



Catherine J. LaCroix, Co-President  
Statement for the Ohio Redistricting Commission – Cleveland State University,  
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I am Catherine LaCroix, and I am the co-president of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland, a 100-year-old all-volunteer nonpartisan organization dedicated to the importance of the vote. We are part of the state and national Leagues of Women Voters, which have been fighting for redistricting reform since the 1970s.

In Ohio, our first ballot initiative attempt was in 1981. Throughout this time – through multiple phases of Ohio’s political life – we have sent the same message: Legislative districts must be drawn in a way that represents communities and does not unduly favor one political party over another.

I personally was heavily involved in coordinating our League’s petition drive for redistricting reform in 2017. The outpouring of grassroots support for that petition drive was overwhelming: over 700 enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers worked with our Greater Cleveland League. It was the largest group effort we have ever seen. This same army of activists has remained interested, involved, and eager for successful reform.

Legislative districts form the foundation of representative democracy. In a direct democracy, everybody votes on everything, but in our system of government, voters rely on the people they elect.

Our Greater Cleveland area has been particularly hard hit by gerrymandering, in both its state legislative districts and in its congressional districts. So I speak to you both as members of the Redistricting Commission and – for four of you – as members of the Ohio General Assembly, for you will be leaders in drawing both types of maps.

The most high-profile problems are in the congressional districts, where the City of Cleveland is sliced up in ways that are all too familiar to all of us. Residents of small suburbs find that their neighbor has a different congressional representative than they do. On the East Side, tiny Lyndhurst and South Euclid share a school district and a library system, but are in different congressional districts. The same is true in the Bedford school district area.

We can see similar patterns in our area’s state legislative districts. State Senate District 24 forms an arc as it goes from West Side to East in a long crescent below

Cleveland. Senate District 25 runs from Solon in the south to parts of Lake County far to the north and east; at one point it is only one block wide. These districts are not compact, and both they, and the House districts they contain, were drawn to favor one-party control.

The decision-makers in Columbus owe the voters faithful adherence to the intention of the reforms. 75% of Ohio voters have spoken: Draw lines in a way that respects our communities and is not politically biased. When drawing lines for the state General Assembly, it is particularly important to respect the mandate for representational fairness, and to draw districts that are compact and understandable to voters.

We at the League are concerned that politics as usual could take over in Columbus, to frustrate successful implementation of reform. We hope that the redistricting process will be transparent, respect public input, and serve the voters. Our League has been working on this issue for fifty years; we will be doing everything we can in the coming months to assure fair districts for Ohio voters.

Thank you.

