largely as a result of Republicans regaining control of the state Senate in the 2010 election, the GOP is now concerned about losing that control under an independent redistricting commission.

Never mind that many of

those who testified Wednesday at City Hall called for creation of an independent commission.

The same kind of arrogance can be seen in some Senate Republicans' willingness to ignore a new state law related to redistricting. The law adopted last year no longer allows many rural upstate communities to count state prison inmates as residents

in the census. The vast majority of New York's 56,000 state prison inmates are from urban areas such as New York City, Buffalo and Rochester.

Fortunately, Gov. Andrew Cuomo vows to veto any redistricting plan sent to him by lawmakers that's developed using the current legislative process. That includes this week's sideshow in Rochester. □