

I live in Lakewood, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, where I see numerous signs supporting fair maps and ending gerrymandering. However, that led me to think about what people in other Ohio cities think about this, since unlike Lakewood, which is strongly Democratic, Ohio as a whole has been trending towards the Republicans in recent years. Donald Trump decisively won Ohio in 2016 and 2020, even after twice voting for Barack Obama. And speaking of Trump, opponents of gerrymandering often talk about how these elections are "rigged." Protip: if you're using the same language that Donald Trump has used on countless occasions, you might want to reconsider.

I'm aware that this is unscientific, but after seeing numerous fair maps signs in Lakewood, I decided to see how many of them were in Brook Park, another suburb of Cleveland. Why Brook Park? Well, Lakewood and Brook Park have similar racial demographics, and each city voted mainly for Democrats for president until 2012. The one big difference between the two cities is that unlike Lakewood, Brook Park is more blue-collar, and it swung hard towards Trump in 2016. Obama received 63% of the votes in Brook Park in 2012, but in 2016, Hillary Clinton won by only 16 votes, and Trump won by about 3 and a half points in 2020. (Also, Brook Park has a lot less NPR listeners and people who gaze lovingly into John Oliver's eyes while watching *Last Week Tonight* videos on YouTube for the millionth time.) In Brook Park, only 13% of its population over 25 has a bachelor's degree or higher, according to the most recent census estimates, as opposed to Lakewood, with 46%. Also, if I've there's one thing I've noticed, it's that outspoken supporters (with an emphasis on the word "outspoken") of ending gerrymandering tend to be affluent white college educated liberal Democrats. This doesn't surprise me at all. Being Democrats, it makes sense that they'd want to call out Republicans, who got more opportunities to draw Congressional and legislative maps across America in 2011, and in Ohio as well.

Anyway, my tour of Brook Park took place over a month ago, so things may have changed by now, but in the entire city, I only saw one fair maps sign. That's right. While in Lakewood, you can and will find multiple houses on one city block with a fair maps sign, in Brook Park, there was only one. Additionally, in Lakewood, I saw more than a few houses with fair maps signs that also had Black Lives Matter signs, LGBT pride flags, those "In this house we believe..." signs, and other ways to indicate support of various causes that left-wingers tend to strongly be in favor of. This further shows that liberal college educated voters are more likely to be vocal supporters of ending gerrymandering. Unfortunately for them, those voters are a minority if you include all of Ohio, as only about 28% of Ohio residents aged 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher, which is significantly lower than the percentage in Lakewood. While there were a few affluent suburban legislative districts in Ohio that switched to the Democrats in 2018 and 2020, throughout the decade, they were outnumbered by the working-class districts that were traditionally Democratic but flipped to Republicans.

Oh, but Brook Park is not alone in being a formerly Democratic city that's now much more Republican. In the Youngstown area, including Ashtabula, Mahoning, Portage, and Trumbull counties, there were four State House of Representatives seats and two State Senate seats that switched from the Democrats to the Republicans in 2018 and 2020. I'd say that area qualifies as blue-collar, seeing as Bruce Springsteen once wrote a song about Youngstown to try to portray him as a champion of working-class Americans even though his net worth is about \$500 million. You might say, "but those districts are gerrymandered, so it doesn't count!" All these districts voted for Democratic Representatives from 2012 to 2016, though, and they had the same boundary lines in every election from 2012 to 2020. Mahoning County, where Youngstown is located, voted for Trump in 2020, voting for a Republican for president for the first time since 1972. Believe it or not, Mahoning County actually voted for Carter. And Mondale. And Dukakis. And Gore. And Kerry. And Hillary Clinton. And I think you get my point by now. Furthermore, U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown did worse in 2018 than in 2012 in the aforementioned Ashtabula, Mahoning, and Trumbull counties, despite the fact that he overall did better statewide in

2018. He did win those counties, but by a narrower margin than in 2012, and that goes to show you that even Democrats with more white working-class support, of which Brown is probably the quintessential one in Ohio, are doing worse in that area.

I should also point out something that rarely gets mentioned but is important to understanding the redistricting process. Since Ohio is one of the more populous states, its State Senate and House districts have more people compared to most other states, and in Ohio, this benefits the Republicans. I'll compare this with Wisconsin, which has about half the amount of people as Ohio. In both Wisconsin and Ohio, there are 33 State Senate districts, and 99 lower State House districts (which in Wisconsin, are known as Assembly districts. Fun fact). In Wisconsin, as of the 2010 Census, the Assembly districts have an average of about 57,000 people, but in Ohio, the State House districts have an average of about 116,000 people, and the State Senate districts have roughly three times that amount. This hurts the Democrats, particularly in the State Senate, where the Republicans have three times as many seats as the Democrats. Canton, Dayton, Elyria, Lorain, and Youngstown are five Democratic cities with over 50,000 people, but because they're not big enough to fit in one Senate district, they're surrounded by rural areas that are more Republican, so as a result, those cities all have State Senators who are Republicans. Trying to add more legislative seats to both houses would likely help the Democrats, but since there are lots of Republicans in Ohio, and the last thing they'd want is more government employees, I can fairly safely say that plan wouldn't work. Besides, this is not a new thing, since the State Senate in Ohio has been controlled by the Republicans since the early 80s, and they've also controlled the State House since 1995 for all but two years.

So honestly, I know this'll make me very unpopular here; more so than if I said "Calling them That Team Up North is stupid," Or "You know, Mason Rudolph didn't really start it," but Democrats who support fairer district maps should know that even if the maps are drawn more fairly than before, the Republicans will still very likely control the legislature in Ohio, and the Democrats and vocal supporters of ending gerrymandering (but I repeat myself) should honestly adjust their strategies based on these facts, and work on getting white working-class former Democratic voters throughout Ohio to vote for them again. Instead of asking "How do I end gerrymandering?" you should be asking "How can I get more blue-collar voters to vote for Democrats, ensuring that it would be more likely for there to be more competitive elections and likely more Democratic representation as well?"

Thank you for your time.

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