

Testimony for the Ohio Redistricting Commission, Toledo hearing

Thank you, Chairmen Sykes and Cupp, and the rest of the commission members, for allowing me to express my concerns about redistricting.

My name is Debbie Dalke, and I live in Bowling Green, in Wood County. Currently, Wood County, by itself, is a State House District, District 3. I looked at the 2020 census data, and it may be the case that Wood County now has too many people for one house district, and so might be split. If a community must be divided into multiple districts, the people who live there should have a voice in how this will be done.

My State Senate District is District 2. In my opinion, this district violates two of the new rules. It does not seem compact to me, which is a requirement. The district takes a bite out of Fulton County, a bite out of Lucas County, then circles around Toledo to capture Wood, Ottawa, and Erie counties. Erie county does not share a boarder with any of the other counties, which seems to violate the rule that districts be contiguous.

I am a member of the Bowling Green chapter of the League of Women Voters. League members worked hard to pass the redistricting reforms that you are to follow this year. These rules are in our Ohio constitution, and as you know, it is your duty to uphold our constitution.

I want to share one personal story to illustrate the importance of keeping communities intact. About 4 years ago, my mother-in-law suffered a potentially life-ending stroke. We took her to the emergency room in Bowling Green, but the ER staff said she needed to go to a hospital in Toledo. I understand; a small-town hospital can't be equipped to handle every type of medical crisis. She was sent to Toledo, and she survived.

This dramatically illustrates how important Toledo is to my quality of life. I want my elected officials to support policies that keep Toledo vibrant and healthy. However, none of my legislative districts include Toledo. My representatives have little incentive to advocate for Toledo. It does not make sense to me that Lakewood Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, is in the same congressional district as Toledo, but Bowling Green, which is just 25 miles from Toledo, is not. I doubt than many people in Lakewood depend on Toledo for live-saving medical treatment, as I do.

I commend you for holding this hearing today, but it is also extremely important that you show us our state and congressional maps as soon as they are drawn, and hold hearings to listen to our feedback. Give citizens the opportunity to tell you how those maps impact us. Be transparent, and show us the maps.

Thank you.

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