

Testimony to Ohio Redistricting Commission

My name is Nancy Gurney. I am a member of the League of Women Voters of Toledo Lucas County. But I live at Lakeside in Ottawa County, 50 miles east of here. I live in Ohio House District 89, Ohio Senate District 2 and US Congressional District 9.

I have spoken two times with my Ohio House District 89 Representative, specifically about putting medical decisions into the hands of a committee and removing the Medical Director as the qualified decision maker. With my 40 year career and experience as an immunohematologist and lab director in Blood Centers charged with making the blood supply safe from infectious disease, I felt qualified to speak to the issue of infectious disease spread and control. We disagreed. Since that time, I've contacted his office no less than a dozen times, rarely speaking in person with an aid, always asking for a call back, and never ever hearing back from my District Representative. If the district was competitive, I would expect to hear back. Gerrymandering in Ohio has created Districts that are not competitive and Representatives who are not responsive to their constituents.

My Ohio House District has a Lake Erie shoreline that is about 1/3 of Lake Eries's total shoreline bordering Ohio. That would make a constituent think that my Representative would be active in helping Lake Erie improve water quality. A review of House activities indicates this is not the case. My calls to his office asking to discuss the lake go unanswered. Gerrymandering creates situations where members of congress are not responsive.

My US Congressional District, #9, is about 100 miles long, running from Toledo east all the way to, and including, Cleveland Hopkins Airport. District #9 includes more than half of Lake Erie's shoreline in Ohio, including all the shoreline in the western basin and Maumee watershed, the shallowest western end of the lake where most water quality problems occur. People all along the lake make their livings from the lake. They own and captain fishing boats to support sport fishing, boat sales, repair and storage, boating rescue services, Great Lakes shipping of gravel, grain and coal, lakefront resorts with shops and restaurants all employing people who depend on the water quality of Lake Erie for their livelihood. The 100 mile stretch of lakefront is in the district of one US Congressional Representative whose voice is diluted by gerrymandering. The district is not compact so instead of multiple Congressional voices calling for improvements to Lake Erie, gerrymandering shuts the message down to one voice. Lake Erie is an enormously valuable asset, not just to District 9, but to all of Ohio. Gerrymandering is not good for Lake Erie or the many businesses who depend on its health.

Ohio wants Districts that are compact, contiguous and competitive. Won't you do your part to end gerrymandering in Ohio?