

10302025 redistricting commission.mp3

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:00:00] Alright, I want to welcome you all to the second meeting of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. I'm calling this meeting to order. I want us to all be mindful of the fact that we have a very full room. And we are streaming to thousands of Ohioans across the Internet. And we want to be very respectful to them as well. And allow for them to be able to hear the testimony and the conversation today. I know that we will all together make that possible. Thank you. We are going to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

All [00:00:51] I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:01:06] Thank you. Would the staff please call the roll.

Staff [00:01:20] Co-Chair Antonio.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:01:20] Here.

Staff [00:01:20] Co-Chair Stewart.

Co-Chair Rep. Stewart [00:01:20] Present.

Staff [00:01:20] Governor DeWine. Secretary LaRose.

Sec. of State Frank LaRose [00:01:20] Here.

Staff [00:01:20] Auditor Faber.

Auditor Keith Faber [00:01:20] Good evening.

Staff [00:01:20] Senator Timken.

Sen. Timken [00:01:20] Here.

Staff [00:01:21] Leader Isaacsohn.

Minority Leader Rep. Isaacsohn [00:01:21] Here.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:01:23] Thank you. We have a quorum and we are expecting the governor at some time soon. At this time I'd like the Commissioners to review and approve the minutes from our previous meeting. Are there any additions or corrections to the minutes? Hearing none, the minutes stand as approved. At this time we will consider the introduction of a congressional district plan. Co-chair Stewart?

Co-Chair Rep. Stewart [00:01:51] Thank you, Madam Co-Chair. I move to accept introduction of the map uploaded to the Ohio Redistricting Commission website on October 30th, 2025 by Commission staff as the new working map of the committee.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:02:07] We have a motion - we have a motion before the Commission. Is there a second to accept the introduction of the working map for the Commission?

Sen. Timken [00:02:13] I second the motion to accept the introduction of a working map for the Commission.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:02:21] Are there any objections from the Commission to the motion? Hearing none, the motion is agreed to and the map uploaded to the Ohio Redistricting Commission website on October 30, 2025 by Commission staff is now the working map before the Commission.

Audience [00:02:37] I don't see it.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:02:39] Co-Chair Stewart.

Audience [00:02:43] Where's the map. Where's the map?

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:02:46] We're going to ask everyone to be respectful.

Audience [00:02:49] You're not respecting us though. Where's the map?

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:02:52] It is on the, upload, it's being uploaded right now onto the website. And we are all going to hear Co-Chair Stewart present on this map. Thank you.

Audience [00:03:08] Can we wait until we have it? We couldn't upload it in time if we could have a big print out of it. We sent it to Punchbowl News.

Staff [00:03:33] We can just leave it right there.

Audience [00:03:38] We get it now, but it wasn't uploaded 'til now. So this was printed before today.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:03:45] That's unfortunate. Co-Chair Stewart, whenever you're ready.

Co-Chair Rep. Stewart [00:04:05] Thank you. Co-Chair Antonio, members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, thank you for allowing me to present testimony today on a proposed Congressional Redistricting Plan, which seeks to fulfill the Commission's responsibility on the Ohio Constitution of adopting a new congressional redistricting plan. I'd like to start by providing a brief explanation of Article 19 of the Ohio Constitution regarding congressional redistricting, followed by an explanation of the proposed plan's components. As you will recall, in 2018, Voters widely approved a constitutional amendment put on the ballot by the General Assembly to establish a new process for congressional redistricting under Article 19. Section one of Article 19 provides three different opportunities for a map to be adopted. First, the Ohio General Assembly may adopt a plan by bill by three fifths vote of each house, including one half of the members of each caucus by November 30th, 2025. That did not occur. Second, if the General Assembly does not pass a map, the process moves here to the Ohio Redistricting Commission, which may adopt a plan with bipartisan support by October 31st, 2025.

Lastly, if the Commission does not adopt a plan, the process returns to the General Assembly, which may then adopt a plan by bill with a simple majority vote, but with different requirements on how the districts may be drawn by November 30th, 2025. In 2021, the General Assembly passed a congressional map, Senate Bill 258, with a simple majority that would have taken effect in February 2022, but that was invalidated by the Ohio Supreme Court. A remedial congressional map was then adopted by the Ohio Redistricting Commission, which would be in effect for the 2022 and 2024 elections and would need to be redrawn now in 2025. As the General Assembly did not pass a map by September 30th, this brings us to where we are now. The opportunity for the Ohio Redistricting Commission to adopt a map with bipartisan support by tomorrow, October 31st, 2025. Section two of Article 19 specifies additional requirements, requiring each district in a congressional plan to comply with the United States Constitution and federal law. It must be compact, be composed of contiguous territory, and be bounded by a single, non-intersecting continuous lines. The law requires Ohio's population to be divided equally into the 15 congressional districts, apportioned to it by Congress, which works out to be roughly 786,630 people per district, otherwise known as the ratio of representation. The remaining rules in section two prescribe the rules for permissive splits of political subdivision. Number one, if a county's population exceeds the ratio representation, it must be split to meet the population requirements. In such a county, which in Ohio under the 2020 census applies to Cuyahoga, Franklin and Hamilton counties, the following rules shall apply. If a city or township within that county also exceeds the ratio of representation, the plan shall attempt to include a significant portion of that city or township in a single district. Currently, only the city of Columbus would meet this criterion. If a city or township in that county has a population of greater than 100,000, and is the largest city or township in that county, that city or a township cannot be split. The two cities that meet this criterion are Cleveland and Cincinnati. The remaining criteria limit county splits. 65 of Ohio's 88 counties shall not be split, 18 counties may be split not more than once, and five counties may split not be more than twice. The parts of a congressional district within one county shall be contiguous. No two counties shall be split among the same two districts unless one of the counties has a population of greater than 400,000 people. The drawing authority shall attempt to have at least one whole county in each district where possible. Next, I would like to describe the proposed map in the submitted congressional redistricting plan. First, only 15 counties are split and no counties are split more than once. Number two, every district that is not entirely contained within one county has an entire county within it. Number three, the map complies with one person, one vote with 13 districts having exactly 786,630 people in them with two districts having 786,629 people in them. Number four, only 17 political subdivisions, 6 municipalities and 11 townships in the entire state are split in this proposed map. Included in the submitted map is a depiction of the statewide map and I know we're distributing a page of district statistics including population and political indices. Please note that the indexes listed represent an average of all statewide races in Ohio from 2016 through 2024. To conclude, the map presented to the Commission complies with the requirements in the Ohio constitution that I have just laid out. Thank you, co-chair Antonio and members of the Commission for allowing me to present testimony on this proposed congressional district map.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:09:36] Are there any questions from the Commission? Seeing none, thank you, Co-Chair Stewart. Before we start the testimony from the public today, I want to make sure that everybody has been able to see they had a little technical difficulty but the map is uploaded on redistricting.ohio.gov. Um, no, I want to, uh... Just remind us all how we got here today. Governor DeWine, Co-Chair Stewart, well, Governor Dewine will be here soon. Co-chair Stewart, Commissioners and members of the public, we thank you for joining us here today. Before we get started, you know, I

wanna take a moment to recognize the Ohioans that have joined today and at previous meetings throughout this process to stand up for state and for democracy. Today's meeting is held with a single-stay notice in the middle of a workday. We understand that. At our capital far away from many of the diverse communities across the state that we all represent. Those testifying today have had to take leave from families, jobs and communities to be here, to serve as our conscience. We are thankful to all for their participation. Before we move to the business at hand, there's a simple observation. Our colleagues on the right and certainly the Governor would likely join Democrats in acknowledging that there are stark flaws in our redistricting process. The system is broken. And it certainly hasn't lived up to the 2018 reforms that voters envisioned. At the heart of this issue is simple, incontrovertible fact that Ohio redistricting lacks balance, transparency and accountability. And we're all just a little bit worse off for that. No matter how we view this process, we can't ignore the harsh reality that here in Ohio elected officials pick their voters, not the other way around. Then as we begin the hearing today, I commit to listen and to carefully consider the words of every Ohioan who testifies. And I acknowledge the impossible challenge that this minority faces as we balance our duty to Ohio's Constitution alongside the pursuit of bipartisanship and our commitment to fairness. Mr. Co-Chair, members of the Commission, we're now ready to hear from the testimony of the public. These folks that are going to testify, I want to let you know it's in alphabetical order. We're going to start with Michael Ahern. You have three minutes.

Michael Ahern [00:12:33] Let me just ask as a point of order, I've been to almost every Commission hearing, and in the past it was five minutes, so I wrote my testimony to be four. So given the fact that there was a number of months for the Commission to convene, I hope you would give me some grace.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:12:50] Well, Mr. Ahern, we will, thank you. Mr. Ahern. We will do our best. We have 28 people to testify. And so we will do our best to accommodate everyone in as fair a way as possible. And any time you're ready you can begin your three minutes starts now

Michael Ahern [00:13:13] Good afternoon, Co-Chairs Stewart and Antonio, and members of the Redistricting Commission. I am Michael A. Hearn, and I have been before this Commission a number of times in the past. I've also attended almost every Redistricting Commission hearing, including some that were held in different parts of the state during the last round. I'm here to highlight the sham process and hearing that has brought me here today. As a Commission, you are violating your oath to the Ohio Constitution, and the oath you took as members of this Commission by continuing the quote "abuse of the legislative privilege", end quote, highlighted in Ohio Supreme Court justice, Jennifer Bruner's concurring opinion in *Neiman versus LaRose*, which struck prior congressional district maps as partisan gerrymanders. To summarize, her point was that the process and the product of the Commission was constructed behind closed doors. Paraphrasing, she stated that the plan has not created, was not created in the public eye, respondents created it entirely in private, and went on to note that respondents on the case provided no insight into substantiating who was drafting the plan, what instructions were given to the map drawers, and how the respondents were analyzing a district's competitiveness. Respondents in this case, President Senate Matt Huff, pardon me, President of the Senate, Matt Huffman, and Speaker of the House Robert Cupp at the time, broadly invoked legislative privilege to avoid responding to any inquiry regarding legislators' statements and decisions during the creation of the plan. And that again is where we are today. No insight into the discussions, negotiations, or even who drew the newly proposed map. That fundamentally is not representative democracy. The map before the public is a

politically contrived collusion between two major political parties to divvy up power across the state, leaving the voice of Ohio voters, the supposed true source of political power, out in the cold and without a say in how we choose our congressional representatives. The United States Constitution begins with the words, "We the people". The voice of self-governance is inherently exercised through the vote of each qualified elector from the population. In Ohio, that means every citizen of Ohio that is registered to vote. Our vote is our one constitutional mechanism to make our voice directly heard. Combined, these voices of "we the the people" are supposed to elect a subset, to conduct the work of legislating and representing us in various state and federal offices. That is why the Ohio Supreme Court rightly focused on the average 10-year vote split in statewide national elections as a metric for ensuring fair districts. District competitiveness and overall statewide average competitiveness that strays from the metric moves away from the voice of the people who vote in towards partisan gerrymandering. One of the previous Commission members, sitting on this Commission, said, after a federal court had imposed a gerrymandered map, that when it comes to redistricting, quote, "we can pretty much do whatever we want", end quote. By we, he did not mean the people of Ohio. He meant his political party and those currently holding power, some of whom are in gerrymandered districts established through a process that did not reflect the voices of Ohioans. It is a joke that I am here today testifying. I and hundreds of Ohioans have provided substantive testimony that has been completely ignored by the legislature and this Commission, ignored in the pursuit of your partisan goals. So why am I here again today, tilting at windmills? Because I want, I need, and I constitutionally deserve, as an American, to have true representation in my government. It is no wonder that Ohioans want to get sitting politicians out of the business of drawing our state and congressional districts. You are like the foxes guarding the hen house and Ohio voters continue to be the hens. Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:17:20] John Anderson. Oh, I'm sorry, I am sorry, Mr. Ahern. I'm Sorry. Are there any questions for Mr. Ahern? Seeing none, thank you, Mr Ahern. John Anderson, John C. Anderson.

John C. Anderson [00:17:36] I submitted testimony yesterday, but in light of the newly introduced maps, I'm gonna skip and allow you to move on.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:17:42] Okay, thank you, Mr. Anderson. Deborah Banks-Skellinger? Is Deborah here? Okay. Bria Bennett?

Bria Bennett [00:18:07] Good afternoon, Co-Chair Stewart, Co Chair Antonio, and members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Bria Bennett. I live in Cuyahoga Falls and I represent the Ohio Organizing Collaborative. Ohioans demanded fair maps when 74% of voters passed a bipartisan redistricting reform in 2018. Ohioans did not vote for partisan dealmaking behind closed doors. What's happening now is an insult to every Ohioan who believes in free and fair elections. This isn't just about lines on a map. It's about power, accountability, and whether our leaders respect the Constitution and the people they are supposed to serve. What this Commission is doing is reprehensible. With barely 24 hours notice, this hearing was scheduled, with an apparent deal cut and no maps released in advance for the public to review. What we're seeing here today is a gerrymandered map. It's a treacherous dereliction of duty and a direct violation of your constitutional responsibility to draw fair districts. Instead of serving the people, you're serving yourselves. This partisan gerrymandered, 12 Republican, 3 Democratic map explicitly targets black and brown communities. The backroom side deals that have led to this map. Have real consequences, especially for communities like Toledo, which may be hung out to dry yet

again. Minority voters are continuously packed into a few districts and cracked apart to weaken our collective voice. Political gerrymandering strips people of power, silences their influence, and makes it harder to elect leaders who truly reflect our values and lived experiences. Republicans are trying to take away our voting power with the rigged maps. And you, Senator Antonio and Representative Isaacsohn seem to be considering letting this happen. These same politicians you're drawing into power are preparing to withhold food assistance from 1.4 million Ohioans and allow healthcare premiums to skyrocket in just a couple of days. That's cruelty and corruption in the same breath. Democrats in Texas, Missouri, Utah, and North Carolina have stood firm against partisan gerrymandering, yet Ohio could be the first domino to fall. Ohio voters deserve courage, not acquiescence. Earlier this month, Representative Isaacsohn, you called Ohio's 11-4 map a gerrymander. And Senator Antonio, you said you wouldn't support maps that put the people's interest last. What we have seen today is a 12-3 map. This is a far stretch from the requirement for rec- for representational fairness in the Ohio Constitution. Don't be complicit. Don't legitimize a broken process that betrays the will of the people. The Commission should not pass maps that fail the test of fairness and constitutionality. Ohioans are watching. We'll remember who stood for the voters and who stood power. Do your job. Draw fair maps. Respect the Constitution and respect the people of Ohio. Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:21:38] Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Bennett. Are there questions for Ms. Bennet? Seeing none, thank you, Ms. Bennett. Janet Boehmer.

Co-Chair Rep. Stewart [00:21:52] I see two questions.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:21:54] I'm sorry?

Co-Chair Rep. Stewart [00:21:54] I see two questions.

Janet Boehmer [00:21:59] Hi, my name is Janet Boehmer and I have driven from Green County because I feel this is important. We need Ohio to create fair congressional maps for all. I would like to keep this short and sweet, but this is crucial. It's crucial to our democracy, fair congressional map. Why? Because when we don't respect one person, one vote, we lose the fragile democracy that our country is based on. The U.S. Supreme Court, since the 1960s, has decided in significant rulings, Baker versus Carr, Gray versus Sanders, that as William Douglas stated, "political equality can mean only one thing, one man, one vote". This was reaffirmed by Reynolds versus Sims and Westbury versus Sanders. In addition, Ohio Supreme Court has struck down numerous gerrymandered maps for violating the state's anti-gerrymandering amendment. If one looks at voting percentages of Republicans to Democrats in recent years, it has been about 55% to 44%. That being the case, the congressional districts, according to the Ohio Supreme Court, should be eight, seven, not 10, five, which it currently stands at, or worse than that, 12 to three. Hopefully this does not happen with our Democratic constituents. Nationally, this process has been exaggerated because state after state continues this gerrymandering. When this happens, other states have to react and rebalance. This is wrong. Ohio does not need to be part of the problem. This will take our country years and megabucks to rectify. Please consider doing the right thing and be a positive role model to this country and stop the gerrymandering. Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:23:52] Thank you. Are there any questions for Ms. Boehmer? Seeing none, thank you. Karen Chakoian. And I may have said your name wrong. If I did, I apologize.

Karen Chakoian [00:24:15] Thank you, Co-Chair Stewart and Co-chair Antonio, for this opportunity and to all of you who are serving on this Commission. My name is Karen Chakoian and I live in Columbus, Ohio, and I'm grateful for this opportunity to be able to speak to you today. This is much more personal for me. I remember going to vote with my parents when I was very young. They were extremely patriotic. I learned from them how important it was to be in the voting booth. And I carried that on with my own children, bringing them whenever I went to vote, because I wanted them to learn its importance and how to be present. My parents were both lifelong Republicans and were very active in supporting candidates in Illinois and at the local level. And I've tried to do the same for the candidates that I support in my life. Now, this may sound silly, but I cry every time I go into the voting booth. I'm kind of embarrassed when the tears come, but I know it's because of what I learned as a child. I do not take this privilege for granted. I don't necessarily vote the way my parents did. My four siblings and I used to tease our dad that our votes outnumbered his. But even when our arguments were sometimes vehement, we disagreed with love and affection. We respected each other because it mattered so much to us. I'm wearing my father's sweater today. To feel his presence near me as I speak to you. Now I find myself in tears for a different reason. We're at a pivotal point in our country, and our future and our children's future and our grandchildren's future is at stake. I'm extremely saddened that when I vote, the districts are so gerrymandered that in those races, innumerable votes do not matter. People's power and voice have been stripped away. The map should reflect the political makeup of our state and now it may become worse instead of better. It doesn't have to be this way and it shouldn't be this. I'm not naive, I understand the desire to hold onto power. And yet as a faith-filled Christian, I hold on to a brighter vision and to the conviction that we must seek the good that we know is possible. And it is clearly possible to have fair districts. We will never have a perfect union. But we should work together for a more perfect union with liberty and justice for all. Thank you again for your service. My prayers are with you that you may be faithful. I forgot the questions part.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:27:46] Thank you. Are there any questions? Seeing none. Thank you so much. Javier Diez?

Javier Diez [00:28:02] Good day, my name is Javier Diez. I am a native Ohioan and reside in the Columbus area first I want to express my utmost appreciation and gratitude for you guys taking time out of your busy, out of your busy, out of a busy schedule to have Constituents come up and share their opinions. So I am currently 17 years old I am unable to vote in Ohio or federal elections. And the reason why I'm here today is because our state congressional maps are going to be redrawn and I want to express the opinions in view of me and many other Ohioans who are underage and do not have a voice in this matter. According to official election data, which was collected by Secretary of State website, in Ohio, 55% of Ohioans, 55.09% of Ohioans voted for Trump, 43.93% voted for Harris. Now I understand that not everyone who votes for President votes the same way in Senate or House, but using, but using that metric, you would expect for the, for the Ohio maps to be about 55 to 45% split, resulting in something close to an 8-7 split. However, this map that is being, the proposed map is not what that, does not align with that. And, and I'm not here today to say that Democrats are good, or Republicans are bad, or to have any kind of bias. I want to state the facts of how Ohioans historically have voted and how that data can be used to ensure that all Ohioans' views are equally represented. Ohio is a red state. I am not contesting that. If Ohio had more Democrats than Republicans, I would

be very concerned. But that's not how it is. But, the pure ratio of Ohio voter data compared to our congressional maps, there is a major discrepancy and I feel that many Ohioans are not going to have their voices heard based on these maps. This happens in our in in the US House. This happens in the Statehouse. When you look at our 99 districts, it is almost, I don't know the exact number but it's almost a two-thirds of the of the Ohio House a Republican and one-third Democrat, and that is not yet again aligned with that 55-45 split that I found earlier. And I'm going to be 18 next year. I'm gonna be able to vote in the midterm election 2026. It is an incredibly American thing to go up there to the polling booth to vote and to say, I voted. Not many people in other places and countries have that right, and I want to be able exercise that right as an Ohioan and as an American. But I want my vote to hold the same weight as other people in Ohio who may have different opinions than me. Every Ohioans voice should be heard regardless of their opinion, regardless of their belief, regardless of the demographics. Because when this Commission was founded, sorry, when this Commission was voted on by the referendum, and it was transferred from the Ohio Legislature to this Commission. Everyone on this Commission knows how Ohioans vote. Secretary of State, Governor, Auditor, all these people know how Ohioan's vote and know, and know how the map should look like, but yet these maps really, I don't feel, reflect the proportion of Democrats and Republicans in Ohio. At the end of the day, I really don't care if Democrats or Republicans are in power. I just care that they got there representing the people who vote. And I want every Ohioan to have an equal say in what goes on in the Statehouse, in the US House, or any place in the government. Thank you very much.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:32:10] Thank you. Are there any questions?

Sec. of State Frank LaRose [00:32:12] Chairman.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:32:14] Are there any questions for the witness?

Sec. of State Frank LaRose [00:32:17] Chairman.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:32:17] You want to come back?

Javier Diez [00:32:19] I'm sorry.

Sec. of State Frank LaRose [00:32:20] Thank you, Chairman. Not a question, but kudos. For a 17-year-old, you did a really good job. And I appreciate that. Heck, you did a really good job for a 37-year-old. You're not old enough to vote yet. You will be next year. But I do want to remind you that you are old enough to be an election official. And you can sign up to be what we call a Youth at the Booth poll worker. And I hope you'll consider doing that. Thank you so much.

Javier Diez [00:32:49] And Ayoda Bechtle (?), you were there like last year from my AP Gov class. I remember you. I gave you a donut, but I think that your assistant took it. I don't quite remember. But thank you so much for your time. It means a lot.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:33:04] Thank you. Next up is Marilyn Fischer. Is Marilyn here? OK. Charity Frierson. There she is. Hi, Charity.

Charity Frierson [00:33:30] Thank you. Thanks for hearing from us today, y'all. I will not be nearly as polished, because this is only my second time being in this Statehouse, and

my first time ever doing anything like this. I'm not a public speaker. I didn't have the forethought to even send myself a copy of my written testimony. So I think it's important, though, that I'm here. I am a voter from Pataskala, Licking County. 12th district. And you know, I realized how badly we were gerrymandered with the abortion amendment when it passed was such a majority in such a red state, and I realized how poorly are the people's interests were being represented. Sorry. I don't know what this map means looking at it. It looks a little sus, there's some kind of obvious suspect areas like Miami County. There, seems like it's a target on brown and black people in that county. It makes me emotional because I have the privilege of being in Pataskala and Licking County and I know my vote counts. It's disgusting that in America, there are people who go or don't go because they know their vote or they feel their vote won't count. We're better than that. Y'all all took oaths to God. And I don't know what that means to you, what God means to you; I know what it means to me. And it's not self. It's not power and it's party. It's justice. It's equality. It's love. And that's what I ask you guys to, in your quiet place, think about who is your God and who are you serving? Reflect upon your oath that you made to the constitution of this state and to the people of this state. And do the right thing for everybody, not just for you and your people, and you're- who it benefits for y'all. But for everybody. That's it. Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:36:11] Are there any questions for the witness? Seeing none, thank you. All right, next up is Zachary Gibbs.

Zachary A. Gibbs [00:36:35] To the members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, my name is Zachary Gibbs. I am a constituent in District 10. We are gathered here again with less than 48 hours before this Commission is expected to have produced something more than political theater, and yet the drama continues. However, although most likely unintentional, this Commission has in fact produced something. It has produced a lot of questions. Questions such as who are the members of this Commission really working for? Are you working for Ohioans? Are you working for sitting and future congressional representatives who seem to forget about Ohio as soon as that plane takes off to D.C.? Or could you be concerned with your own position in standing in the political pecking order? If so, I must ask, when did Ohio start taking orders from the federal government? Are we not a sovereign state within these once United States of America? It also raises the questions of what are you afraid of? Are you afraid of allowing residents of the state of Ohio to have a fair election? One that allows us to pick our candidates and not the candidates picking us? Are you are afraid that people will see that the politicians bought by big money and special interest groups are not doing anything for the people who put them in power? Or are you terrified that if you start allowing us common folks to fully execute our duties and responsibilities as taxpaying Ohioans and American citizens, that you as well will soon be fighting to maintain your assumed authority without regards to the people that put you there. In summation, on behalf of myself and over 11 million of my closest neighbors, we demand this Commission do the job as you have sworn to do and provide a fair map for Ohioans, and I will not be accepting any questions. Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:38:22] Thank you. Robert Jacobsen is next. Robert Jacobsen. Okay? Beth Likens? Is Beth Liken here? Beth Lykins, okay. Katharine Mallory.

Katharine Mallory [00:39:02] Good afternoon, my name is Katherine Mallory.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:39:04] I'm sorry, Mallory.

Katharine Mallory [00:39:05] That's okay. I'm a resident of Ohio's third congressional district and a registered independent voter. I'm here today as an interested party and I appreciate the opportunity to speak, thank you. Every member of this Commission clearly understands the importance of voting maps and every member understands that how those maps are drawn impacts the outcome of elections. The Ohio voters who established this Commission when they approved a constitutional amendment in 2015 certainly understood the importance and impact of voting maps. The ballot language in 2015 specifically offered an end to the partisan process for drawing Ohio House and Senate districts by replacing it with a bipartisan process with the goal of having district boundaries that are more compact. And politically competitive. Ohio voters neither want nor support partisan maps. Articles 11 and 19 of the Ohio Constitution, which all of you have sworn an oath to, uphold, provide a clear roadmap for the work of your Commission. In addition to that clear roadmap, the legislative history is also clear and its specific emphasis on bipartisan cooperation. And fairness. It is difficult to understand how, if everyone on this Commission is acting in good faith, we've ended up here, at the end of October. Further, with tomorrow's drop-dead deadline, Ohio citizens have now learned of a compromise that results in maps that are objectively familiar in their one-sidedness. This is your legacy to Ohio. At the end, each of you must look in the mirror. And know in your heart that you have upheld your oath to the Ohio Constitution by working in a cooperative, fair, and bipartisan manner to satisfy the mandates of the Constitution. Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:41:17] Are there any questions for Ms. Mallory? Seeing no questions, thank you. Thank you. Gabriel Mann. Welcome to the Commission.

Gabriel Mann [00:41:35] Thank you. Co-Chairs Antonio Stewart, members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, thank you for accepting my testimony today. My name is Gabriel Mann. I'm the Communications Director for Abortion Forward, formerly Pro-Choice Ohio. I'm here today urging you to pass a congressional district map that represents the people of Ohio like the map submitted by the Senate Democrats or the Ohio Citizen Redistricting Commission. That map that the Equal Districts Coalition resubmitted. I'd like to start by asking a simple question, what are we doing here? We are 24 hours away from a constitutionally mandated deadline, and we are only just now seeing this map proposal. On top of that, it's trick-or-treat night. This means that you're holding an important public hearing that impacts families at the exact hour when many parents across Ohio are committed to spending this time with their children in a treasured tradition. You're cutting families out of this process. As you sit here and consider maps that cut families out of our democracy, this is unacceptable. Ohio families deserve and need representation in government and this process has shown exactly how much legislators in Ohio want to rule us and not represent us. This is not the time. This is not the time for you to try to make up for the fact that you've been ignoring constitutionally required deadlines. In 2023, we saw a clear example of why gerrymandered districts fail to represent the views of the voters that elected officials are supposed to be representing. 57% of the voters that cast ballots in November 2023 voted in favor of the Ohio Reproductive Freedom Amendment. Why did voters have to do that? It's because for over a decade, the gerrymandered Ohio legislature has been going against their will, against the will of the voters, enacting more than 30 bans and restrictions on abortion. Not only did voters have to go to the ballot, collecting hundreds of thousands of signatures to get the measure qualified to appear in the ballot. But the same voters had to come out and vote in a special election. You remember that, Senator? Just months before the November election to fight back a legislatively created constitutional amendment solely focused on making the November election impossible to

win. This gerrymandered Ohio legislature has one goal rigging the process in their favor because they cannot win based on the merits

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:44:08] Okay, we're gonna, we're going to let-excuse me. We're gonna let our person testify, we're gonna let the folks streaming in listening hear what he's saying and that means we really need to have order. Thank you. Continue, please.

Gabriel Mann [00:44:24] Thank you, ma'am. You know, the policies that you all are passing do not represent the will of the people. You read the same polling that I do. I'm gonna skip ahead just a bit. In the United States, we have a representative democracy. The people elect individuals to represent the needs of our communities and government. Unfortunately, states like Ohio have strayed from this foundational principle, creating district boundaries not based upon representation, but biased to a single party to win elections. The very foundation of our democracy is at risk when the people of our state no longer have true representation from their elected officials. I am outraged that this hearing is the first and likely only opportunity for testimony before the second deadline in this redistricting process. I'm also highly appalled that the public has been completely cut out of this process. Backroom meetings outside the public view are not how to draw maps. Leadership means coming together and doing what is right for the people that you serve. President Trump has dictated to his supporters that they should do whatever they can to rig the election to favor Republicans in 2026 and beyond. States like Texas have followed that edict and once again taken away the voices of the people that leaders are supposed to represent. Ohio cannot and should not follow that trend and further rig our already gerrymandered congressional districts. This process should not be about which party wins or loses, it should be about ensuring that voters win. That the voices of the people are heard in our government, and Ohioans have elected officials that will actually represent the needs of their community. The map submitted by the Democrats and the Ohio Citizen Redistricting Commission drawn map resubmitted by the Equal Districts Coalition both meet the spirit and the letter of the 2018 voter approved congressional reform. This map does not. We encourage this committee and the legislature to adopt one of these maps for bipartisan passage before tomorrow's deadline to give Ohioans what they deserve, a representative democracy where the voices and the needs of their communities are heard. Ohioans deserve true representation in our government. When we don't get good maps, Ohioans lose, communities lose.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:46:35] Thank you, are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you. Peter Maxwell is next.

Audience [00:46:47] Can we wait until DeWine gets here and all the press comes back in? Yeah, we need the press here.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:46:50] So Peter Maxwell is here, the Commissioners are here. Thank you, Miss. Peter Maxwell.

Audience [00:47:01] So that he can ignore hearing from actual voters about these maps.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:47:01] We can, if you all want to hear the testimony, we need to-

Audience [00:47:05] Do you want to hear the testimony? You're not even asking any questions.

Co-Chair Rep. Stewart [00:47:07] Madam Chair, this attendee has repeatedly interrupted this hearing. I don't think it's appropriate to continue to let these folks derail this hearing

Peter Maxwell [00:47:18] I will provide my written testimony for Governor DeWine's use.

Audience [00:47:22] You all should be ashamed of yourselves, especially you two Democrats, that you are going along with this absolute bullshit. You don't have to touch my shit. I'll put back my own stuff.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:47:31] Mr. Maxwell.

Audience [00:47:32] It's bullshit and you should be ashamed and you should wait until Governor DeWine comes back here. You all -.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:47:48] Well, we're going to wait one minute, okay? All right, we are going to have, we're going to have the door closed. Okay, Mr. Maxwell, anytime you're ready.

Peter Maxwell [00:47:59] Thank you. Good afternoon, I am Peter Maxwell. I'm a registered independent voter and election official and a resident of Westerville. We were here a week ago for what was purported to be a hearing on establishing maps that would fairly distribute Ohio citizens into voting districts, keyword here being fairly. The hearing began with committee members swearing before their God to uphold the Ohio State Constitution. What does the Constitution say about this matter? Article 19 begins with, quote, the General Assembly shall not pass a plan that unduly favors or disfavors a political party or its incumbents. It then continues. Representative Stewart, are you with me? It then continues, the General Assembly shall not unduly split governmental units, giving preference to keeping them whole. The half-hour hearing last week was so brief and unproductive that no map was provided by the majority for review, and maps submitted by the minority party were not reviewed. Additionally, members of this committee questioned whether the concept of fair was even a requirement of the Constitution. I would say please consult with the God that you have sworn to before taking action on this matter before you. After the hearing, public participants met downstairs where inspirational quotes are displayed. I would recommend that you all go downstairs and refresh your memory of them. Of particular note were Abraham Lincoln's words. Quote, no man is good enough to govern another man without that other man's consent. I do not consent to being governed by a congressional delegation that is ruled by an 80% Republican majority. Neither do I consent to be represented by a similarly disproportionate Ohio legislature. Ohio is roughly evenly divided between two political parties. In two of the last five presidential elections, Ohio citizens have selected a Democratic presidential candidate. We, the citizens of Ohio, initiated and overwhelmingly voted for changes to our Constitution in both 2016 and 2018 to ensure that all citizens would be represented fairly in both state and congressional elections. When is that going to occur? Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:51:09] Thank you, Mr. Maxwell. Are there any questions from the Commission? Seeing none. Thank you, Mr. Maxwell. Anne McCarty. Lorraine McCosker. Paul Miller. Anytime you're ready.

Paul Miller [00:51:52] Thank you, Co-Chair. Like others here, I wrote a 10-minute speech for you last night, submitted it at midnight, and will not be reading it to you for the same reasons. I'd prefer to relegate that to the record of my written testimony to this

Commission. There are essentially two factors at work here, partisan interests and constitutional process. And I commend you for coming together and resolving your differences. Politics is the art of compromise. I think a lot of these partisans and voters, too, tend to forget that. But we've just seen your proposal, which unfortunately doesn't follow the constitutional process, which is the easier of the two. As well as the obligatory one. Article 19 says that a plan shall comply with all of the following requirements, among which is, quote, every congressional district shall be compact. This proposed plan was not presented for any kind of analysis by the public beforehand, but a casual visual analysis. Suffices to know that this plan has at least three, arguably four or five districts, which are not even attempts at compact districts. How did you manage that? When District 15 and District 6, both have at least four splits a piece. My plan doesn't have a single district with more than three. This is not the product of what the U.S. Supreme Court has called traditional geographical principles. I came here to present my redistricting plan, but instead of turning it to you and explaining the relevance of my statistical analyses, I've turned it to the public so they can see for themselves, for the first time, what an ideal, compact, ungerrymandered, that is, a fair plan, might look like. A compromise, if you will. I encourage everyone sitting here to examine it closely and compare it with what we've been given. I'm sure that everyone sitting before me knows that my plan is far superior to the proposed one, mathematically. I'm sure you do. Even without it, you're still playing right into the hands of the operatives in our nation's capital. Which are trying very hard to upend this whole process. Republicans, what are you doing? Listen to the applause. This is an embarrassment. Democrat activists are still calling it to a man, a partisan gerrymander, despite whatever bipartisan agreement you've made. In the past, we've had snake on the lake, you've turned it into an elephant. We've had a duck district. You made a turkey out of 15 weeks before Thanksgiving. This is a joke and I'm tired of Ohio being a laughing stock, aren't you? And I say that as a Republican. It's not as hard as it looks. I spent more time drawing this than I did making the plan. Democrats won't relent in their efforts. The map is crap. That's all.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:54:58] Are there any questions for Mr. Miller from the Commission? Thank you. Next is Michael O'Neill. Michael O'Neill. Next is Claude Ramkey. Claude? Mary Ellen Rossi-Knickel. Tracy Sabetta.

Rachael Belz [00:55:36] I'm not Tracy, but Tracy submitted my testimony, Rachael Belz.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:55:37] What is your name?

Rachael Belz [00:55:47] Rachel Belz. I was waiting until the end because I knew it wasn't going to be in alphabetical order.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:55:47] Is Tracy here?

Rachael Belz [00:55:49] No.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:55:50] You may go in her place. Rachel Bell? Is it B-E-L-L?

Rachael Belz [00:55:56] B-e-l-z.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:55:58] Oh, I'm sorry.

Rachael Belz [00:55:59] It's okay.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:55:59] B- e-l-z.

Rachael Belz [00:56:00] Yep. Belz.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:56:03] Thank you. You may start whenever you're ready.

Rachael Belz [00:56:06] Members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, I'm Rachel Belz, CEO of Ohio Citizen Action. This testimony is presented on behalf of our more than 32,000 members and all Ohioans who have a stake in the decisions made by this Commission. We're a grassroots organization. We've been dedicated to protecting and strengthening the democratic rights of Ohioans for the past 50 years. Talk to Ohio voters where they live. Right on our front porches about issues that are important to them as consumers, parents, workers across the state. We help them to amplify their voices and stand up for the things they hold most dear. And they're watching this process closely and expecting you to get it right this time. Okay, that's what I wrote before all this. I've already submitted this testimony, so what I'd like to say is... I don't think I've ever been more angry standing here testifying in front of any Commission or legislative body or anything in 30 years here. I am shaking, which isn't really like me if you met me before. I understand that overnight y'all made some compromise. You know, we voted on this many times, twice, three, I don't even know how many times we voted on these things. I'm the last person to say that I would want to run a referendum, and that's not what my organization does. We sometimes help, you know, gather signatures like any organization on whatever issue you might care about. We don't do that. We don't do those kind of projects. So again, I know that that kind of thing is tough, but I honestly can't believe that y'all are doing this. I mean, this is shocking. There are Democrats and Republicans in states who don't even have to do this this who spent more time than you all did. I'm a process person. I think my staff probably hates that about me. But I really am, and I love Ohio. I'm not from Ohio originally, I don't have to be here, but I love it like you all do. I live in district one, or I guess I live in district, I dunno what district I live in yet, because I'm in southwest Ohio. At Ohio Citizen Action, I just wanna say that we oppose maps that further rig the lines. We also oppose backroom deals, things like House Bill 6, things like Corrupt. Compromises. We ask the Democrats to stand firm. I know it's maybe too late for that, but we do a lot of accountability and we talk to a lot of voters and we want to talk to all of your voters. Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:59:06] Thank you, Ms. Belz. Are there any questions for Ms. Belz? Seeing none from the Commission, thank you. Wenda Sheard.

Wenda Sheard [00:59:20] Sheared.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [00:59:20] Shared. Thank you.

Wenda Sheard [00:59:20] Thank you. I thank you for a map any map. I guess I don't need the t-shirt right now I speak today as a longtime advocate against gerrymandering by any party and as an attorney since 1979 and as a political science PhD and I mentioned that because I understand that we the people will rise up and run for office, campaign for folks who are running for office. We will vote and we will recruit voters to bend the arc of justice towards what we need. To the majority of this Commission, I ask why haven't you followed the golden rule and adopted a fair map? Why are you so hostile towards the people of this state? Why do you wanna cheat? What would your grandmother think and say if she could see you denying the basic fairness? Yes, I realize as Senator Timken said or noted by

asking a question on September 30th that the word fairness isn't in Article 19 of the Ohio Constitution, and that's a grand disappointment to me and everyone else who worked so hard to end gerrymandering. By collecting signatures years ago. But does the absence of that word imply that the Ohio Constitution gives public officials the right to lie, steal, and cheat by drawing obviously unfair maps with elephants and turkeys? What kind of example are you setting for the people of Ohio if we end up with these unfair maps? I texted Michael Kripchak when I saw the map. He ran for Congress and the district that goes from Youngstown down to Marietta. I asked him, hey, where do you live? Yeah, he lives in the 14th district, the new one. You have the people in Marietta who love Michael Kripchak, can't vote for him anymore because he's three districts away. We can't do it. And I can't for Jared Christian anymore, an Athens native who is now in a completely new district. I want to mention that in Nelsonville, Ohio, So there was. A beautiful redistricting thing led by Trevor Martin. It was open to the public and everybody saw the map on the wall and agreed on how to do it. And I wish the backroom deals would stop and I wish there'd be basic fairness. I really do. Because we're gonna rise up and change things. It may take some time, but we're going to do. Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [01:02:35] Thank you. Any questions for Ms. Sheard? Thank you, Ms. Sheard. Scott Sibley. Is Scott here? Jeri Simmons. John Tesorek, Terschak, I'm sorry. Andrea Yagoda.

Andrea Yagoda [01:03:13] Andrea Yagoda, resident of Ohio, 51 years. I want to first say I firmly oppose this proposed map. Chair Stewart, at the committee hearing, you questioned me about House Bill 442 and you acted like you appalled at the way they split Delaware County. Well, sir, your split shows your hypocrisy. It highlights your hypocrisy because you have split us into approximately 25, you took us 20, we're in 25 different counties and what you did is you took us the two fastest growing counties in the state and put us with the most rural counties that you could find for one purpose, to dilute our votes. The Ohio Constitution, Article 11, Section 1C, mandates that you give us a proposed map, and the purpose of the hearings is that we have meaningful review of those maps and that we can testify. You have denied us of meaningful review of these maps. These maps, we were shown this morning. For the first time and they didn't even get on the website until after this hearing started. We have had no opportunity for a meaningful review of these maps. And even though you are having a hearing at 10 a.m. tomorrow, you are denying us of our constitutional right and the purpose of having hearings. You know what the intent was on that amendment and you have purposely avoided the intent of the voters when we pass this amendment. I'm not disappointed because I had absolutely no expectation that this hearing, like all hearings before it, would be anything but a sham. You are not interested in hearing what we have to say. That's obvious by when this map was first posted for Ohioans to consider. The fact, for those of you watching at home, you need to know that it is now past five o'clock and we still don't have the governor here. Present to hear the testimony. Why don't we have him here? He's not here because we all know you don't give a damn about hearing what we have to say. You've already decided as evidenced by no questions, you don't care what we say. You made a deal, you're gonna stand by it no matter what we had to say, that is obvious today. My parents taught me that just because you can do something does not mean that you should do something. And perhaps everyone on this Commission needs to know that lesson. Just because you can screw us and you can gerrymander these maps does not mean that you should do it. Just because maybe you file all the technical requirements of the Constitution doesn't mean you have to do it in this way. There are better ways to do. You have plenty of maps submitted by citizens. You have House Bill 442. You have the Citizens Redistricting Commission that submitted much better maps than what we have and that actually, actually reflect what we

voted for and what the will of the people are. You should all be ashamed of yourselves. I have lived, I have breathed, I have dreamed redistricting to 2017, and it's the same thing, same thing that we keep seeing. Just one big sham. On the Ohioans. I ask you to reconsider this and do what's right. Thank you. Thank you.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [01:07:07] Thank you, Ms. Yagoda. Lawrence, Lawrence Yungk. Is Lawrence Yungk here? Not seeing Lawrence, that is the end of the list. Seeing no further witnesses before the Commission, this concludes our agenda for the day. The next Commission meeting will be tomorrow, Friday, October 31st, at 10 a.m. In this hearing room, do I have a motion to adjourn?

Co-Chair Rep. Stewart [01:07:36] Chair Antonio, I move to adjourned.

Co-Chair Minority Leader Sen. Antonio [01:07:39] Do I have second? Second. So moved. Seeing no objections, we are adjourned.