

Ohio Redistricting Commission Testimony
by Debra Shankland
Fri 27 Aug 2021, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. at the University of Akron

My name is Debra Shankland and I live in Brecksville, a city/suburb south of Cleveland.

I'm grateful to be able to address the Commission today. I would have preferred to attend the Monday hearing in Cleveland, but I couldn't make the last-minute arrangements to do it. I don't think I'd be wrong to estimate that five times as many citizens would participate in these hearings if we were notified sooner, and more opportunities were given to accommodate individuals who work standard hours. So, I'm honored to speak for at least some of those individuals as well.

Members of the Commission, we are in crisis. All of us here, and our children and grandchildren, are under existential threat of climate catastrophe as well as a global pandemic. These crises demand not just individual actions such as changing light bulbs and washing hands, but also strong actions and policies at all levels of government. What is our leadership at the Ohio Statehouse doing to address the climate crisis? They passed, and still have not repealed HB.6, a gift to the fossil fuel industry which is being paid for by every one of us in this room. To avoid the worst effects of climate change, some of which are evident today, we should have decreased and then ended our reliance on fossil fuels decades ago. We should have done everything possible to scale up renewable and clean energy sources, like solar and wind, instead of doing everything possible to quash those positive, job-creating industries with bills like the recently introduced S.52 and HB.118, as well as HB.6. I'm a scientist and trust me, the worst is yet to come.

As a single woman living alone, I'm also very concerned about the exponential increase in mass shootings, domestic terrorism, and the proliferation of guns in our communities. More guns do not make us safer. The majority of Ohioans of all political affiliations want common-sense gun laws, like those proposed by Governor DeWine, which include background checks, red flags, and secure storage of guns in homes occupied by minors. What did our Statehouse pass instead? Open carry without a license or training, concealed carry of any deadly weapon, and stand-your-ground, which passed on 6 Apr 2021.

These laws, and abortion restrictions, are the priority of our legislators. But clean air? Protecting our natural resources? Allowing virtual testimony during a pandemic? Our elected officials have no time for those. They've been very busy putting together the State's budget. A budget in which a policy and a new commission were created to promote fossil fuel extraction in our state parks, forests, and wildlife areas. Will the royalties from extraction help to fund needed maintenance in our state parks? No: they'll be used to promote further oil and gas leasing on our public lands.

How does our Statehouse so brazenly ignore the wishes of the people, and further, actively promote policies and laws that damage our health and wellbeing? It's simply and effectively

done thru gerrymandering. And if that doesn't work to maintain their grip on power, they impose voting restrictions. When our representatives are not beholden to the people, they are open to the forces of corruption.

Now, I know that there are many good and hard-working legislators that want to see Ohioans thrive for generations. They are why I'm here today. I implore you to use fairness in redistricting; to make the process transparent; and to give the people time and ample opportunity to review and comment on the maps yet to be proposed. We know what has happened in the past and we are watching you today.

Thank you.

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