

September 13, 2021

Dear staff,

Please submit this as written testimony to the 9/14, 10 am, Ohio Redistricting Commission meeting in Columbus. Unfortunately, I cannot attend.

Through the League of Women Voters I was actively engaged in bringing the issue of gerrymandered districts to the ballot. This is a bipartisan issue and every voter I spoke to regardless of party affiliation wanted to be sure their vote counted and wasn't watered down through gerrymandering. Fair districts assures that voters are selecting the representation and is intended to prevent politicians from selecting their voters.

The initial maps introduced by your Commission were harshly criticized by the media. Officially proposed maps are not fair and appear to inappropriately "pack" minorities into Ohio House districts. Now I am not naïve enough to propose that race constitutes party affiliation. However, the ability to track voting patterns and assess where voters likely to vote for one party or another live, is something that computer programs do. For instance, in the Cincinnati area, districts 24 and 25 have a surplus of population as well as significant percentages of minority populations. While the surpluses are within the legally allowable limit, concentrating minority populations into fewer districts can affect the diversity of election results.

Member promoting the Officially proposed map have stated for the record that they failed to examine the racial composition of their map. This runs counter to the Ohio Constitution and the Federal Voting Rights Act. Moreover, why are they packing large populations into small voting districts at all unless there is an intention to gerrymander urban centers? I ask, does each voting district have the same or similar numbers of people contained within them?

Compactness measures how "sprawling" a district is. While there are several mathematical measures of compactness, the Officially proposed map still includes certain anomalies evident in regards to a lack of compactness. For example, House district 18 does not seem to comply either in mathematical measurements nor by simply eyeballing it.

I believe the commission can go back to the drawing board and create a fair map. Better yet, Fair Districts Ohio held a public mapping contest and Geoff Wise of Cincinnati and Pranav Padmanabhan of Columbus created fairer maps than the Officially proposed map in terms of Proportionality, Minority Representation, and Compactness. Why don't you just accept one of those? It's time to work together with Fair Districts for the benefit of we the people.

Sincerely,

Dawna Peterson