



September 14, 2021 Ohio Redistricting Commission Testimony
 Jen Miller, League of Women Voters of Ohio
 614-563-9543; director@lwvohio.org

PROPORTIONALITY:

The new Sykes maps introduced yesterday are far better in regard to Section 6 of the Constitution, but we could still see improvements, especially in the Senate, which could afford the minority party 1 - 2 more seats.

HOUSE DISTRICTS

	<i>OFFICIAL PROPOSED</i>	<i>UPDATED DEM.</i>
REPUBLICAN DISTRICTS	67	57
DEMOCRATIC DISTRICTS	31	41**
COMPETITIVE*	1	1***

- * Difference between Democratic and Republican voting percentage is less than 1%
- * Includes one district where Democratic advantage is only 1.29%
- *** It may be claimed by some that this Competitive district is a Republican district. However, as the difference between Democrat voters (48.63%) and Republican voters (48.81%) is only 0.18%, I do not consider it a safe Republican district.

SENATE DISTRICTS

	<i>OFFICIAL PROPOSED</i>	<i>UPDATED DEM.</i>
REPUBLICAN DISTRICTS	23	20
DEMOCRATIC DISTRICTS	8	12
COMPETITIVE*	2	1**

- * Difference between Democratic and Republican voting percentage is less than 1%
- ** It may be claimed by some that this Competitive district is a Democratic district. However, as the difference between Democrat voters (49.13%) and Republican voters (48.75%) is only 0.38%, I do not consider it a safe Democratic district.

SPLITS:

The Democrat’s cartographer, Glassburn talked about measuring the Constitutionality of only one map regarding splits. Before we talk about which map that was, I want to ask how these determinations were made? Did they use software? Did they hand count them?

Secondly, why was the only one reviewed under the microscope created by Geoff Wise, an everyday Ohioan? Why was this review not conducted on the official map adopted by a 5-2 vote? Why did he not review the other winner of our mapping contest or the Ohio Redistricting Commission or the maps of the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission maps? Metrics matter,



legal definitions matter, and I ask that we make sure that we have a transparent process that is performed uniformly on all maps for Constitutionality.

Officially Proposed Splits: House: 35 counties are split a total of 72 times; Senate: 13 counties are split a total of 18 times

Updated Democratic Splits: House: 33 counties are split a total of 70 times; Senate: 12 counties are split a total of 17 times

Pranav Padmanabhan Splits: House: 39 counties are split a total of 78 times; Senate: 16 counties are split a total of 21 times. Note that Pranav's map worked very hard to keep school districts together, which really speaks to trying to keep communities whole.

Geoff Wise Splits: House: 36 counties are split a total of 75 times; Senate: 24 counties are split a total of 32 times

EFFICIENCY GAP: WASTED VOTES

Partisan gerrymandering is always carried out by cracking a party's supporters among many districts, in which their preferred candidates lose by relatively narrow margins; and/or by packing a party's backers in a few districts, in which their preferred candidates win by enormous margins. Both cracking and packing produce votes that are inefficient in the sense that they do not contribute to a candidate's election.

In the case of cracking, all votes cast for the losing candidate are inefficient. In the case of packing, all votes cast for the winning candidate, above the 50% (plus one) threshold needed for victory, are inefficient. The efficiency gap is calculated by taking one party's total inefficient votes in an election, subtracting the other party's total inefficient votes, and dividing by the total number of votes cast. In practice, the score should be 0, in which every voter's vote is equal in weight.

The officially proposed Senate map has an efficiency gap score of 10.2%. This is the difference between the 'wasted votes' on each side divided by the total number of votes. Wasted votes are those that do not contribute to victory due to cracking and packing. So votes for Republican candidates are expected to be inefficient at a rate 10.2% lower than votes for Democratic candidates. Likewise, the officially proposed House map has an efficiency gap of 7.5%. -- again favoring Republicans. These efficiency gaps reveal the benefit that the Republican side enjoys through the nefarious practices of cracking and packing.

In comparison, the new Sykes map has an efficiency gap score of 3.8% for the Senate and 3.7% for the House. Both gaps still favor Republicans, but are less egregious and more responsive to the desires of Ohio constituents and is about the range that Dr. Niven stated would be acceptable for the Buckeye State.



MINORITY REPRESENTATION:

The updated Democratic map provides for 8 Minority-Majority House districts (down from 11 in Officially Proposed) and 18 Opportunity Districts (same as Officially Proposed). Reducing opportunities for minority voters to be represented by candidates of this choice should be a nonstarter. We need more review of this area, as it there appears to be significant cracking in several neighborhoods of color, including:

- Parts of Downtown Columbus & Berwick are put with Pickaway County, which have very different in terms of economics and demographics.
- The map splits up Linden (my neighborhood) into two Districts, a historically black neighborhood that has been in existence since the early 1900s.
- Districts 35 and 38 split Fairview & North Riverdale in Dayton for no apparent good reason.
- Kennedy Heights, McPherson Town & Silverton in Cincinnati are all split in confusing ways. District 17 reaches out like a tentacle into the middle of district 16 - packing Democrats into the 16th.
- In Cuyahoga County, on the south side of Cleveland, it looks like Pangea took place as district 7 appears to have broken off from six, with a little sliver of five jammed in between. One neighborhood should not be split into 3 senate districts.

At the end of the day, we are asking that whatever map you choose, that we actually go through district by district - county by county - community by community regarding why the lines look the way they do. There will always be hard decisions to make when balancing the various policy goals and considering where to split lines. Let's hangout together all night, all day tomorrow and get the best map done. This type of review will also likely result in a better map in terms of representational fairness, minority representation, and the efficiency gap score.

It's been a long and intense week. You've heard from so many Ohioans – some have yelled, many have booed or clapped (which you have asked me to help stop – and I had no success at doing). Others have cried - indeed some have made me tear up, talking about loved ones who died of covid, children who have left Ohio because they feel like their voices don't matter, or others who are afraid of climate change or want women's rights. But all have come with love of Ohio in their hearts; with a hope that you would do right by voters.

My job is to try to demystify government so that people can participate as voters, as advocates, as leaders. I understand their frustration and pessimism. The process has been chaotic, confusing, and rushed. Some of the most important conversations have not happened at all or happened behind closed doors. Even trying to understand, let alone comment on the details of these maps is exceedingly difficult. The Congressional process must be better, and I ask legislative leaders to meet with us about how to ensure that.

Despite the frustration and fear that you've heard from League members and supporters, I personally am a serial optimist. I can't be in my line of work and not be both persistent and optimistic. I appeal to your better angels to put voters first, to put our state first.

Thank you.