

Ohio Redistricting Commission
Citizen Testimony on Officially Proposed Maps
Cheryl Claypoole-Beall, Buckeye Lake, Ohio

Co-chairs Speaker Cupp and Senator Sykes, members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

My name is Cheryl Claypoole-Beall, a voter in Ohio House District 72 and Ohio Senate District 31.

Having previously submitted testimony about why fair Ohio House and Senate districts are important to me, I feel compelled to comment on the maps proposed by the Ohio Redistricting Commission.

I feel outraged and disgusted both by the maps and the secretive, anti-democratic process by which they were developed.

The maps flout provisions of Article XI of the Ohio Constitution, which 72 percent of Ohio voters approved in 2015.

By flout, I mean largely ignore. The officially proposed maps fail five of six anti-gerrymandering requirements of Article XI. According to an analysis by Dave's Redistricting Map, they score high only on keeping communities together.

Outrageously, some commission members admitted publicly they didn't even try to meet some of the remaining five requirements.

As a result, the officially proposed maps meet the dictionary definition of gerrymandering: "a practice which manipulates the boundaries of an electoral constituency to favor one party or class."

The maps fail tests for proportionality in an egregious way. Proportional means that the districts' partisan makeup reflects Ohio as a whole. Proportionality is a way to ensure the voting districts aren't gerrymandered. It is central to representational fairness.

As article Article XI, Section 6 (B) states, "The statewide proportion of districts whose voters, based on statewide state and federal partisan general election results during the last ten years, favor each political party shall correspond closely to the statewide preferences of the voters of Ohio."

Over the past decade, the percentage of statewide Ohio votes going to Republicans equaled 53.62 percent – not much more than half. Democrats received 46.38 percent.

Therefore, accurate proportionality would result in Ohio House seats with a partisan breakdown of about 53 R/46 D. The officially proposed maps give an expected ratio of 67/32.

Accurate proportionality in Senate seats would be 18/15. The working draft is at 23/10.

Through these maps, developed in secret, Republicans have awarded themselves substantially more seats than statewide voting history suggest voters would give them.

But, wait, there's more! The officially drawn maps appear to inappropriately "pack" minority voters into Ohio House districts to reduce their influence. Commission members have stated that they failed to examine the racial composition of their map. This omission disrespects the Ohio Constitution, the federal Voting Rights Act, minority communities, and Ohio voters who value diversity and inclusion.

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If these maps are adopted without revision, Ohio's House and Senate districts would be even more gerrymandered than they are today. To this average voter, the maps seem unconstitutional on their face.

It's entirely possible to create fair maps that pass constitutional muster. Just ask Geoff Wise and Pranav Padmanabhan, the winners of the Ohio Fair Districts Mapping Competition.

They drew maps that are fair, that avoid splitting political subdivisions, that keep communities together, that are more competitive, and that bring all voices into our democratic process.

With the September 15 constitutional deadline for adopting new maps looming, members of the commission could simply ditch the rigged maps and adopt ones developed by Wise or Padmanabhan. These are readily available on the [Fair Districts Ohio](#) website.

These maps would give Ohio taxpayers a chance to choose their elected officials in a fair and democratic way – as we demanded in 2015. It also could prevent waste of potentially millions of taxpayer dollars fighting inevitable legal challenges to the commission's gerrymandered maps.

Failing better maps, I urge the minority members of the commission to vote against approval of the officially proposed maps, which demonstrate an outrageous power grab by Republicans and disenfranchise voters.

At least then Ohio citizens may only be stuck with these unconstitutional maps for four years instead of 10.

Cheryl Claypoole-Beall
Buckeye Lake, Ohio