

I am State Senator Kent Smith. I represent Cuyahoga County and I hold many of you in high regard and I would like to begin my testimony with a statement attributed to one of you, in the Majority Party, as reported on Cleveland.com on Friday Sept. 22nd. It was reported that one of you said, "It's important to try to ensure that communities are represented by someone who shares their interests, especially as Ohioans with the same political bent increasingly cluster together geographically."

I could not agree more with that individual. But it is exactly that belief that is not being satisfied if you examine the Democratic leaning parts of Ohio through the lens of the new proposed maps.

We all remember when we were drawing maps two years ago, we were working with a partisan calculus of Ohio being roughly a 55-45 state.

Before we start, let's establish the basic math.

As you all know Ohio has 99 State House seats and 33 State Senate seats. According to the US Census Ohio 11,797,517 people in it. Which translates to 119,167 per House seat or 357,501 for each Senate seat. The population of each district is allowed to vary by 5% - which is a range of 125,125 on the high end and 113,211 on the low end.

In Ohio's urban counties, counties that vote for Democrats, it seems that this scheme is being abused to give a legislative advantage to the majority party. The proposed maps are making the Democratic seats larger than they should be and Republican seats smaller than they should be which allows them to falsely increase the number of Republicans in the State House and State Senate.

Let's look at 4 urban counties - all of whom voted for Joe Biden in 2020.

First Franklin County. Home of 11 State House seats. What we see is, in an effort to create a safe Republican House seat, more Democratic voters are pushed into fewer districts. The six largest Franklin County House Districts all lean Democratic. Five of those House seats are 121,000 or larger (Districts 3,4,7,8, & 9). Remember the average is just over 119,000. But this is not the worst example of packing House Districts to minimize Democratic votes in the General Assembly.

Then there is Montgomery County, home to four State House seats. In November 2020, Montgomery County voted for Joe Biden (50% to 48%), yet this county could see a 3 to 1 GOP advantage based on the manipulation of the State House district borders.

Like Franklin County, Montgomery's most Democratic district is its most populated. In this case, it is House District 38, a 72% Democratic district has a population of 125,132 – which is actually over the maximum allowable total. The other “Blue” district is House District 39 – right next door to 38, but it only has a 49.7% Democratic majority which means, Montgomery County could easily go 3 to 1 Republican in its State House representation even though it voted for Biden.

You will see a similar scheme in Hamilton County but this time it is more noticeable with the Senate map.

Hamilton County is home to seven State House seats and 2 Senate seats.

Again, let's examine the population of those seven House seats.

Remember the average population should be 119,167.

HD 24	117,767 Democrat
HD 25	118,377 Democrat
HD 26	122,876 Democrat
HD 27	121,968 Democrat
HD 28	121,789 Democrat
HD 29	114,051 Republican
HD 30	113,811 Republican

The two House Districts with the smallest populations in Hamilton County are the ones likely to vote Republican. This repeated scheme cannot be a coincidence. GOP Mapmakers are trying to minimize Democratic voices in the state legislature and they can do that by making the Democratic districts larger than it should be. The more people per district, the less power. And this manifests itself more dramatically when you look at the State Senate map in Hamilton County.

How does a 5 to 2 Democratic majority state house map turn into a State Senate map that is a 2 to 1 Republican advantage? Again GOP map makers

have manipulated the borders and boundaries to take a county that voted over 57 percent for Biden and distort their State Senate representation.

Cuyahoga County also loses Democratic seats in the State Senate and the possibly of losing a State House seats and the Districts are all way over the average population, some even exceed the maximum allowable.

So let's look at the District population data.

HD 13	125,141	Democrat
HD 14	124,938	Democrat
HD 15	125,100	Democrat
HD 16	124,466	Democrat
HD 17	124,758	Democrat
HD 18	125,128	Democrat
HD 19	124,935	Democrat
HD 20	125,112	Democrat
HD 21	125,132	Democrat
HD 22	125,141	Democrat
HD 23	123,929 (Partial Cuyahoga County)	Leans Democrat but it is a toss up District when combined with Lake County

Due to the overcrowding, the Republican map drawers have cheated Cuyahoga County out of an 11th District fully inside its borders. Cuyahoga County's population is 1,264,817 which when divided 11 ways gets you 114,983 per district which is above the minimum number per district by almost 1800 people which means – there is NO Reason to draw any district outside of Cuyahoga County, but that's what happens when HD 23 gets drawn into Lake County.

It is also important to point out that four of the ten Democratic seats (HDs 13, 18, 21, & 22) are over the maximum allowable (of 125,125), which again cannot be a coincidence.

Yet the State Senate Map is worse in every way. Currently Cuyahoga County has two Democratic Senators. The proposed GOP map overcrowds those two Senate seats with Democrats, draws HD 23 into Lake County, which makes it a

Republican leaning Senate District and the western part of Cuyahoga County is a toss up Senate District. Which means, Cuyahoga County, which gave Joe Biden his largest percentage win and his largest total vote win of all the 88 Ohio counties might be represented in the Senate by 2 Republicans and 2 Democrats.

The Cuyahoga County State Senate map should be restored to something that looks like the 2012-2020 map that had a Western suburbs district and an Eastern suburbs district and a City of Cleveland District. Obviously, population numbers have shifted since the 2010 census but the current population totals actually make that prior map design even more appropriate. Remember, the average State Senate District size is 357,501 and the City of Cleveland population is 367,991. It is almost a perfect match. It is so close, it is where the Cuyahoga County map making should begin. Give Cleveland three State House seats, one State Senate seat and divided the other eight districts in the suburbs.

This would be a map that is equal and logical. Not overpopulated, manipulated and illogical.

So I have five requests of this commission

- Make all the districts equal in size. When the numbers are equal chance are better that the maps will be fair.
- Move the Montgomery County boundaries to better ensure a more accurate 2 to 2 State House ratio rather than 3 to 1.
- Correct the State Senate balance in Hamilton and Cuyahoga County,
- Ensure 11 full House Districts within Cuyahoga County
- and make sure that the City of Cleveland gets its State Sente District restored, like they have during the last decade.

If, as it was reported, one of you said, (quote) “It’s important to try to ensure that communities are represented by someone who shares their interests, especially as Ohioans with the same political bent increasingly cluster together geographically.” Then I think you would agree that my five map recommendations would improve the current proposed maps.

I appreciate the Commission’s kind attention and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.