

Michael Ahern's Testimony
Before the Ohio Redistricting Commission
9/14/2021

Good morning, Co-Chairs Cupp and Sykes and members of the Redistricting Commission. My name is Michael Ahern. I live in Blacklick just east of Columbus. This is my third time speaking before the Commission and I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the maps being considered by the Commission. I will not wade into the weeds because there are others much more skilled at that than me. But I am here today to add my voice in criticizing the blatant effort of the House and Senate Republicans to not only maintain a super-majority through political gerrymandering, but to be so bold as to increase that majority in the House if the maps officially placed into consideration on a partisan vote of this Commission were to be approved by the Commission tomorrow. It is clear to me that Republican members of the Statehouse and your consultants have no interest in meeting the spirit and written requirements of the Redistricting reforms passed in 2015 by over 70 percent of Ohio voters. So, this morning, I turn to the state-wide elected Commission members to urge you in the most earnest terms to vote with the two Democrats on this Commission. I urge you to support the modifications presented by the Democrats which, in my estimation, will result in more compact, competitive and compliant set of House and Senate Districts.

Governor DeWine, you were elected in 2018 by a 50.4 to 46.7 percent margin over your Democrat competitor. You should vote to approve a set of Senate and House District maps that reflects how you came to Office. You have represented all Ohioans, as you have strived to do what's best for all Ohio during the pandemic and you should use that same courage to vote for fair Districts in the officially approved maps.

Auditor Faber, in 2018 you were elected by a 49.7 to 46.3 percent margin against your Democrat opponent. A slightly closer margin than the Governor. On your website, you tell citizens "As Ohio's chief compliance officer, the Auditor of State makes Ohio government more efficient,

effective and transparent by placing checks and balances on state and local governments for taxpayers.” On this commission, you should have the confidence in Ohio citizens to place checks and balances on unbridled, unfairly obtained power of one Party over another through the continued practice of political gerrymandering embodied in the official map before this commission. I urge you to support the modifications presented by the Democrats in their entirety.

Secretary of State La Rose, in 2018 you bested your Democrat opponent by a 50.7 to 47 percent margin. As a registered independent voter, I was heartened to observe first-hand the non-partisan work of poll workers last November. People from both Parties worked in a non-partisan fashion at the risk of their health to provide a free and fair election to all eligible voters. As Secretary of State, you represent the leadership of that non-partisan operation. I urge you to accordingly consider and vote in a non-partisan manner on this Commission. You more than anyone on this Commission knows that there are some in this country that are actively seeking to undermine confidence in our elections. Highly partisan gerrymandered Districts feed this dangerous effort. I urge you to support the modifications presented by the Democrats in their entirety. You owe it to your fellow elections officials and poll-workers.

All three state-wide officeholders on this Commission won your seats in a margin consistent with the competitiveness that Ohio voters are demanding through the recent reforms to the Ohio Constitution. Each of you legitimately reflect the will of Ohio voters. Show that you have the fortitude to reach across party lines and approve the amendments submitted yesterday by the Democrats on this Commission.

Thank you for your time and service on this Commission.