

To the Ohio Redistricting Commission:

I am strongly in favor of the Ohio Redistricting Commission drawing State and Federal legislative districts which meet the criteria established by the Ohio Constitution and which gain strong bipartisan support. These districts should be competitive, compact, and reflect the relative strength of the two major political Parties in recent elections.

I believe that gerrymandered districts, as drawn in Ohio and other states over the past two decades, are a major contributor to divisive nature of our politics today. When the outcome of the general election is a foregone conclusion (which it is for all of Ohio's Congressional Districts and the vast majority of the State Legislative districts), legislators will naturally become more radical, as they strive to win primaries which are dominated by the most activist members of both Parties. There are few incentives to govern from the middle, as working across the aisle will often be punished in the next election cycle. Competitive districts will encourage compromise and the delivery of real results for Ohioans, because a successful candidate must appeal to members of both Parties and to disillusioned independents. Primary electors will nominate candidates they believe can win in the General Election.

In demanding redistricting reform, citizens of all Parties clearly stated that the status quo is unacceptable. No one with a conscience can say that the iron clad domination of our legislative contingent by Republicans is fair, given that since 1992 no Presidential candidate has won Ohio by more than about 8 points. Ohioans have clearly stated they want competitive and fair General Elections.

I implore all Republican members of this Commission to consider how they would feel if the Democrats had drawn districts as wildly in their favor over the past two Census cycles. Short-term political gains are not worth the resulting undermining of the foundation of our democracy. Please, draw compact districts and ones in which each Party must truly fight to win a General Election.

Sincerely,

Edwin Richard Smith III
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