

WHAT: Redistricting Commission Testimony

WHERE: Quaker Square Ballroom  
1200 Mill Street  
Akron, Ohio 44308

WHEN: Friday, August 27, 2021, 9:30 AM

WHO: Dr. Rosanne L. Winter, President  
League of Women Voters of the Akron Area

The League of Women Voters of the Akron Area has served the citizens of the Akron Area and most of Summit County, in which Akron is located, for more than 80 years. We know the area's people, issues, and assets well.

The Akron Area is anchored by the city of Akron, population just under 200,000. The surrounding area relies on and shares numerous assets with the city, including medical, commercial, educational, and recreational facilities. Our community is striving to thrive amidst a host of difficult-to-solve circumstances: loss of corporate headquarters, impacting support for community development; rising costs due to aging infrastructure; the continuing struggle to address the effects of prescription drug and other addictions; increased gun violence; and pandemic-related educational setbacks for students, among others. While well understood by our city and county leaders, these issues need attention and support at the highest levels of government. The ability to address these needs adequately has been diluted by the current dissection of Summit County into four U.S. congressional districts. With more than 540,000 residents, all of Summit could be encompassed in just one district. And, with a population of just under 200,000 citizens, Akron City would certainly not need to be divided into more than one district. However, it is.

As a result of this division, the 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional District splits not only Summit County but the City of Akron as well, wandering from Euclid through East Cleveland, Bedford, south through Seven Hill, Broadview Heights, and Richfield, finally entering the Akron area and the City of Akron! Parts of the city are in different districts. This strange configuration was by design. By packing black and other minorities voters from Cleveland and Akron together in one district, the only minority-majority district in Ohio was formed.

Voters are confused as to who their representative is. In the latest special election primary to fill the seat vacated by Marcia Fudge, many citizens showed up at the polls only to find that they were ineligible to vote. Why? Because they live in a district different from that of their neighbors across the street.

Marcia Fudge's seat, like all 16 of Ohio's U.S. Congressional seats, was constructed to be "safe". These safe seats were designed to yield a predictable outcome: 12 Republican and 4 Democratic representatives. As a result, most Ohioans have been represented by the same congressional representative for the last 9-plus years and yet for many in Summit Count, it took this primary to learn in which district they lived. These voters and their community are easily forgotten by those elected to represent them. This point is driven home by the fact that not one of the four representatives of Summit County lives in Summit County.

Members of the Redistricting Commission, what we are asking of you is to keep the Akron Area whole. Give us a chance to elect one representative who thoroughly understands our people, issues, and assets.