

## LWV Greater Cleveland – Testimony to Ohio Redistricting Commission

Monday, September 13, 2021

Good afternoon, Co-chairs and members of the Commission. My name is Catherine LaCroix, and I am the co-president of the League of Women Voters of Greater Cleveland, an all-volunteer organization. I live in Shaker Heights and vote in Ohio House District 9, Ohio Senate District 21, and US Congressional District 11.

I have several comments about the Commission's proposed maps under discussion today. These maps were presented to the public on September 9.

Last Friday morning, September 10, we sent the best information we could get to our 700 members and other volunteers, for them to review the maps. Many commented that the information on the maps was too limited for them to even tell whether their community was kept whole. There are no community lines, and some versions of the maps didn't even display community names, let alone streets or other details. Other League members commented that, once again, the time and location of the hearings did not permit them to participate, during the workday. So I and other regular citizens very much appreciate the volunteer map experts and other concerned citizens who are appearing at these hearings with detailed analysis.

In the same spirit, I would like to offer some observations.

A few features on the East Side of Cleveland can be seen by anyone. The districting including Shaker Heights has an odd additional piece, the Village of Woodmere, connected to the rest of its district only by a bridge over a highway. This separates this largely-minority population village from the school district to which it belongs, and packs its residents into already-diverse communities. The cities of South Euclid and Lyndhurst are separated into different House and Senate districts, even though they share a school district and other services. The city of Solon is split between two districts. The city of Pepper Pike is separated from its neighbors to the east and west, with whom it has the most in common, and placed in House and Senate districts that wander across the county to distant points and communities that have nothing in common with Pepper Pike.

Also obvious from the shapes on the maps: Many districts violate the Ohio Constitution because they are not compact. Senate District 27 runs from north of

Mayfield Heights near Lake Erie to south of Akron. House District 22 follows a similar bizarre path. House districts 14 and 18 meander east to west below Cleveland. There is even a small snake on the Lake, House District 13.

In addition, the data appear to show that Democratic-leaning House districts in Cuyahoga are as much as 4% over the average population number for a district. In other words, more people are packed into each district, reducing their leverage and representation.

I could not understand why these districts were so long and meandering, and so over-packed with people, until I saw the analysis by Fair Districts, showing the extreme partisan imbalance of the maps.

Thus we have two constitutional violations: the Commission districts ignore the compactness requirement, in order to build a map that, as a whole, was drawn to disproportionately favor the party in power.

And that is without even touching on the potential federal Voting Rights Act issues with the maps.

There is no excuse for this. The Commission proposal is based on an unconstitutional approach to mapmaking and should be rejected.

Based on today's testimony from Chris Glassburn, I am tempted to feel encouraged by the latest Democratic caucus proposal. But how can I know? The ground keeps shifting.

This entire process has been disturbing. But I choose optimism. As I stated in my first testimony on August 23, I hope that you will rise to the occasion and listen to the voters of Ohio. Draw district lines that fully comply with the Ohio constitution and federal law.

Thank you for your time.