

I have contacted my state senator many times, by both phone and email, and he never acknowledges or answers my communication. I have also met with him on several constituent visits for which I have researched and prepared extensively, but he seems disinterested in different points of view from his own and prefers to not follow up on the information or questions I provide. I believe he has a good heart, and earnestly believes he is doing the right thing, but there are many, many constituents in his district who have no voice in the statehouse because he refuses to consider the other sides of the issues that are so important to them in their economic well-being and their way of life. I believe this is happening because of gerrymandering.

There is no question that Ohio is and will remain a majority Republican state, and that Republicans hold decision-making power in the offices of the Ohio Supreme Court, Governor, Secretary of State, Auditor, Attorney General, Ohio General Assembly, the State School Board (in its new form), the Controlling Board and every other appointed state commission or board. But without any ability for the 46% of Ohioans whose voices are constantly ignored or dismissed, to be heard, our state government is depriving the governed from the benefit of views and ideas that could help public policy improve our health, increase our prosperity, and ensure sustainability into the future. Because so many gerrymandered districts are uncompetitive, our legislators are primaried by those with the most extreme views which often do not reflect the majority of even the Republicans, let alone Democrats or Independents.

If we want to preserve the democratic principles enshrined in our Constitution, we must have sufficient competitive districts that will allow bipartisanship. Without meaningful public participation in this process, Ohio will become so entrenched in the status quo that it will be unable to embrace the forward-thinking educational, innovative, cultural, and sustainable initiatives that can save our state.

The maps you are currently promoting expand Republican supermajorities in both the House and Senate, as well as create fewer competitive districts overall.

Under the Democratic plan, Republicans would still be the majority party, but not a supermajority, free to enact any legislation they see fit, without involving legislators on the other side of the aisle at all.

District maps cannot be fair without an inclusive process.

I am asking you, the members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, to please adopt the proposed maps submitted by Minority Leader Allison Russo, which reflect the state's overall partisan preference, meet the proportionality requirements, and reflect Ohio's voting patterns in recent years. They are well researched and fair to all.

Thank You,

Ruth Hardy