

GERRYMANDERING IN OHIO

To whom it may concern:

My name is Dan Fonte, I am married and the father of two adult children and have two grandchildren. I am retired from Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 94 as a Pipefitter/Welder. I am presently a Board Member of the Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans. I am here to testify in favor of fairer districts. The current state legislative and congressional maps have led to a more polarized Ohio. These politically motivated districts allow the most extreme politicians to win. In most cases, you know who is going to win the seat by the outcome of the primaries.

Luckily, Voters in Ohio voted overwhelmingly to end gerrymandering in 2015 and 2018 for redistricting reform. The people of Ohio want fair maps as shown by the over 70% support for these two ballot initiatives. This is how democracy works: a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Voters want transparency and engagement through public hearings that are convenient for the public to attend and to be a part of the process. It's a shame that all of these commission hearings are happening during the work day. For the past year we have called workers "HEROES" but then we don't even allow the space for them to be heard on something important as redistricting.

The new maps must not favor one political party over the other. It should hold communities together, not split them apart. Also, make the representation fairer and make districts that reflect the preferences in how Ohioans actually vote. The Ohio congressional delegation of 12 Republicans and 4 Democrats does not reflect the reality at the polls. It's closer to a 50/50 split. So right now the way our Congressional District maps are drawn is 75% in favor of one political party. Do you think this reflects the will of the voters? I don't think so.

I find it hard to believe that meetings haven't taken place already, but we Ohioans have no idea if anything has already taken place. Where's the transparency? Has the majority party had any secret meetings on redistricting in private so far?

In Stark County we are split into three congressional districts and not one representative lives in Stark County. That's crazy. I reside in the 7th congressional district and have never been able to meet my representative in person.

A few of the biggest fiascos of gerrymandering are: In Ohio the deregulation of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) in the late 1990's was huge. John Kasich is quoted in the Akron Beacon Journal in April of 2014. "I will tell you it's a challenging time in a state that has gone through this whole business of trying to figure out what deregulation actually means". Kasich added "The ideological effort to deregulate, I'm not so sure it's the smartest thing we've done in the State of Ohio. But we are where we are, and we can't go backwards now. So, it's onward in a deregulated environment, and we've got to figure it out". **RESULT HB 6**

Another one is the defunding and degrading the public health care system in Ohio and the Country. This has lead to not doing enough research and development in fighting diseases that are hurting and killing our citizens in Ohio and the Country.

Another example is Citizens United vs. Federal Elections Commission in which the U.S. Supreme Court in January 2010, ruled (5-4) that the free speech clause of the first amendment prohibits the government from restricting independent expenditures for political campaigns by corporations, non-profit corporations, unions, wealthy billionaires and committees established for the purpose of fundraising (PACs). Here again, Citizens United is a Conservative nonprofit organization funded by Corporate donors. **RESULT TONS OF DARK MONEY.**

These are a few examples of what corporate think tanks, their corporate donors and their lobbyists have been able to get legislators to pass. They write the bills and pass it on to the legislators to enact them. So when we

talk about elections, this is what happens. We don't elect our representatives. The corporate think tanks, their corporate donors and their lobbyists elect them. Not we, the people. This is the way it has been in Ohio for over 30 years.

People would be shocked to know how many bills in Ohio and other States and in the U.S. Congress are written by Conservative Corporate funded think tanks like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and others that are corporate writing bill mills.

Right now there are four bills, that I know of, in the Ohio house and four bills in the Ohio Senate that have ALEC origins all over them.

Go to the Alec exposed web site and search Ohio and see how many elected Ohio representatives and Senators are currently dues paying members of ALEC. And, see how many former members of the Ohio Senate and House were members.

Thank you for allowing me to give testimony on this very important topic, and please do everything you can to pass fairer state and congressional district maps that reflect the preferences in how Ohioans actually vote.

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